

BALANCE.

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When, as a new Christian, I heard a Pastor praying that a person might be given wisdom and balance, I had no real understanding he might have meant by "balance". At that time I thought he was talking only in terms of human behaviour. I had some understanding about physical balance, balanced states of physical equilibrium, about gymnasts needing good balance, of what happens when credits and debits get out of balance, of balance in equations, and even of idioms such as "plans hanging in the balance", but any thought about balance referring to doctrine escaped me completely. It was a long time before any application of balance to doctrine came to me. This was because I had not been taught about it.

To explain what I mean by "balance", I will jump ahead to a popular church position held today, and that is to the idea that common experience is more important than doctrine. This may be within a singular church, or between different groups. This position has been strengthened in the popular search for church unity, and also in the inter-faith movement, where the idea is presented that people who have similar experiences of "God" are one in their worship, regardless of doctrinal position. In short, experience and unity are understood to be more important than doctrine. For instance, Protestants and Roman Catholics who experience similar charismatic "second blessings" are supposed to have some mystical unity, (which incidentally, is promoted as being a tool for ecumenism with Rome). Likewise, the New Age, together with most evangelicals, claim a mystical experience of "new birth" whereby entrance is made by means of a heightened state or stage of consciousness, encouraged by some emotional message.

Involved in this is a dimension of "religious fear" which can take many forms. To the evangelicals, the "new birth" card is often played outside of the need for repentance and forgiveness for having transgressed of God's Law. A false fear is generated by thoughts such as that one might be "left behind". For some there is fear of nuclear devastation, whilst for others there is fear of environmental destruction. The latter has progressed to the stage where environmentalists are seeking forgiveness from "mother earth" for man's abuse of the world's resources. Some even go as far as to say, "*Christ's atonement has reference to the environment*". There is more fear of "mother nature" than there is of God, by those who claim that nature and God are one. They say, "*We believe that if nature forgives, so will God*". So nature and the environment together has become "**another God**", and sermons on the environment are not unknown amongst evangelical groups. To understand this we should look through all the many references in the Bible to "**other gods**". People with their particular "**other god**" still tend to band together, a banding which is normal human behaviour amongst people with common experience. Hosea 3:1 describes such as those, "*who look to **other gods**, and love flagons of wine*". (It is interesting how some things are associated together).

We can read a verse, which is taken only in environmental terms by some people.

*Rev. 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest **destroy them which destroy the earth.***

There is a moral sense to this verse. Did not God curse the earth for man's disobedience-(Gen. 3:17)? Man is destroying the earth because of disobedience to the one true God, and God is allowing it, but will remove the destroyers in His time. Environmental programs cannot solve the progress of the destruction of the earth. It is in the "*restitution of all things*" where the solution is to be found. As Peter says:

*Acts 3:19-21 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive **until the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

Step one is repentance, and not just in the environmental area. The lack of understanding of what repentance really is, and what the consequences are, is one of the areas where we find a lack of balance in the churches. In 1 John 3:4 we can read a definition of what sin is, "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*". Therefore repentance must involve a commitment to not "*continue in sin that Grace may abound*"-(Rom. 6:1). It is hard to find any church willing to teach this rightly because they do not separate the different sections of the Law. They do not separate Talmudic Jewish law, the Law of God or law as a principle, when they handle the Word of God. They do not make the Biblical separation of the Jews ("from below") from Israelites ("from above"), as having different origins, and like things.

So what do they replace such issues with? Instead we find "feel good", user-friendly programs like Alpha, which are an attempt to "*make Christianity accessible to men and woman of today's culture*", (that is, to the permissive culture). In order to make people feel comfortable, the doctrine of what sin actually is, is played down almost totally. It has been said that, "*vows are too demanding for people today*". But without vows and commitment, there can be no balance. The churches present the Love of God but do not balance

this by showing the true character of God as being Lawgiver and Righteous Judge, and that, *"The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* –(Heb. 10:30-31).

From here we can view the popular church scene today, and it does not take long to see the above lack of balance. A visit to most church denominations such as the Baptists, Assemblies of God, many Presbyterians, Churches of Christ, and so on, will demonstrate a remarkable similarity in their form and order of "worship", so much so that often one would not know which denomination one was attending. The form of service is absolutely predictable, as is the milk diet of *"everyone love everyone"* (instead of "love each other"), which is presented. What is offered is emotional experience as being the source of commonality. The addition of knowledge to virtue –(2 Peter 1:5)- is not encouraged because few can agree together, so agreement on emotion takes the place of knowledge, and the end of that idea is destruction. One does not have to probe very far to find many frustrated churchgoers who cannot find the answers they are looking for. They may hear about obedience, but what are they to obey in practical terms? Not being told, or being told wrongly, they know something is missing. Hosea goes on to tell us one place wherein lies a lack of balance:

*Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing **thou hast forgotten the law of thy God**, I will also forget thy children.*

Jesus confirms emphatically that true joy (emotion) is connected with obedience when He pointed out, *"If ye love Me, keep My commandments"*-(John 15:10). Jesus connected this with the emotion of joy. As long as emotion (or deception) is placed before doctrine, especially in regard to joy as it connects to the "law of the God", there will be lack of balance. Wrongly sourced emotion does not provide any right to the Tree of Life; there is a "doing" part!

*Rev. 22:14 Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

Churches do not teach the difference between "sin", "iniquity" or "uncleanness". Few longstanding church members can understand the difference in meaning between "salvation" and "redemption", and to whom only the latter can apply. Lack of making such distinctions makes for imbalance. Churches usually fail to differentiate between justification that is outside of Law-keeping, and sanctification that involves the Law of God. The Law certainly is "legalism" when it comes justification, but it is not when it comes to sanctification. Evangelicals emphasise the emotion of justification continually, but do not go on to, *"thy law is my delight"*-(Psalm 119:174). It is as if the entrance is supposed to be arriving, instead of being the start along a pathway. In effect, it is as if each member should act like a person who has gone through the marriage ceremony, but who is never required to have to come to live like a married person. This is because they are told it is bondage to submit to the Husband who says in Jeremiah 3:14, *"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you"*.

In order to support this lack of balance, churches have developed a set of teachings many of which are invalid. For instance, the "new birth", which was mentioned above, is used as a mechanism which is supposed to make a person become one of God's people. Anyone who studies the tenses and words in the "born again" passage will soon enough find out that this confirms Matthew 1:21 where we read, *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"*, that is that Jesus came to save those who were already His people before this. There is a raft of teachings which are wrong in application, thus providing a heavy imbalance.

Then there is the imbalance caused by emphasis on one particular doctrine. It is not teaching emphasis on one particular teaching that is wrong on its own, since there are many parts to the one body. Where this can be wrong is failure to recognise the principle of Colossians 1:18, *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence"*. What use is there in holding to group loyalty, to a prophetic position, to a "National Message", to "Identity", or to teachings such as a "Rapture" doctrine, or to some creed, without giving Jesus pre-eminence, or first place in one's personal life? This lack of balance can be found not only in those in popular churches, but also in those who despise what they call "religious" churches, but who become unbalanced in a different direction themselves.

It is obedience that provides the balance. What Jesus says in Matthew 7:24-25 is not really heard in the heart, as it is seldom practised, *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock"*. What does the "therefore" refer to? The verse above follows on from, *"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"*. "Iniquity" has an application to breaking what the New Testament refers to as, *"the commandments of God"*. There is only one way to know balance and

doctrine, this is as Jesus says, "*If any man **will do his will**, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*".

Unbalanced people who believe that having similar experiences of "God" are all one together in their worship regardless of doctrinal position, are deceived, as we are told, "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*"-(James 1:22).