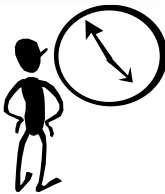


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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I Have a Closed Mind

By Fanning Yater Tant
Vanguard Magazine, January 25, 1979

This editorial is being written on my birthday (December 30). I have now attained my three score and ten, and have reached a point in life where I am neither ashamed nor afraid to say some things which would have been ranked heresy at a younger age. And one thing I have no hesitancy in affirming is that "I have a closed mind." I am not a "truth-seeker" in certain great and tremendously important areas. Will I discuss such questions with one who differs from me? Of course, I will -- but as a teacher of my disputant, not as a "seeker after truth." *I have the truth on these matters; I enjoy it.*

I am no longer in any state of mind that allows for doubt or uncertainty. I think this is the trait that ought to characterize every mature Christian. As the years slip by, there should be more and more areas in which our convictions become so firmly rooted that we can join with Paul in saying, "We know," rather than "We believe" on such things, but have reached -- certainty. Luke wrote to Theophilus in order that his friend might have "certainty" concerning the things in which he had been instructed. It is amazing the difference this "certainty" can make in the life of an individual.

The Existence of God

Our generation has a plethora of people who do not believe in God. They are of two kinds—the theoretical, philosophical, quasi-scientific atheist who identifies with the fool of Psalm 14:1 and says, "*In his heart, there is no God,*" and the professing believer whose practical and emotional life each day proclaims his disbelief in the words he mouths.

I do not have an "open mind" as to the existence of God. The truth of His being and the reality of His existence

has been so overwhelmingly established in my heart that I could doubt my own existence as easily as I could question the existence of God. The subject is not debatable. In my university and seminary days, I spent many long hours carefully studying every argument I could find against His existence, arguments from the ancients as well as from current scholars. In essence, there has been no new argument advanced in a thousand years, regardless of the field in which one explores. If someone advances what he considers new evidence to support a non-theistic concept, I believe with a little research I could show him where essentially that very argument was made and answered in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era.

The Divinity of Christ

My mind is equally “closed” as to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Will I study the subject with an unbelieving Jew? Of course, I will – but as a teacher, not as a truth-seeker. And incidentally, I have yet to meet a truly sincere unbeliever who has carefully read and studied one good book on Christian Evidence! The nature of Christ was a subject of hot debate in the very earliest days of Christianity. Even among those who professed to be followers of Christ, there were some (the Cerinthians or Ebionites) who denied the divinity of Christ, contending that he was wholly human, but was “infused” with the Divine essence in the form of a dove that came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him on the cross. (They declare that the agonizing cry from the cross, “*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*” was wrung from Jesus when he realized that Divinity had left Him, and He was to die as a mere human being.)

More than a century ago H. P. Liddon, Canon of St. Paul’s and Professor of Exegesis at the University of Oxford, delivered a series of lectures on “The Divinity of Christ (Bampton Lectures, 1566) which has been generally acknowledged as an absolutely impregnable defense of the central truth of Christ’s divinity. He demonstrated beyond all question the falsity of those opposers of the first centuries and the monotonous way in which these old discarded and shop-worn arguments keep cropping up from time to time in a new dress and current form. But they are as false now as when they came from the pens of such pagan philosophers as Celsus, Porphyry, and Hierocles in the early dawn of the faith. I read the writings of such men with the same detached interest which I have in reading Greek mythology -- interesting but obviously absurd.

Immortality

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*For we know if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.*” (II Corinthians 5:1). Paul had a “closed mind” as to immortality; it was not a speculative or debatable subject with him. Nor with me. I think I am familiar with the objections to such an idea; whether from the realm of pure science or from philosophical assumptions. But the evidence for such is so strong as to amount to a demon-

stration, indeed, that is exactly what happened in the resurrection of Christ. And on purely philosophical grounds it is far less difficult to accept the idea of a life beyond the grave than to accept the origin of life ex nihilo (out of nothing) in the first place! Will I discuss the idea of immortality with an unbeliever? Of course. But I am not a “truth-seeker,” on this subject; I would view myself as a “truth-believer.” I am happy and relaxed in the certainty of immortality, rather than groping and wondering and hanging in suspense. I share completely the conviction of Washington Gladden, “That somewhere, beyond the stars, Is a Love that is better than fate; When the night unlocks her bars I shall see Him, and I will wait.”

Apostasy

There is one other area, a sad one this, in which my mind is very nearly “closed” – not completely so, perhaps, but near enough to it to bring unceasing sorrow of heart. That is the conviction that the great majority of what some have called the “mainline Churches of Christ” will continue right on their present course into full-fledged denominationalism. I do not think any mature student of church history can view the present scene with any understanding at all and come to any other conclusion. I am quite aware of the valiant efforts of such men as Thomas B. Warren, Guy N. Woods, Ira Y Rice, and some others to stem the tide. I think they are doomed to failure. The whole lesson of religious history over thousands of years demonstrates that once an apostasy gets well underway, it **never** turns back.

Nearly a century ago David Lipscomb wrote on this subject in the Gospel Advocate pointing out the melancholy fact that a “pattern of apostasy” is seen over and over again through all of God’s dealing with His people. There would be alternating periods of faithfulness and apostasy, and every time an apostasy developed, it would sweep the great majority of God’s people into its destructive error. Usually, only a remnant (and sometimes not even that) would emerge holding “to the old paths.” This remnant would gradually grow and become strong again, and when a few generations had passed, and the children of God were once again a great and powerful people -- the same dismal story would be repeated. Lipscomb’s plea was that every reader of the Gospel Advocate determines in his heart to “be a part of the remnant,” I would add to Lipscomb’s plea that every reader of Vanguard not only determine to be “a part of the remnant,” but that you exert every effort within your power (your prayers, your purse, and your personal influence with others) to persuade every Christian you can reach to become like you, “a part of the remnant.”

And so my seventieth birthday draws to a close; the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. On this cold but beautiful winter’s day, I look back across these seventy years only briefly; my real interest is in the years that lie ahead: I face the future, not the past. I ran across a few lines from Robert Frost the other day that fit my mood perfectly, “The woods are lovely, and dark and deep; But I have many miles to go, And promises

to keep, Before I sleep.” And I travel those miles, and keep those promises with a “closed mind” --- on some subjects!

And now I leave the typewriter to go to a “surprise birthday party” some of the folks from the church have prepared for me!

(NOTE) The warnings, written by my father over 40 years ago, have certainly come to pass, as we see so many “churches of Christ” today that are using instrumental music in worship, ordaining women as elders, and having women preaching. The old saying that “History repeats itself” has certainly proven to be true. The pattern is seen over and over again in the Old Testament, and continues to this day. We must give heed to the words of Jeremiah 6:16: *“Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”* -- Jefferson David Tant

This Is One of Them

By Terry Wane Benton

“As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them!” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.” But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!” Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he began to weep” (Mark 14:66-72).

He entered an environment that was hostile to followers of Jesus. It was by a fire not far from where the Jewish leaders were trying Jesus in their kangaroo court. A servant girl openly said of Peter, “This is one of them!” Imagine how Peter felt, knowing that he could now be exposed to personal abuse and embarrassment. A little while earlier he would have fought carnally to protect Jesus, but now, Jesus is in the official custody of a corrupt court trying to find a reason to justify a desired death sentence for Jesus, whom they have predetermined to be a troublemaker to their corruption. Peter cannot swing a sword here. His go-to response is a denial of knowing Jesus, denial of any association with this hated man.

What if the company you work for becomes “woke” and determines that Christians are hateful troublemakers to their woke agenda of pushing all kinds of moral perversity and daring Christians to say anything or even identify their association with Jesus?

What if someone said of you, "This is one of them", would you feel like Peter on this occasion or more like the better version of Peter in Acts 4-5? He was embarrassed with himself earlier but now feels honored to be recognized as associated with Jesus. When they say regarding you, "This is one of them!", you must be ready to say, "I am very honored to be recognized as a servant and disciple of Jesus, and I wish all knew Him!"

Your Speech Shows It

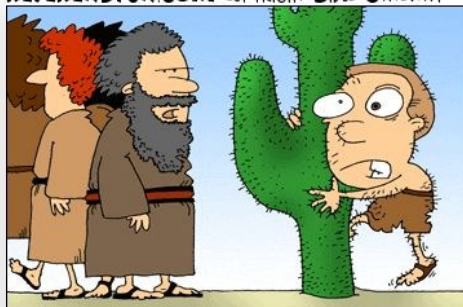
By Terry Wane Benton

"As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep" (Mark 14:66-72).

To those venomous unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, gathered that early morning around the fire, it seemed to be a strong inference that Peter was associated with Jesus. His speech was Galilean in style and enunciation, and Jesus was Galilean. Who among Galileans would be up and present here at this hour? Thus, an inference is that "this is one of them" (troublers) and "your speech shows it!"

I wonder if being a disciple of Jesus was a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict us? Would our speech show it? Is our speech so unlike the world? Holy? Non-vulgar? Never any profanity or coarse jesting? Never any taking of the Lord's name in vain? Do you talk about moral issues and righteousness a lot? Does your speech avoid gossip, and contain a lot of thanksgiving? Does your speech show faith, hope, and love? Do you speak of Bible knowledge and love for Jesus? Does your speech show that you are a real disciple of Jesus? Or, does your speech hide the light? Does it fit with the world? Or does it fit with Jesus? What does your speech make others conclude about you? More importantly, what does God know about you? Serious reflection now can do us eternal good!

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(See Luke 19:1-10)

04-02-2003

HONESTLY ZACCHAEUS ... YOU KNOW
BETTER THAN TO ATTEND SPEECHES IN THE
DESERT