

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Evangelism

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Imagine seminaries churning out graduates like factories at full steam. Imagine these young, fresh graduates marching across the land like conquerors, armed with glistening and be-ribboned diplomas. Imagine the determination in their eyes, the strong words on their lips, the fire in their hearts. They go from door to door, town to town, state to state. Not satisfied, they set their eyes across the seas. They overcome language barriers, cultural barriers, hunger, thirst, ridicule, persecution, torture, imprisonment, loneliness, disease, and yes, even face death, hoping to gain a better crown of glory. Now, imagine the throne of glory, the Lord of lords, King of kings, among multitudes upon multitudes of worshiping angels and glorified saints shouting "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever!" The books are opened. A cosmic silence falls. The King summons to the throne these religious warriors who had counted all as loss to go over land and sea, enduring pain, to win even just one convert. Then, the Ancient of Days slowly and finally declares to them, "I never knew you! Away from Me, you workers of lawlessness!"

Imagine! This scene on World-Wide Judgment Day (WWJD) will prove to be not at all imaginary but all too real for many religious teachers, evangelists, and missionaries. (See *Matthew 7:21-23*.)

No, I am not referring merely to Jehovah's Witnesses. Certainly, they go from door to door, relentlessly proclaiming their message of salvation. The Lord does not know them. Nor am I referring merely to the Mormons. They study diligently to overcome language barriers and give up years to march across the world with their message of salvation. The Lord does not know them either. Nor am I referring merely to those denominations in the mainstream of "Protestantism." I am referring to the missionaries and evangelists who are in the mainstream of "Evangelicalism," churned out by "conservative" seminaries year after year. They will not be accepted on Judgment Day, not because they lack zeal, but because, like the cults of Mormonism, Romanism, and Watchtowerism, they themselves are unjustified, and they promote a false gospel. Though their gospel is different from the false gospels of the cults, it is a false gospel nonetheless.

In fact, lesser culpability may perhaps be placed on the cults, because they do not claim the Bible as their sole standard of religious truth. Greater culpability may well be placed on these nominal Evangelicals because, while having the inerrant Word of God in front of them, and while claiming to believe in its infallibility, they nonetheless advance a gospel that is contrary to the gospel found in the Scripture.

A missionary of many years to South America, who now teaches Evangelism at a seminary in New York, wrote my wife and me a note with just two questions: "Which is more important: To win souls, or to have an absolutely correct theology? Does anyone have the latter?" This reminds me of an illustration from Gordon Clark's *Thales To Dewey* (though I'm taking it out of his context) about a group of boys trying to play ball:

One boy claims another is unfair because he is using a spherical ball three inches in diameter when the ball ought to be a foot-long oval. A third boy mediates this quarrel by agreeing with the first that the ball should be spherical and agreeing with the second that it should be a foot in diameter; but he claims the others are unfair because they have nine or eleven on their teams, when five is the proper number. And then a truly ecumenical spirit argues that such differences are trivial and to discuss them is unsportsmanlike—the important thing is that they should all play ball together.

My old missionary friend was saying that correct theology is relatively unimportant. What is important is that we Christians all stick together and be zealous in evangelism. But such zeal ought not be commended at all. In fact, the Bible explicitly condemns blind zeal. "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge" (*Proverbs 19:2, NIV*). Paul, writing about his own countrymen who would go over land and sea to win just one proselyte, says, "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (*Romans 10:2*). Zeal must be based on knowledge. It is the truth, nothing else, for which we must be zealous. Zeal about error is not a virtue, but a sin.

Evangelism means to preach the *Evangel*, the Gospel. If one's gospel is incorrect, and one's hearers believe it, to whom is the convert won, to God or to demons? Preaching a false gospel will never make anyone a child of God. It may, however, make a son of Hell, as Jesus says in *Matthew 23:15*.¹ Granted, no sinner is infallible in theology. But that fact does not imply either that it is permissible to try to win souls with a false gospel, or that theology is relatively unimportant. The message proclaimed must be correct in order for evangelists to escape the charge of making sons of Hell. Remember that Paul called down curses upon anyone, even angels and apostles, who preaches a false gospel (*Galatians 1:8, 9*). The Great Commission is not fulfilled by preaching a false gospel, however zealously and optimistically we do it.

Incidentally, since *evangelism* means *preaching the Gospel*, the audience is much wider than atheists, Buddhists, or cultists. Both Jesus and Paul began their ministries by going from synagogue to synagogue evangelizing those who already believed in God and the Messiah, but whose beliefs were wrong—they thought Jesus was not the promised Messiah and that justification came by faithfulness and works. Telling the true Gospel to churchgoers who hold a false Gospel is *ipso facto* evangelism. The Great Commission commands us to take the Gospel to every creature, not merely to every creature who does not attend church.

God So Loved the World

The most popular evangelistic message is "God loves everyone." This statement has become an axiom of contemporary religion. But this notion is based on an errant interpretation of *John 3:16*, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." This verse is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible, teaching not only the measure of God's love for his people, but also that everlasting salvation is through belief in Jesus Christ alone—justification by faith alone. But misinterpreted, it is frequently coupled with *1 John 2:2*, "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not only for ours only, but also for the whole world." The word *world* is misinterpreted in both verses to mean everyone—everyone who has died, everyone who is alive on Earth, and everyone who is yet to be born. So brainwashed are churchgoers in this misinterpretation that when the writer's seven-year-old daughter told her class in a Christian summer day camp that God does not love everyone but only the elect, the class accused her of not being a Christian. The teacher assured her that God loves even those who are already in Hell!

If it could be established from the Bible that the word *world* and the phrase *the whole world* do not mean *every single individual*, and if it could be established that God hates anyone, even just one person, then the popular gospel "God loves everyone" is proven to be a false gospel. The Bible is the only standard of truth. The Bible is the authoritative test. You may love your church very dearly. You may love your pastor very much. But in the final analysis, it is not what your church teaches or what your pastor says. The important question is, What does the Bible say?

In a booklet titled "God So Loved the World..." Homer Hoeksema complains that the "God loves all men" message is preached in some Reformed churches. He goes on to explain the term *world* in light of Scripture:

In the high-priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus, preserved for us in the same Gospel narrative of *John*, chapter 17, verses 8 and 9, we read: "...I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which you have given me; for they

are thine...." [I]t would be blasphemous to assume that our Lord Jesus Christ does not pray for the world which God loved.... [I]t is evident that the term "world" in *John 17* cannot possibly mean "all men." This is plain from the fact that the Lord Jesus makes a very clear distinction between his disciples, who believed that the Father had sent him, who were given unto Jesus, and who are the Father's, on the one hand, and the world, on the other hand....

Turn next to *1 John 2:15-17*. There we read: "Love not the world...." Here again, it is evident that the term "world" cannot possibly mean all men.... For...would it be possible that God loved the world, and that he would enjoin his people, "Love *not* the world, that is, the same world that I love?"But wherever that term appears in Scripture, and whatever else that term "world" may mean, you can put every passage to the test, and you will discover that the word *never simply means all men*. By no strain of exegesis can this faulty assumption be maintained.

Now if it is true that God loves all men, then it must also be true that he hates *no man*. But if the Scriptures cannot be broken [they cannot contradict themselves], and if then it can be shown by those very Scriptures that God hates so much as even as one man, then it also follows that God does not love all men, and that the term "world" in *John 3:16* cannot possibly mean all men. [Hoeksema then lists several verses: *Psalms 5:4, 5; Psalm 11: 5, 6* And in *Romans 9*, a chapter that is very significant for the whole question, we read in verses 10-13: "... Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

From all these passages it is perfectly evident that there is a hatred of God as well as a love of God, and that some men are the object of the divine hatred, while others are the object of divine love.

Therefore, our first answer to the question, "Who does God love?" must be a negative one: God does not love all men. Let us obediently bow before this plain Word of God [7-9, emphasis in original].

Many have said that God's hatred for Esau is relative. God loves everyone. But God loves Jacob so much more than Esau that his love for Esau seems like hatred by comparison. Well, if these expressions are merely relative, it would be equally true to say, God hates everyone, but his hatred for Esau is so much stronger than his hatred for Jacob that his hatred for Jacob seems like love by comparison. Calvinists consistently take both God's love and God's hatred for the individuals named in *Romans 9* literally, while Arminians inconsistently take God's hatred metaphorically. Gordon Clark has often said, If Arminians were logically consistent, they would not be Arminians. But let us press on.

John Gill, the great 18th century Baptist theologian, the "eminent predecessor" of Charles Spurgeon, of whom Spurgeon said, "For good, sound, massive, sober sense in commenting [on Scripture], who can excel Gill?"—this Gill wrote a book titled *The Cause of God and Truth* explaining every single verse misinterpreted by the Arminians. Gill refuted the misinterpretation that the word *world* and the phrase *the whole world* mean every single individual:

[I]n one place it [the term *world*] is used three times, and in so many senses, *John 1:10*; *he*, that is, Christ, *was in the world*, the habitable Earth, and *the world*, the whole universe, *was made by him*, and *the world*, the inhabitants of the Earth, *knew him not*; and which is not to be understood of them all, for there were some, though few, who did know him: and I will venture to affirm, that the word *world* is always used in the Apostle John's writings in a restricted and limited

¹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of Hell as yourselves."

sense...and that it is never used to signify every individual of mankind that has been, is, or shall be in the world....

This phrase [*the whole world*] in Scripture, unless where it signifies the whole universe, or habitable Earth, is always used in a limited and restricted sense; *a decree went out that all the world should be taxed* [Luke 2:1]; which was no other than the Roman Empire, and such countries as were subject to it. The *faith* of the church at Rome, was *spoken of throughout the whole world* [Romans 1:8], that is, throughout all the churches, and among all the saints in the world.... An *hour of temptation* is spoken of, *which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the Earth* [Revelation 3:10]; who can be no other than such who will then be in being, and cannot be thought to include all the individuals that have been in the world. *All the world wondered after the beast* [Revelation 13:3]; and yet there were some who did not receive his mark, nor worship him. *Satan deceives the whole world* [Revelation 12:9]; and yet it is certain, that the elect cannot be deceived by him. *The whole world* will be gathered together to the *battle of the great day of God Almighty* [Revelation 16:14]; who are distinct from the saints, whom they will oppose [64-66].

Gill further notes that the Apostle John was a Jew writing to Jews. The Gentiles were commonly distinguished as "the world," for Paul also calls them *cosmos*, the world, in *Romans 11:12,15*. The context of *John 3:16* shows that Jesus was teaching Nicodemus, a rabbi. Contrary to his rabbinic and un-Scriptural notion that God's chosen people were the Jews only, Jesus scolds Nicodemus for not knowing that one must be born again (being born a Jew is not enough) and that there are elect persons among the Gentiles, too—"all the families of the Earth."

An arrogant young pastor who interpreted *John 3:16* to mean "everyone" once argued with a friend of mine. He boasted: "I got this interpretation from the Bible! Where else do you think I got it from? From myself?!" Though he boasted, he could not give any evidence from the Bible that *cosmos* means "all men." This is the kind of graduate seminaries churn out these days: arrogant and ignorant. And in many cases a seminary degree is nothing more than an official license to impose their asinine assertions on those who pay their salaries. But by now it should be incontrovertibly clear that the Bible itself never uses the term *world* to mean *all men without exception*.

That He Gave His Only Begotten Son

Some semi-Reformed teachers try to evade the clear teaching of Scripture, including *John 3:16*, by saying that God loves everyone in the sense of giving them the sun and the rain; but in the redemptive sense, God loves only the elect. The problem with this is that *John 3:16* speaks only of redemption. God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son. For what? For sun and rain? No, for eternal salvation.

As quoted earlier, *1 John 2:2* indicates that God gave his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for sins. Commenting on *1 John 2:2*, John Gill writes:

That the whole world, for whom Christ is a propitiation, cannot intend every man and woman that has been, is, or shall be in the world, appears from his being their *propitiation*; because for [those] whose sins he is a propitiation, their sins are atoned for and pardoned, and their persons justified from all sins....

Jesus Christ himself said that he did not die for all men. Should any man contradict him and make him a liar? Christ said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the

sheep." But the word *sheep* does not mean all men. Jesus continued: "You do not believe because you are not my sheep. [Please note, he did not say, You are not my sheep because you do not believe.] My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them [sheep] eternal life" (*John 10:11,15, 26-28*). Christ died for his sheep, and some men are not his sheep. The Bible calls them goats, wolves, pigs, and dogs.

Nor did Christ desire to save all men. Anyone interested in what true evangelism and the true Gospel are should read Gordon Clark's *Today's Evangelism: Counterfeit or Genuine? And The Atonement*. In *The Atonement*, Clark asks some pointed questions:

But if it was his [God's] pleasure that all be saved, how could Isaiah say, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied"? *Job 42:2* says, "No purpose of thine can be thwarted." And is not a purpose a desire? And does not God do all his will? In *Psalms 135:6* God says, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he." Had he pleased to save everybody he would have saved them. He did not save them. Therefore he had not pleased to [89-90].

That Whosoever Believes on Him

Here's another dilemma: If Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty of sins for every single individual, then no one would go to Hell. The Law's demand has been fully satisfied. God cannot require payment when Christ has fully paid. But some people have, in fact, gone to Hell, and thousands follow daily. Therefore, it is quite obvious to all who are not blind that Christ's death did not pay for all the sins of all men. "Christ died for everyone" and "God loves everyone" are popular but false gospels.

Trying to escape this dilemma, the proponents of the false gospel of universal divine love and atonement add falsehood to falsehood. They say, God indeed loves everyone, but it's up to man to accept God's offer of salvation. They say, Christ indeed died for the sins of everyone, but it's their unbelief and unrepentance that bring these people to Hell. But are not unbelief and unrepentance sins? If Christ died for all the sins of all men, then Christ died for those sins, too. Why then does anyone go to Hell? Asserting man's ability and free will does not solve the problem; it makes the problem worse.

Of course, the Bible nowhere teaches the natural ability of men to believe the Gospel. However, sinners do have a natural ability to believe false gospels, and they believe them all the time. (This explains why some religious organizations and movements are so large.) The proponents of the false gospels have conveniently transformed "Whosoever believes on him" into "Anyone can." This involves a very shallow and superficial view of sin. This view says that man is not totally depraved, that his volition, desires, and motivations are not under the bondage of sin. By the same token, it involves a very low view of God and a very high view of man. Man can stop Almighty God in his tracks. The omnipotent God cannot save man unless man allows him to.

In *Whosoever Will*, Herman Hoeksema wrote:

O, indeed, "Whosoever will may come;" but this is also true: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw him...." And again: "Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father" (*John 6:44, 65*).... One may, indeed, freely proclaim... that "whosoever will may come," but he is unfaithful to his ministry unless he adds: "no one can come unless the Father draw him;" "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy" (*Romans 9:16*).

This one-sided emphasis on what man may [not can] do and must do in order to be saved without mention of the truth that the sinner can do nothing unless God first

performs the wonder of his grace upon him...predominates in modern, so-called evangelical preaching. And so the way is prepared for that caricature of Gospel preaching that consists chiefly in begging the sinner to come to Jesus, leaving the false impression with him that it is quite in his power to come,...and that presents a very willing but powerless Jesus that would be ever so pleased to save the sinner, but is incapable to do so unless the sinner gives his consent.... And instead of the truth of the Gospel that no man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him, we now hear: "No Christ can come to the sinner, except the sinner permit him!"Call it the gospel, if you like; to me it is nothing short of blasphemy of the name of the living God! An anxious and pleading God, whose power is limited, and whose hands may be tied by the proud and stubborn sinner, who is less than dust of the balance, is no God, but a miserable idol! [16-18]

Whosoever believes the Gospel will indeed have everlasting life. The problem is, no one can naturally believe the Gospel. The Bible clearly states that saving faith—that is, the very act of believing the Gospel, the very act of accepting Christ—is a gift of God (*Ephesians* 2:8). God is the "author" of faith (*Hebrews* 12:2). It has been granted to the elect on behalf of Christ "to believe" (*Philippians* 1:29). God gives the gift of faith only to the elect, not to all men (*2 Thessalonians* 3:2).

The popular but false gospels are these: (1) God loves everyone; (2) Christ died for everyone; (3) Man has the ability, the free will, to accept the Gospel or not. Now, if God in the Bible declares one thing, and your pastor says another, who do you suppose is right?

Division / Heresy

"Which is more important: To win souls, or to have an absolutely correct theology?" I hope that by now the reader can correctly answer that question. One cannot win souls to Christ by preaching a false gospel. Evangelism depends on and requires correct theology.

But another issue is brought up by that question. Underlying the question is fear of division within the church. For the sake of unity, we are told, we should all play ball without any precise rules. After all, does not the Bible condemn division and command that those who cause division be disciplined? So we must criticize those who are critical. We must hunt down the heresy hunters like the heresy hunters hunt down heresies. We must tolerate everything except intolerance. Christians should love one another; therefore, they must not love those who hate falsehood. Unity is of primary importance; therefore, we must separate from those who cause division. Ironic, isn't it? Or should I say, contradictory and hypocritical?

First Corinthians 11:19 reads: "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (*New King James Version*). The *New American Standard Bible* and *Revised Standard Version* also have "factions." The Chinese Bible has "divisive persons." The *New International Version* is a bit milder; it has "differences." These translations leave one with the impression that those who cause division are disapproved by God. The *King James Version*, however, has "heresies." So does the *Modern KJV*. The Greek word in this verse is *haireisis*, that is, *heresies*. Had Paul meant *division*, he could have used the same word for division he used in verse 18, which is *schismata*. Paul differentiates division from the *cause* of division in verse 19, namely, heresies.

Titus 3:10 reads: "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition" (*NKJV*). The *NIV* paraphrases: "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have

nothing to do with him." The Chinese Bible, the *NASB* and *RSV* have "factious man." This seems to command that after the proper steps of church discipline have been applied, a divisive person should be ostracized. The *KJV*, however, has "heretic." The *MKJV* is very clear: It has "man of heresies." The Greek is *hairetikos*, related to *haireisis*. A heretic is one who believes and teaches heresies.

The same Greek word *haireisis* occurs in *Galatians* 5:20, where a long list of the deeds of the sinful nature is given. The *RSV* has "party spirit." Both the *NIV* and the *NASB* have "factions," while the *NKJV* correctly translates it "heresies." The Chinese Bible once again retains "division" but also adds "heresy." So once again, the overall impression given is that division, instead of heresies, is a deed of the sinful nature and therefore to be avoided. The *KJV* and *MKJV* are once again faithful to the Greek; they have the translation "heresies."

The one place where all these Bible translations agree with the Greek, the *KJV*, and the *MKJV*, is *2 Peter* 2:1. All have "heresies." Even the Chinese Bible agrees. But note, the Greek word here is exactly the same as the one found in *Galatians* 5:20 and *I Corinthians* 11:19. Why it is not translated "heresies" in these instances is hard to fathom. One plausible explanation is that the translators, by using *division* rather than *heresy*, betray an underlying bias favoring organizational unity and an underlying bias opposing, or at least undervaluing, doctrinal discernment.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words has this under *haireisis*: "a choosing...and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of the truth, and leads to division and formation of sects." *Liddell & Scott* has "choice..., system of philosophic principles, or those who profess such principles..., religious party or sect...." *Zodhiates' The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* has "to choose.... A form of religious worship, discipline, or opinion. In contrast to *schisma*, schism, it is only theoretical. One can hold different views than the majority and remain in the same body but he is a heretic. But when he tears himself away, *schizo*, then he is schismatic. Heresy is theoretically schismatic." The main meaning is an opinion that is contrary to the truth, and therefore leads to division. It is not division *per se*, but the *cause* of division, namely, heresies. The divisions condemned in the Bible are those caused by heresies contrary to the teaching of the apostles (*Romans* 16:17), and those caused by personality politics (*I Corinthians* 3).

The true meaning of these verses, therefore, is that the heretic ought to be disciplined and excommunicated if he refuses to repent. Those who defend the truth against heresies are those approved by God. Because heresies are deeds of the sinful nature, they ought not be trivialized or brushed aside.

Some divisions are not sinful. Divisions resulting from the defense of the truth are necessary, commanded, and commended in the Bible. This kind of division cannot possibly be evil, for Christ himself, as well as the apostles, brought division by preaching the truth. I encourage the reader to search the Bible. Don't take my word for it. See *Luke* 12:51; *John* 7:43; 9:16; 10:19. The Greek word used in *Luke* is *diamerismon*, while the word used in *John* is *schisma* in all three references. I repeat: Why the modern translations have "division" for *haireisis* is hard to fathom, and therefore they must be held suspect. The reader is referred to the commentaries of John Calvin and Gordon Clark on these verses for more in-depth studies. Both Calvin and Clark correctly translate *haireisis* in these verses.

If Christians continue to trivialize and shut their eyes to heresies and allow them to flourish for the sake of unity, both evangelism and the unity of the church will continue to suffer: evangelism—because it will be a false evangelism with a false gospel; and unity—because the only time unity can coexist peacefully with

heresy is when everyone in the church is a heretic. But in that case, it would no longer be a Christian church.

Tithing

One final thought: Would you give to support the evangelistic efforts of the Jehovah's Witnesses? Would you give your financial support to a building fund for the Mormons? Would you give your money to them in the hope that they might someday change? To ask these questions is to answer them. So ask yourself this question: Why should I give any money to any institution, whether it calls itself a church or not, that promotes a false gospel?