

*Beware Lest Anyone
Cheat You*



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*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”
Colossians 2:6-10*

No one wants to be cheated. We want a good deal whether it is at the car lot or in the local grocery store. However, unless we have

researched car prices or shopped around a little to know something about the cost of grocery items, we could have the wool pulled over our eyes. If we want to avoid being cheated then we have to do our homework.

Even in our pursuit of religious ideals and truth, we must be sure that we are not being cheated by a counterfeit or pseudo religion. There are some who claim that we should just listen to our hearts when it comes to finding the truth. Years ago my wife and I were told by a couple of young men that we should pray about the message that they had told us and God would let us know whether it was true or false. I probed further with them to try to understand how I would know it was the truth. They said that we would just know. After talking about it for a while it appeared that we would just have a

Church Bulletin Bloopers

>>Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

>> Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

>> Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

>> The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

>> Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM - prayer and medication to follow.

>> The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

>> This evening at 7 PM there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

>> Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 AM. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.

>> The pastor would appreciate it

if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.

>> Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.

>> The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

>> Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.

If you or someone you know would like to receive BC, send the name and mailing address to:

Basic Christianity

PO Box 3425

Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425

Or

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Volume 34 - Number 2- Mar/Apr 2015
BC is published every other month. Send all inquiries, address changes and subscriptions to the editor: Scott Gage, PO Box 3425, Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425 Voice & Fax 479-521-6809 Email: Lsgage129@cs.com

www.basicchristianity.net

A Sense of Direction

As I stepped out of the house earlier this morning to begin the day's activities, I immediately knew the seasons are changing. The air was brisk to say the least, and then from the sky came further evidence in the familiar sound of flocks of geese flying south. Since my earliest years I have been amazed in watching the "V" shaped flocks as they change leaders and then press on to their winter habitat.

Each time I witness this, my mind begins to think of the great instinct that God has placed within these birds. Although many of them have never made this journey, they are still drawn to the same areas by way of the flyways year-after-year. While considering that great "sense of direction" within them, I think about man, and how he at times seems to not possess that sense at all.

Our nation's prisons are full of individuals who have followed the course of their own choosing. Counselor's offices are full of couples who are tired of trying to find their own way, and so desperately want some normalcy in their marriage. Our world is literally dotted with re-hab facilities that await the next young or older person who has become dependent on drugs or alcohol. Why does it seem as though many are just blundering around in the darkness and stumble over every obstacle? The answer is they are allowing the world to lead them!

God's word tells us "*it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps*" (Jer. 10:23). You see, it's not that God hasn't given man more than ample "direction"; there are simply those who think their way is better. "*There is a way that seems right to a man....*" (Pro. 14:12). Our way in life is not meant to be our own. We are created to belong to God! Man is expected to walk in the path which God has marked out for him in the word. It's when man fails to "*walk in the light*" that he finds himself in constant trouble.

We are in desperate need of God's divine guidance, and it is freely given to all who will accept it. When we live by God's word, it doesn't mean all the disappointments and sadness in life disappear, but it does mean there is one with you who understands. God challenges all who "*labor and are heavy laden*" to seek his guidance and not to try it alone. "*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and not turned aside*" (Job 23:10-11).

...Tom Bennett

Spearsville, LA

Antioch Bulletin 10/28/12

feeling that it was true, according to them. When these young men came back later and I tried to establish the Bible as our guide and final authority when judging truth and error, they told me that they didn't believe it

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would be of any benefit for them to return and study with us again. They were not willing for the word of God to be the final judge in discovering the truth, although they did say that they accepted the Bible, but with some amendments that they wanted to add to it from another religious book that they followed. They didn't come back again.

If we could only know what it means to receive Christ and walk in him, then we could remain rooted in him and be built up and established in the faith. According to Paul in Colossians 2:7, we have to be taught. Paul warns us that there is a danger of being cheated out of the truth that is in Christ Jesus. This danger lies in the philosophies and empty deceit of traditions that are manmade and not of Christ.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a religious tradition. A tradition by very definition is just a practice or truth that is handed down from one generation to the next. Paul admonished the Thessalonians, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (2Thess. 2:15). The traditions that are handed down to us come in two forms: those that are matters of faith and those that are matters of judgment. We could say that there are some traditions that are God ordained and some that are ordained by men.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a religious tradition.

Traditions that God ordains are matters of faith and not matters of judgment. We know that the Bible teaches that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). There are some truths in which God has ordained that we should walk. Notice this statement by Paul to the Ephesians, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph.

2:10). We want to walk as God directs and so we seek wisdom that we may discern the difference between works ordained of God and works that are a matter of the judgment of men. Let us try to illustrate the difference to which we refer.

We know that the Bible teaches that we are not to forsake the assembly of the church: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

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not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25). The assembling together of the church is a matter ordained by God. If we forsake it, then we do so to our own peril. However, there is an element of human judgment that enters into the church assemblies. When should we assemble? What time and what day? We do have some examples in the Bible of the early church assembling daily (Acts 2:46) and also on Sunday, or the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). When I was growing up

the traditional times for the assemblies of most churches in Fort Smith were Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening. Over the years the time of day changed, but not the days of the week. Most congregations try to work out a time that is best suited to their own circumstances. When I first moved to Fayetteville the South Hill congregation was meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday evenings. Most churches by then were meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evenings. The reason South Hill continued to meet at 6:30 was that fact that there were two men who had to work most Sundays, but their schedules allowed them to make it to church if we met at 6:30 p.m. Some years later the work schedules changed and we changed our Sunday evening services to 6:00 p.m. Some circumstances have changed again in recent years and now we have Sunday evening services at 1:30 p.m. Assembling with the church is a matter of faith and is ordained by God, but the time of day and how many days a week we assemble is a matter of judgment. If you had a congregation full of men who traveled for work every week on Monday through Wednesday, good judg-

conformed to the world's standards rather than being transformed by God's standard, the word of truth. Let's quote just two passages on this subject of the role of women in church assemblies from God's word:

"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." 1Cor. 15:34-35

"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." 1Tim.2:11-12

I am fully aware that most of the learned men of our modern generation consider this to be foolishness. There is political pressure and also social pressure that demands that we conform to modern standards. Anyone who opposes these forces is considered old fashioned, a mossback, and out of step with the times. I pray that a wise observer can see the difference in what God's word says and what the men of modern fashion are saying. Do not be surprised if you are re-

buked and scolded for holding to this ancient tradition regarding a woman's role in the assemblies of the church. This is a tradition that is ordained by God in his word. If you find yourself ridiculed for holding to this ancient truth take heart from this passage: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are

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called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1Cor. 1:26-29).

In your effort to keep in step with the times, to be hip and with it, beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit.

...L Scott Gage
Fayetteville, Arkansas

and lesbian clergy and same-sex couples. The Conservative-led government recently introduced a bill that would vest most churches and other religious groups with the legal right to marry same-sex couples. Under the measure, the Church of England would be barred from conducting such ceremonies for now, a concession to conservatives. But a growing number of voices inside and outside the church are pushing for change.

To update this tug of war I quote from an article that appeared in *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly* (30 January 2015):

The historic ordination of the first female bishop in the Church of England has already made an impact on ecumenical relations, the Catholic archbishop responsible for dialogue and unity said this week.

On Monday Revd Libby Lane was ordained and consecrated as Bishop of Stockport following the

passing of legislation allowing women bishops by the Church of England's General Synod in July last year.

But Archbishop Bernard Longley, who is co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (Arcic) and leads the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales dialogue and unity department, said: "Sadly ... Bishop Lane's consecration at York Minster serves to highlight one of the major challenges that Anglicans and Catholics in England face on the path towards full visible unity." He added: "The ordination of women to the episcopate presents a further obstacle to achieving that unity among us for which Our Lord prayed."

These two quotations serve to highlight the battle which is raging around the world and it points out how the line has been blurred between being in the world and being of the world. It indicates just how easy it is to be

ment might dictate that you schedule your mid-week assembly on Thursday evening instead of Wednesday evening.

We are living in a period of time in which many traditions are being called in question. We must be careful to distinguish between God ordained traditions and the traditions that are just in the realm of judgment. One is a matter of faith and the other is just a matter of preference or

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taste. I might prefer a doctrine that says that Jesus is equal to Buddha, Mohammed and other traditional religious beliefs but it would only be a preference and would not have the weight of God ordained faith. In fact, it would be a false doctrine because it contradicts a matter of faith that is clearly stated in the word of God: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). God ordained his Son for our salvation and that is a matter of Bibli-

cal faith. The philosophies of men that contradict that faith are false doctrines. We must be careful that we are not cheated according to the traditions of men. In making this claim I base it on what I believe the word of God teaches. This does not mean that I hate anyone because they believe something different, and I certainly do not want to persecute or harm them in any way. I will do my best to persuade them that the word of God is true, but I will not resort to violence to impose my beliefs on others.

Two years ago an article appeared in our local newspaper, the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (Saturday, January 5, 2013, p. 5B). The title of the article was "Tradition, modernization split Church of England". This article highlights a couple of areas where church traditions and modern culture are at war. We know that the Bible teaches that we should be "in" the world but not "of" the world. Jesus prayed this prayer for his disciples, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that

You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:14-18). There is a line that marks the distinction between being in the world and being of the world and that line is constantly blurred by men who desire to be wise in the eyes of the world. As disciples we are to be holy unto God and to be separate from the world. In another passage Paul instructs us that we should not be conformed but that we should be transformed: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

How can we achieve this distinction of being in the world but not of the world, of being transformed instead of conformed? Jesus prayed to God the Father that His disciples should be kept from the evil one. In that prayer Jesus identifies the word of truth

as being the key to our sanctification. Paul states that the means by which we are transformed is through the renewing of our minds. At least one way that we can pursue this condition of being in the world but not of the world is to fill our hearts and minds with God’s word of truth. Do we spend time in God’s word? If we fill our minds with most of the fare that comes over our television sets in modern

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sitcoms, we will have a hard time being transformed. We may find ourselves gradually conformed to the thinking of the world. We need the sword of the Spirit to win this fight (Eph. 6:17). Can we name of the books of the Bible in order? There are 66 of them. Do we know the names of the Apostles? Can we recite a few verses of scripture that teach us about God’s plan of salvation? On the other hand, can we name all the characters in our favorite television shows and movies? There are probably far more than 66 of them. Can we recite the starting

line ups for our favorite baseball, football and basketball teams? The point we are making is simply this. We must spend some time in God’s word if we ever hope to be transformed, to be in the world but not of the world.

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In recent history one of the great cultural battles has been over women’s rights. While the Bible has some things to say about the role of women in the church assemblies, it does not restrict her from any good work that she might do outside the assembly. It is not surprising that the article cited above about the Church of England describes a battle that is being waged all over the world regarding a woman’s role in the church assemblies and leadership. The article begins:

The surprising defeat in November of a measure allowing the ordination of women as bishops has plunged the Church of England into a crisis with

one issue at its core: Should religion adapt to fit an increasingly secular society, or be the enforcer of tradition in fast-changing times?

Debate over that question is upending Britain’s official church, the symbolic heart of a global Anglican communion that includes the Episcopal Church in the United States. The narrow loss of the measure has so infuriated liberal church leaders that many insist the only way forward now is to simply show conservatives the door.

The results is what both sides are calling a tug of war for the Church of England’s soul, one offering a snapshot into the last frontier of the Western world’s culture wars: the push to bring modern norms inside faith-based institutions...

In some quarters, the call for female bishops has become inexorably linked to another controversial effort, one aimed at deepening acceptance of gay