

View

Subjectivism

By Tim Nichols

Modern man has lost the ability to learn and obey God's truth by destroying, for the most part, the most basic principle on which truth can rest. This is a principle that is taught in the scriptures (1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:6, 7; 4:1-5; Titus 1:10-13) as much as it is an observation made in the real world. The notion that truth exists at all is rejected by many, - even by some who claim to be Christians. It

really seems to be a part of the breakdown of "rational thinking" more than a deterioration of "communication" skills.

We are seeing, in our day, the fruit of subjectivism. Words do not mean anything in these days of relativism. As a result of this men seem to feel free to construe the words of others in

any way they choose. They expect others to construe their words to mean what they do not mean in the dictionary. These are two sides of one coin. The coin of subjectivism.

In "the old days" two men would approach a question or a problem with something in common. They both believed that truth existed and they usually believed that the truth they were seeking could be found. They may have differed widely concerning just what the truth was, but they both believed it was out there, independent of what they chose to think. They both argued about the evidence with the mutual hope of finding the truth. Today, many (if not most) in our culture have been "educated" (indoctrinated may be more accurate) to believe that all truth is relative. When we attempt to speak with many of our neighbors and some of our weak brethren we are simply not on the same page. When we present evidence for the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the truthfulness of specific Bible doctrines, and the rightness and wrongness of certain human actions, we are met with confused looks by those who stand on no foundation and believe that none exists. While we love those who are thus adrift without anchor or rudder we are often frustrated



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in our attempts to find some “common ground” that will serve as a basis for study and communication.

This may be a slight exaggeration, but it seems that when a subjectivist says that, “You are a dirty, stinking skunk!” he is shocked that you did not construe his words to mean that, “You are an immaculate, charming sweetheart.” In his confused mind you are responsible for knowing what he meant and that what he meant was not definite and rigid. You are guilty of unfair judging when you take his words to mean what we normally use those words to mean. With him, meanings are flexible rather than fixed. When he says, “You look like a monkey”, he may mean “Apples are fruit.” This can be frustrating when we are on the receiving end of “communication” with a subjectivist, but it is much more bearable than when we are on the sending end. The subjectivist feels free to take your words to mean anything he chooses and to tell others what he has “perceived” you to say. After all, in his mind, words can mean no more than the ideas that they represent. Since ideas, in his distorted thinking, can never be objectively fixed, he feels free to impose any meaning upon them that he chooses.

Over the past several years we have heard enough straw men quoted by subjectivists to supply the need of every corn field in the world. While we might as well give up trying to convince the subjectivists of anything beyond the truth that truth exists, we need to call them to account for the public statements for the sake of those who hear their claims. One brother told me this week that, in “45 years of attending the church of Christ, no one ever told [me] what Jesus has done for us!” I asked him for the names of the elders, teachers, and preachers who had neglected their work by not telling him about the grace, mercy, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. At first he refused to give me their names on the grounds that I might be unkind in my dealing with them. When I promised to be kind and to simply tell them what he had told me and ask them to study some Bible verses with me he changed his tune and said, “Well, they did teach me what Jesus has done for us, but they did not teach me about how the Holy Spirit will directly guide me in my daily life.” Notice the giant difference between

the former and latter statements! And such non-thinkers cannot see the inherent dishonesty of their own words because truth, to them, is always “fuzzy.”

Others tell us that “nothing can be questioned in churches of Christ.” When you ask them what question they are not permitted to ask, they are at a complete loss. Usually, they have no response because most preachers and teachers among us are delighted to have questions to explore from the Bible. A few have said, more or less in response, “But they claim to have the answers!” And this is the problem for the subjectivist: “answers!” He hates all things presented by others as absolute facts. He repudiates the very idea of undeniable truths proceeding from others. He paints the whole realm of ideas gray so he can select what he chooses from the whole to turn either black or white at will. He cannot maneuver well in an environment with fixed boundaries and immovable obstacles. There he loses his freedom to manipulate, exploit, negotiate, and orchestrate.

The Bible does not present a problem for the subjectivist because of what it specifically teaches. His problem with the Bible is that it specifically teaches. His problem with the church and her teachers is not really what is taught. His problem is that specific things are taught as inflexible truth. His battle is not really with the specific doctrines that he seems to attack as much as it is with the notion that specific doctrines can be settled once and for all. This leaves him without arguments in favor of his own ideas and it places him perpetually at odds with God’s people who are always prepared “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

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“OTHERS TELL US THAT ‘NOTHING CAN BE QUESTIONED IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST.’ WHEN YOU ASK THEM WHAT QUESTION THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ASK, THEY ARE AT A COMPLETE LOSS.”

Two Men “Know” They Are Saved

By Bill Hall

Two men “know” they are saved. The first man bases his assurance of salvation on his experience. He had been assured that when he completely turned his life over to Jesus Christ, accepted Him as personal Savior, and received Him into his heart, that an inner peace and feeling of well being would sweep his soul; that he would be able to recognize that feeling when it came; and that this peace and feeling of well being would be unmistakable evidence of his salvation. In keeping with that teaching he did “receive Jesus into his heart.” He did feel this wonderful peace sweep his soul. And he “knows” that he is saved.

The second man’s assurance is based on the promise of God. He had read in God’s word, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). From other passages he had learned the necessity of repentance and confession of faith (Acts 2:38; 7:37; Rom. 10:10). Trusting God’s promise of salvation, he obeyed from the heart those commands (Rom. 6:17), and has never doubted since that God forgave him of all his past sins, according to His promise.

The first man’s assurance of salvation is based upon an unsure foundation. The Bible teaches neither the action he has taken nor the criterion he has accepted. We do not question his feelings; but we do question that such feelings are proof of salvation, for they are the product of his teaching. The cultist who has been taught certain gross practices in religion and has become the victim of his perverted leader will experience similar feelings. If the feelings of the latter are not sufficient proof of salvation, neither are the feelings of the former.

“But an angel appeared and spoke to me,” someone may be thinking; or “I spoke in tongues.” The Bible teaches, however, that even unusual, inexplicable occurrences in one’s life cannot set aside the teaching of God’s revealed word. Many who will be in hell will have said, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

(Matt. 7:22). But all their experiences, even “miracles,” will not substitute for their doing the Father’s will as it is recorded in the scriptures (Matt. 7:21; see also Gal. 1:8; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Deut. 13:1-5; Col. 2:18, 19).

The second man has based his assurance on a solid foundation. God’s promises are sure. He cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). What He has promised He is able to perform (Romans 4:21). The person who obeys His commandments through truth in His promises can know, because God is faithful. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3).

We ask our readers, “Who really demonstrates strong faith in God: the one who simply trusts God’s promises and finds assurance in His word or the one who must experience some overwhelming feeling that sweeps his soul?” God’s judgment will be based, not on what we “know,” but on His word. Be not deceived!

VIA CHARLOTTESVILLE BEACON



“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Luke 12:15