

LIBRARY

by Bob Enyart

A collection of writings and studies by Bob Enyart addressing various topics in biblical theology, apologetics, and Christian worldview.

4 Chapters

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God and the Death Penalty

God and the Death Penalty

Jeffrey Dahmer raped, killed and ate parts of at least thirteen men. As punishment, the government was planning to feed, clothe, educate, medicate, entertain, and legally represent him for the rest of his life. Families of his victims would pay taxes, in part, to keep Dahmer comfortable, warm in winter and cool in summer. That type of punishment should scare the dickens out of other mass murderers. Interrupting the governments plans for Dahmer however, an inmate beat the cannibal to death in prison.

Some oppose the death penalty on practical grounds, arguing that it is not a deterrent. However, in the late sixties, when there were an average of 6,000 murders a year, the United States Supreme Court struck down the death penalty as unconstitutional in the way it was administered. Six years later, when it was re-instituted in the early seventies the number of average annual murders had jumped to nearly 16,000 victims per year. In countries like Saudi Arabia, which enforce a swift and certain death penalty, violent crime is rare. Singapore and Los Angeles have equivalent populations, yet in one year Singapore had 58 murders (most followed by swift execution) while Los Angeles had 1,063. Criminal sub-cultures like the Mafia show that the death penalty is a powerful deterrent even among career criminals, since few will ever double-cross their superiors, fearing the repercussions.

Others oppose the death penalty on moral grounds. The "morality" arguments of atheists are not persuasive because if there is no God, then there is no absolute morality, only arbitrary and subjective opinion. The anti-death-penalty morality arguments of some Christians, on the other hand, are persuasive to many. They base their arguments on statements made by Jesus Christ and therefore many listen attentively.

These "moral" opponents of the death penalty often intimidate good people into shying away from execution. Many Christians claim society should forgive criminals and instruct them to "go and sin no more." Ideas have consequences and the popularity of this idea parallels a huge sustained crime epidemic.

There is a right way to deter criminals and to end the crime epidemic. That deterrence, however, does not lie in telling Dahmer to "go and eat no more."

Ezekiel 13:19

Death Penalty Opposition Biblical arguments against execution consist primarily of six arguments:

First, Jesus said:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you... whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Matthew 5:38-39

Second, Jesus forgave the woman "caught in adultery, in the very act." To those arguing that she should be put to death, Jesus said:

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." John 8:7

Third, Jesus taught believers to forgive:

"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:15

Fourth, the New Testament teaches Christians not to judge:

"Judge not, that you be not judged." Matthew 7:1

Fifth, Paul taught believers to:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse... Repay no one evil for evil... do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I Will repay," says the Lord." Romans 12:14, Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19

Sixth, the Ten Commandments teach "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

Biblical History of Execution In the first crime in the Bible, Cain murdered his brother Abel. Cain intuitively believed that everyone would think themselves justified in executing a murderer.

"It will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." Genesis 4:14

So God forbade capital punishment:

"Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Genesis 4:15

Without the death penalty, lawlessness reigned on earth:

So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them..." Genesis 6:12-13

Within ten verses of the account of Noah's departure from the ark, God instituted the death penalty. Interestingly, the first three commands given to man after the flood parallel the very first three commands given to man before the flood.

Before the Flood

After the Flood

Genesis 1:28

Genesis 9:1-2

Genesis 1:29

Genesis 9:3-4

Genesis 4:15

Genesis 9:6

These were the only three commands given to mankind before the flood, and the only three commands given to mankind after the flood and before Israel's covenant of circumcision.

Thou Shalt Not Kill The rendering of the sixth commandment in the King James was very unfortunate. "Thou shalt not kill" in recent versions (like the NKJV, NIV, RSV, ASB, NASB, etc.) is accurately translated "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). In Hebrew, as in English, the words for "murder" and "kill" can be used interchangeably, but their different meanings are easily understood from the context. The Hebrew word for murder (*ratsach*, which appears in Exodus 20:13) is translated by the King James as murder/murderer 17 times, slayer/slain/slayeth 21 times, kill/killing 6 times, manslayer 2 times, and death once. The Hebrew word for kill (which appears in Exodus 13:15 -*harag*) is translated by the King James as slay/slayer/slain 132 times, as kill 27 times, murder/murderer 3 times, destroyed once, out of hand once, and made/put/surely 3 times. The Ten Commandments forbid murder, not killing. The chapter following the giving of the Ten Commandments has a number of commands from God to execute criminals, including:

"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." Exodus 21:12

"He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." Exodus 21:15

"He who kidnaps a man... shall surely be put to death." Exodus 21:16

"He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." Exodus 21:17

"[If an unborn baby is killed] you shall give life for life." Exodus 21:23

It is not plausible to suppose that God contradicted Himself just a few sentences after delivering the Ten Commandments to Moses. Clearly God prohibited murder but insisted upon execution of murderers and others. Some Christians, however, are so influenced by the world's philosophy that they are ashamed of the Lord's own words in Exodus 21:1-36. Others talk as though God was a bad God in the Old Testament but that now in the New, He is a much nicer God, as though He has gone through a rite of passage.

God forbid murder, and commanded the lawful execution of murderers.

Execution Not Optional As punishment for murder, the death penalty was applicable to each and every murderer:

"Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death.... You shall have the same law for the [foreigner] and for one from your own country; for I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 24:17-22

The death penalty was not a maximum penalty, nor was it optional. As the Lord said:

'Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death... So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.' Numbers 35:31-33

Did God change this law in the New Testament? Consider that Jesus supports the death penalty in Matthew and Mark, and so does John in Revelation, and Paul in Acts and Romans, as does the

book of Hebrews.

Jesus Supports Capital Punishment

Jesus affirmed the Mosaic Law even to the keeping of the "least of these commandments" (Matthew 5:17-19). He blasted the Pharisees for giving their own ideas precedence over God's commands:

"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying... 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say..." Matthew 15:3-4

"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men..." [Jesus] said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother; and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say..." Mark 7:8-11

Jesus reaffirmed the capital statutes of God's law. Not only the murderer (Revelation 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 13:4), but even the one who curses a parent must be put to death (Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9) just as God commanded. God's commands to execute the one who strikes or curses a parent are the death penalty statutes that liberal Christians are the most embarrassed over. However, Christ was not at all embarrassed over His Father's commands. Jesus repeated these commands without caveat or reservation.

Laying aside the commands of God has its consequences. In America, murder has become the number one cause of death among young black males, and suicide is the number three cause of death among all teenagers. There is a death penalty when children disrespect their parents. If Jesus' telling of God's command is ignored, countless children will die terrible deaths at the hands of other children and by their own hands. On the other hand, if God's command were enforced, rather than ridiculed, the shedding of innocent blood would virtually disappear in our land. God's wisdom would save thousands of children. man's wisdom destroys them.

While Jesus was on the cross the Romans inflicted the death penalty on the two criminals next to Him. Christ said nothing in their defense, or against their crucifixions. One of those two mocked Christ. In response, the other criminal (whom Jesus would immediately declare righteous, Luke 23:43) said of their punishments, "we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). What did this forgiven criminal, this newly justified man, say about the death penalty? Bottom line: the criminals were getting their just punishment. The dying criminal knew the truth, as he said, "we indeed" are "justly" punished.

Revelation Supports Capital Punishment The angels in heaven also recognize the principle of just punishment.

And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord... because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." Revelation 16:5-6

God will equip the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-19 to execute those trying to harm them.

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. Revelation 11:5

The Apostle John also taught that you reap what you sow:

...he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Revelation 13:10

Paul Supports Capital Punishment The Apostle Paul did not object to the death penalty. He knew his rights as a Roman citizen and defended them. Yet while on trial, he volunteered the following endorsement of capital punishment to Porcius Festus, Governor in Caesarea:

"For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." Acts 25:11

Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!" Acts 25:12

Vengeance is inherently good. God said, "Vengeance is Mine." Individuals, however, are not to avenge themselves, but are to allow God to avenge in His way:

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19 (see also Leviticus 19:18)

While Paul instructs people not to seek their own revenge, but to "give place to wrath." Paul then explains that the proper channel for wrath is the "governing authorities." The government is the "place" for wrath and vengeance:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities... For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Romans 13:1, Romans 13:3

Godly rulers are a terror to evil doers. Note that God's two witnesses in Revelation "tormented those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 11:10).

God through Paul specifically commands earthly governments to execute criminals with the sword:

For [the governing authority] is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Romans 13:4

A sword is not used for scourging but for killing.

Paul instructs believers to "not avenge" themselves, "but rather give place to wrath." Governments are the place for wrath for they are "God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath." Individuals have one role, governments have another. Individuals do not avenge themselves, the government does. Believers forgive, governments execute. So, if the governing authorities are to obey God, they must not bear the sword in vain but execute wrath on the criminal, for they are God's minister to avenge and bring terror on him who practices evil. Thus God commanded execution in large part to meet out vengeance against capital criminals.

Hebrews Supports Capital Punishment The author of the book of Hebrews also supports the death penalty. The certainty of punishment under the Mosaic law proves the certainty of punishment for rejecting Jesus Christ:

Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies (present tense) without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot... Hebrews 10:28-29

Temporal punishment through the law teaches men of the certainty of God's eternal punishment. If the government neglects the death penalty, then the people will scoff at the second death (Revelation 2:11; Revelation 20:6, Revelation 20:12-14; Revelation 21:8).

Be afraid of the sword for yourselves; for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment. Job 19:29

The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance... So that men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth." Psalms 58:10-11

Further, showing mercy to the wicked does not produce repentance. As Isaiah wrote:

Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness... Isaiah 26:10

And as the proverb states:

A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again. Proverbs 19:19

While the Old and New Testaments strongly support the death penalty, some Christians think Jesus repealed capital punishment during an event that John described in his Gospel. The Woman Caught In Adultery Does the story of the woman caught in adultery, forgiven and released (John 8:3-11) negate the death penalty?

God Forgave Adulterers Before Gomer was an adulteress yet God forgave her (Hosea 3:1). Still, He demanded that His people obey His law (Hosea 4:6).

King David committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11:1-27). Yet God forgave him (Psalms 32:1-5).

It was a conscious decision on God's part to not execute David. As Nathan said to David: As Nathan said to David:

"The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However... by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme..." 2 Samuel 12:13

Still, God's law remained in effect (Psalms 1:2; Psalms 19:7; Psalms 78:1, Psalms 78:5-8; Psalms 89:30-32; Psalms 119:1-176).

God forgave the New Testament adulterer just as He forgave Old Testament adulterers, in neither instance revoking His law. God has all authority to forgive the criminal and disregard temporal punishment. Contrariwise, Men must obey God and cannot ignore punishment. The Pharisees Wanted to Trap Christ The Pharisees wanted to accuse Jesus of rebelling against the Roman

Empire:

This [the Pharisees] said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. John 8:6

Rome had revoked the Jews' authority to put a criminal to death (John 18:31). A straight-forward answer to the Pharisees would have brought Jesus into premature conflict with Rome before His "hour had come." Jesus solved this problem stating, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7). Christ often frustrated the Pharisees giving clever answers that thwarted their wicked intentions (Matthew 22:15-22; Matthew 21:21-27; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26).

Jesus Did Not Repeal The Law

Without the law, lawlessness cannot exist. Yet as Christ said, "because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). Christ will throw "those who practice lawlessness... into the furnace of fire" (Matthew 13:41-42).

Jesus was born under the Old Testament law:

...God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. Galatians 4:4

The Mosaic law was still in effect in the New Testament according to Jesus:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets... Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great..." Matthew 5:17-19

And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them." Matthew 8:4

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do..." Matthew 23:2-3

[Jesus said,] "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? ... Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?" John 7:19-23

Some argue that all this changed after the resurrection. Yet after His resurrection, Jesus said:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20

And years later, "James and all the elders" said to Paul:

"You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Acts 21:20

Paul Used The Law

Paul teaches that the unrepentant world is still under the law, and that the law is designed to show guilt and to bring people to Christ:

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless... and for sinners... for murderers... for sodomites, for kidnappers, for perjurers... 1 Timothy 1:8-10

All the world is under the law:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God... Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. Romans 3:19, Romans 3:31

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:24-25

Christians who are untutored in the evangelistic role of the law oppose the foundation of the criminal code upon God's law.

Turn the Other Cheek

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Matthew 5:38-39

Pacifists have an unworkable interpretation of this passage. Imagine applying the pacifist view to a woman being raped? Does a father tell his daughter to not resist the rapist? Pacifist father to daughter being raped: "Don't resist the evil man, honey. Remember, Jesus said, 'Love your enemy.' If he wants you for one hour, stay with him two."

Rather, this teaching is similar to Paul's teaching, "Do not avenge yourselves," knowing that the government is to bring wrath and vengeance against the perpetrator. The command to not avail oneself of "an-eye-for-an-eye" is not a strictly New Testament concept. Many falsely presume that this is a New Testament teaching which opposes Old Testament teachings. However, the command to avoid personal vengeance was just as applicable to Old Testament believers as to us. "Do not say, 'I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work' (Proverbs 24:29). Graciousness from the believer in his personal life is an enduring virtue and not a new concept.

Further, a slap "on your right cheek" would normally be a back-handed slap such as an insult. A punch to the face would usually land on the left cheek, as most men are right-handed Thus Jesus was not talking about a full-fledged violent attack, an attempted murder or a rape.

Jesus was not here repealing the Mosaic law, but was teaching patience, forgiveness, and self control for the individual.

It Is Personal, Not Governmental The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29) does not lay down rules for governments but principles for an upright heart.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit... You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder'... But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment... Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way... I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
Matthew 5:3-28

In this very sermon Jesus made the distinction between individuals and governments:

"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. Matthew 5:25-26

Jesus did not tell the judge or the officer to turn the other cheek or to void the law. God wants the governing authorities to uphold the law without mercy (Hebrews 10:28; Romans 13:3-4). The Other Laws Remain With the following words, did Jesus repeal God's law that He referred to:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you... whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:38-39).

If Christ here repealed "An eye for an eye," as some suppose, did He at the same time repeal the other Mosaic laws that He mentioned in the exact same manner? Few would even begin to argue that He did. Jesus used the words "You have heard... But I say unto you..." to show the personal application of the laws on murder and adultery. He said:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder...' But I say to you..."
Matthew 5:21-22

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery...' But I say to you..."
Matthew 5:27-28

The punishment side of God's criminal justice system in the Mosaic law is directed to governments who were commanded to execute the criminals, it was not directed to individuals. Thus, individuals who used these laws to justify their own lack of forgiveness were misapplying the law. Jesus here repealed neither the prohibitions against murder and adultery nor the command to love your neighbor. Rather, He was correcting misinterpretations. Thus, in the same way Christ was not repealing "an eye for an eye" but explaining the right heart attitude of a believer. An Unusual Formulation

Old Testament quotes are typically introduced with the phrases "It is written," or "That which was spoken by the prophet," or "Moses said." The formulation used in the Sermon on the Mount indicates that Jesus was not directly addressing what was written, but rather, what was said about what was written. "You have heard that it was said."

Jesus was not criticizing God's law, but the misinterpretation of the law. This becomes obvious when it is realized that at one point, He corrects a command that does not even appear in the law:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love you neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies..."
Matthew 5:43-44

"Hate your enemy," does not appear in the Mosaic law. Jesus is not adjusting the law! He is correcting the misapplication of the law.

"You have made the Word of God of no effect by the traditions of men." Throughout this sermon Jesus is rebuking men for misinterpreting the law. And what do men do, they completely misinterpret this sermon.

Pacifists Only Go So Far

Many churches claim to literally "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39). After losing a lawsuit, however, not many churches would give double the judgment amount to their opponent (Matthew 5:40). Further, in the context of evil requests from evil people, Jesus said to "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away (Matthew 5:42). The members of a church which publicly claimed such a policy would end up poorer than church mice, and with less shelter. Wicked people would take everything they own. No Contradictions Here

If Jesus in Matthew 5:39 revoked part of the law, He would have severely contradicted His own statement made just 20 verses earlier:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets... Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great..." Matthew 5:17-19

Hence Jesus command to turn the other cheek is not a repeal of God's command to governments to apprehend and punish criminals but a command to individuals to love one another. But Who Can Forgive Whom?

Some argue that we are to forgive murderers. These same people insist that we incarcerate murderers and make thieves pay restitution. They say "forgive," but actually demand punishment. These objectors do not sincerely believe in forgiveness, they only want to decide on the penalty themselves while rejecting the penalty God has commanded.

You can forgive a debt owed to you, but not one owed to your neighbor. If your friend owes you \$100 dollars, you can cancel that debt if you like; however, if your friend owes me \$100, you have no such authority to cancel that debt. You can forgive a sin against you, but not a sin against your neighbor. Only God has authority to forgive a murderer and even He will not forgive the unrepentant murderer. A murderer has also assaulted the community, the law and God Himself. You can only forgive the wrong done against you, not that done against God or your community. When Jesus spoke of forgiveness, He did not confuse this simple truth. He taught clearly that you must forgive those who sinned against you, not those who sinned against your neighbor. For as He taught Israel to pray:

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" Matthew 6:12

Jesus forgave sins and the scribes reasoned in their hearts, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). Thus Jesus realized that men would want evidence for His claim to be able to forgive sins:

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise..." Luke 5:24; Mark 2:10-11

So parents of a murder victim should forgive to the extent that they have been hurt, which requires a tremendous amount of forgiveness to cover a tremendous amount of hurt. In America, sadly, their sorrow is agitated and increased by a government that mocks their grief through mercy to the murderer. How does a mother's broken heart heal when the wound is reopened each time her daughter's murderer is up for appeal, or sues the jail, or gets a photo in the newspaper. Do Not Judge? But does the New Testament teach believers to not judge? Jesus did say: "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1)? Jesus gave that teaching to hypocrites (Matthew 7:5) however. For He specifically commands His followers to judge:

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." John 7:24

"Judge not" is the Hypocrites Golden Rule. For "judge not" (Matthew 7:1-5) is simply a hypocrites application of do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12). "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2). Judge others as you would have them do unto you inverted is Judge not if you do not want to be judged. Therefore the hypocrite does not judge. As Jesus said, "Judge not... you hypocrite" (Matthew 7:1, Matthew 7:5 KJV; Ezekiel 16:52).

Jesus warned against judging falsely or with hypocrisy. For immediately after saying "judge not," Jesus taught just how to judge correctly:

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?... Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3, Matthew 7:5

Christ kept this theme throughout His ministry. "Hypocrites," Jesus said, "why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?" (Luke 12:56-57). Still, His own followers have mostly ignored the Lord's harsh rebuke: "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). "Judge Not" is the Hypocritical Oath and hypocrite haven. He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones. Such Christians, though, should relocate. Move into "the temple of the great God, which is being built with heavy stones" (Ezra 5:8).

Jesus paid a compliment to Simon [not Peter] when He said:

"You have rightly judged." Luke 7:43

Paul commands Christians to judge:

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judge by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 1 Corinthians 6:2-5

Paul elsewhere teaches:

...he who is spiritual judges all things... 1 Corinthians 2:15

Moses and the law of God condemns and judges sinners, as Christ said:

"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you 'Moses..." John 5:45

Paul teaches this also:

Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world [is] guilty before God. Romans 3:19

God has always approved of giving warning to those who commit crimes:

...those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. Proverbs 24:25

Then Why Is the Death Penalty

Not a Deterrent in America?

God promises that the death penalty is a reliable deterrent:

"So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the peoples shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously." Deuteronomy 17:12-13

Yet, the death penalty as executed through American courts is not much of a deterrent. Wise King Solomon 2,900 years ago explained why this is so:

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Ecclesiastes 8:11

When a murderer is executed, three appeals and 12 years after his crime, society has largely forgotten about him. His death has almost no deterrent effect on crime. Further, a life sentence cannot be executed speedily. The swift death penalty deters crime and aids evangelism. Thus Christians, in obedience to God, should support the death penalty.

(1) "But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer (ratsach as in Exodus 20:13); the murderer shall surely be put to death." Numbers 35:16

(2) Criminals, that is, robbers not from the Greek kleptes for a typical thief, but kakourgos (Luke 21:39) and lestes (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27), for a thief who steals openly (Matthew 21:13). This is the same word lestes used for the thieves who attacked the man helped by the good Samaritan. These robbers "stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30), that is, attempted murder.

Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, speaks of many robbers, one of whom was Judas, son of Ezekias, who, in the aftermath of Herod's death, assaulted the palace in Sepphoris in Galilee, stole its weapons, and was purposely vicious with everyone to build a reputation for himself. Robbers, were also murderers. Elsewhere, Josephus speaks of the Judean Procurator Felix, in AD 52 hiring robbers to kill the High Priest. After that accomplishment, the robbers returned again and again to murder others in the city and in the temple itself. Josephus claims that this is likely the reason God rejected Jerusalem and its impure temple and brought the Romans

upon the Jews (AD 70).

(3) The prohibition of personal vengeance has precedence in the Old Testament. "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge but you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). No one could successfully argue that the prohibition of vengeance in the Old Testament negated the death penalty then. And no one can successfully argue the same today.

Judge Rightly

Judge Rightly

(Is not some guy's name) Jesus commanded men to judge rightly and He told them to "judge not." Did the Lord contradict Himself? Or does the Bible say more about judging than the general public realizes?

Jesus repeatedly taught men to judge rightly, insisting they "judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24) and He praised a man who "rightly judged" (Luke 7:43). Paul shamed the Corinthian Christians because no one among them was willing to "judge the smallest matters" (1 Corinthians 6:2). As the Apostle wrote, "He who is spiritual judges all things" for "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). Where did we get the notion that men should never judge? Should child-molesters escape condemnation? Should rapists be free from criticism? Should society refrain from judging those arrested for murder? And why would anyone judge others for judging?

Borrowing characters from C. S. Lewis, imagine this dialogue between a junior demon named Wormwood and his wicked uncle Screwtape. This fiendish exchange could have occurred a century ago:

Wormwood: Believers have so many weapons at their disposal. It is difficult to neutralize them. It takes a huge effort just to slow the work of a single Christian.

Screwtape: Your one-on-one approach is inefficient. This is the age of Madison Avenue and mass marketing. If you can undermine their whole group at once, then you've accomplished something.

Wormwood: Unfortunately, I'm not highly productive. In the time it takes me to frustrate one believer, I could tempt a dozen heathens.

Screwtape: Don't lose heart, Wormwood. We are implementing a plan to impair the whole Church with a single ploy.

Wormwood: I don't see how that will be possible. I see Christians dedicated to warning others about hell. It's all I can do just to get one of them distracted for a short time.

Screwtape: We are going to use their Leader's own words.

Wormwood: No! Please don't. Don't even joke about using His words. I can't take it.

Screwtape: If you're ever going to grow up to be an effective demon, you're going to have to learn to use the Enemy's words against Him.

Wormwood: It just seems so dangerous. Which words are you going to use?

Screwtape: "Judge not!"

Wormwood: I don't understand why He would tell them not to judge. That's confusing. He commanded His followers to rebuke, admonish, and judge hundreds of times in His Book. And that's what they're out there

doing. And I might add, it's causing me grief.

Screwtape: When their Leader said those words, He was speaking to hypocrites. "Judge not... you hypocrite," as He said later in the same paragraph.

Wormwood: Yeah, but how are we going to use "Judge not" to neutralize the whole Church?

Screwtape: We're going to get them to ignore the fact that He was talking to hypocrites. He said that hypocrites should not judge, at least not until they stop doing the wrong deed themselves. But we're going to make them think none of them should judge, ever.

Wormwood: That's brilliant... if you can pull it off, that is. I mean, if we can get them to stop judging, then they won't rebuke the wicked. And they won't be able to admonish those who are sexually immoral.

Screwtape: It is even more brilliant than you realize. If we can seduce Christians into following the instructions for hypocrites, we will turn them into hypocrites. It's like government workers who follow foolish rules so precisely they are transformed from human beings into bureaucrats; drones who mindlessly dispense red tape regardless of the misfortune they cause. The slave who willingly obeys his master, begins to conform to the master. If believers willingly submit to an instruction for hypocrites, they will conform to hypocrisy. Eventually, with a little evil luck, we might stop them from confronting unbelievers altogether because, as you know Wormwood, to confront requires judging. And if they don't judge unbelievers, they are hypocrites, professing the Gospel but denying its power.

Wormwood: Ha, ha. I'm excited. When do we start?

Screwtape: Everything is underway already. Just do your part.

Wormwood: And that is...?

Screwtape: Make sure your targets read as little of the Book as possible. Don't get too worried if they stick to their favorite twenty cliché verses. But make sure they remain ignorant of most of the Word.

Wormwood: Master, you are brilliant.

Screwtape: You can call me Master if you want, but don't let the boss hear you. A lie paralyzed the Church. God warns against "hypocrisy" commanding men to "abhor what is evil" (Romans 12:9). Yet to abhor evil, someone must first judge evil. Thus, unable to judge, large numbers of Christians become hypocrites by obeying the Hypocrites Golden Rule. Since the hypocrite doesn't want to be judged, he judges not, as Jesus said, "Judge not... you hypocrite" (Matthew 7:1, Matthew 7:5 KJV; Ezekiel 16:52). For "judge not" (Matthew 7:1-5) is simply a hypocrites application of do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12). "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2). Judge others as you would have them do unto you inverted is Judge not if you do not want to be judged.

Christ kept repeated this theme in His ministry. “Hypocrites,” Jesus said, “why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?” (Luke 12:56-57). Still, His own followers have mostly ignored the Lord’s harsh rebuke: “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to [judge, i.e., to] remove the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5). “Judge Not” is the Hypocritical Oath.

“Judge Not” is hypocrite haven. He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones. Such Christians should relocate. They should move into “the temple of the great God... being built with heavy stones” (Ezra 5:8).

Christians live in the “building” for which Christ is “the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). And if that Stone falls on someone it “will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:18; cf. Exodus 32:20). Better to be judged by a Christian than crushed by Christ.

Hollywood, Hillary, and Homosexuals repeat the phrase like a mantra, judge not, judge not, judge not, until the masses are mesmerized. Jesus did not intend this.

Scripture deals with topics that range from simple to advanced truth. Milk is for babes in Christ; meat is for men of God. The question of whether or not Christians should judge is milk. It is preschool. The newest believer taught any of a hundred passages would immediately understand that he must judge. Judging others is fundamental. It is not a difficult concept and should in no way be controversial.

“Everyone who partakes only in milk is unskilled in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe” (Hebrews 5:13). The Church, today lactose intolerant, has trouble even with milk.

Extreme ignorance of the Bible has crippled the Church. And that paralysis slows every denomination by hurting local fellowships. What is the percentage of Christians who have succumbed to the “Judge not” deception? Is there even one percent of believers who have not fallen for that diversion? A quarter century of observation suggests to this author that probably 99 out of 100 believers misquote Jesus by repeating the “Judge not” mantra. Believers need to turn from this sin and ask God for wisdom to keep from being so easily deceived again.

Curse God and die! Is that good advice? Word for word, it is in the Bible. Job’s wife counsels her husband to “Curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Many verses, if ripped out of context, can ruin lives. Judas “went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:5) and as Jesus said “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37). The believer who lacks a hunger for God’s word is susceptible to the most absurd dangers. An October 1996 letter in the Rocky Mountain News expressed a typical judge-not sentiment. It advocated incarceration and not the execution of murderers, who are made “in the image of God” as it would be “wrong to put the image of God to death.” However, the writer never addressed the incongruity of putting the image of God in jail.

“Judge not” is the prayer of those who want to hide light under a basket. The cliché describes salt, which has lost its flavor, which no longer seasons or preserves. This seductive lie takes its victims out of ministry. As spectators on the sidelines, they only watch the spiritual battle. But they are in a comfort zone. Apathy is the craving. “Judge not” is the shirking of responsibility. To the Jews God said, “If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house” (Zechariah 3:7). Are members of the Body of Christ today less capable than Israel whom

God commanded to “judge righteously” (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; Leviticus 19:15)? Moses appointed the head of one out of every ten households as a judge (Exodus 18:25; Deuteronomy 1:15). Should Christians toss out the entire book of Judges? Should America eliminate all judges, or should just the Christian judges resign? Should believers ignore Paul’s admonition:

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?” (1 Corinthians 6:2-5).

Notice that Christians “will judge the world!” (1 Corinthians 6:2). For Paul said, “if the world will be judged by you...” God the Judge delegates judgment to His people. Even spirit beings will submit to believers: “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” Then and now, believers should “judge... according to My judgments” (Ezekiel 44:24) as God said. The Almighty commits judgment into the hands of His obedient servants (Revelation 20:4).

If God were the only judge, the sins of all men would be “clearly evident, preceding them to judgment” (1 Timothy 5:24 a). But because human beings will judge their fellow men on Judgment Day, therefore the sins “of some men follow later” (1 Timothy 5:24 b). The human judges will already have been aware of the sins of notorious men. But they will not learn of the sins of obscure men until they are revealed at Judgment Day. Also, these human judges will then become aware of the sins of leaders, celebrities, and even family members who had carefully concealed their wickedness.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, may have known of this. For he said “the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all” (Jude 1:14-15). The Lord with His saints will judge the world!

Jesus too said, “The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it...” (Matthew 12:41). And as Solomon wrote, “jealously is a husband’s fury; therefore, he will not spare [the adulterer who violated his wife] in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense nor will he be appeased” (Proverbs 6:34-35). God gives the responsibility for vengeance, condemnation, and judgment to His servants for “every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord” (Isaiah 54:17).

Today, many believers are effectively saying, “Lord, thanks but no thanks. I’ll pass on that judgment duty.” But Paul responds, Start judging now, because you will need the practice (1 Corinthians 6:2-5). Remember, “He who is spiritual judges all things. For... we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). And God will reward those who judge, and do the hard work: “Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.” (Proverbs 24:25). Would slain Columbine high school student Danny Rohrbough be forgiving or judgmental toward his unrepentant murderers? A People Magazine photo in Nov. 1999 shows his family and friends answering that question. They quote Revelation 6:10 in which martyred Christians in heaven ask God to “avenge our blood.” Judge-not Christians condemn the martyr’s call for vengeance, but never the murderer.

Hopefully the Church will see Judge Not headed for retirement replaced with Judge Rightly. For as Jesus said, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

Bob Enyart

Pastor, Denver Bible Church

PO Box 583

Arvada Colossians 80001

Listen to Bob Enyart Live which airs around the world via the Internet at KGOV.com and throughout Colorado on 50,000-watt Amos 670 KLTT. Also, you can get The Plot, Bob's best-selling unpublished manuscript about the Bible, at our KGOV store <<http://www.kgov.com/store/detail/literature/theplot.html>> or by calling 1-888-8Enyart (836-9278)!

Miracle Dynamics

Miracle Dynamics

Sections of the Bible differ in how commonly they record miracles. But there is one thing that common thread that runs throughout:

Miracles foster unbelief.

God's great miracles through Moses filled Egypt with undeniable evidence for the God of Israel (Exodus 9:27). Yet neither the Bible nor history records Egyptian repentance, only good riddance (Psalms 105:38; Exodus 12:35-36; Exodus 14:25). Further and more dramatic, consider the effect of those tremendous miracles on Israel. God followed the 10 plagues (Exodus 7:14-25; Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29; Exodus 11:1-10; Exodus 12:1-30) done on behalf of Israel with the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22) and the drowning of the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:26-28). Then daily for 40 years God appeared to the entire nation as a column of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22; Numbers 14:14; Nehemiah 9:12; Psalms 105:39). The Lord kept their clothes from wearing out (Deuteronomy 8:4), produced water out of the Rock (Exodus 17:2-6), fed the people with angel's food from heaven (Exodus 16:4-7) and brought meat on demand, literally filling their camp with quail (Numbers 11:31-32; Psalms 105:40).

Yet with all this, virtually the entire nation rejected God: For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ... Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? Hebrews 3:16-17 ...and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation... was gone. Numbers 32:13

Jesus did great miracles and crowds followed Him, but mostly out of selfishness. Of thousands who received His miracles, few worshipped Him. Of 10 lepers healed, only one even said thanks (Luke 17:17). Generally, Christ's miracles did not win over the crowds (Matthew 8:34; Matthew 11:20; Matthew 13:58; Mark 15:8-15; Luke 4:23-28; Luke 8:37; Luke 17:17; John 5:8-10; John 10:25-39; John 12:29-30). Even His own city rejected the miracle-working Messiah (Mark 6:4-6).

Confronted By Truth

Why would miracles lead to unbelief? Consider this. Ten-year-old Norman bickers with his 12-year-old brother Jack. "We'll probably have left over spaghetti for lunch." Jack says, "No we won't. There's none left, it's all gone. We finished it last night."

Norman: No, there's some leftovers.

Jack: You're wrong, it's all gone.

Norman: No, there's leftovers.

Jack: Nope. We finished it.

Norman: Did not.

Jack: Did too. I saw mom put the rest in the garbage disposal.

Norman: Do you like being wrong?

Jack: I'm not wrong. You're wrong.

Norman: All right, I'll just go in there and prove it.

Norman comes out of the house with a serving bowl half filled with leftover spaghetti. He shows it to his brother.

Question: Is Jack happy that he now knows the truth?

Answer: No. Actually, Jack is angry.

Why? Norman proved him wrong!

People do not like the truth shoved into their faces. Jack may now know that there is leftover spaghetti but he resents his brother for proving the point. These boys quarreled over a minor issue. What is the reaction when the issue becomes more significant?

Often the more serious the issue, the more a man resents those who prove him wrong. Evangelism sees the ultimate application of this principle. He who rejects God is not typically eager for correction. When someone's heart is hardened against God, a miracle shoves the truth in his face. His mind cannot deny God but his heart can resist. Thus countless witnesses of the miraculous have refused to acquiesce. In which three cities did Jesus perform most of His miracles and what was the corporate response of those cities to His works?

Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent... Chorazin... Bethsaida... Capernaum... Matthew 11:20-23

Jesus' miracles benefited the masses, yet entire cities rejected Him. His very reputation for doing miracles hurt His own ministry: So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. ... And they said, "... Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." "... So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him... that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Luke 4:16-29 In the city where Jesus did His first miracle the people's constant requests discouraged Him. For that reason He chided Cana for their constant need to "see signs and wonders" (John 4:48). In another region, Christ's extraordinary reputation and His visible authority over demons (Matthew 8:28-33) did little to produce repentance: The Lord did many miracles in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Yet even in Jerusalem the crowds were not won over. For good reasons God determined to provide signs and wonders for and through Israel. Yet even He tired of their demand for service. It's like bratty kids who want more and more, and no matter how much a parent does for them, they just demand more. It gets so that the parent is restrained from doing the good he would have wanted to do, because of the emotional weakness and immaturity of his children. The parent, for the child's own good, wants the child to love him, not for gifts but for himself.

Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign?..." Mark 8:11-12 Miracles did not effectively teach the crowds for their outward manifestation of faith did not persuade Jesus:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you [believe], but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. John 6:26 The Rich Kid The rich kid expects special treatment. The rules should not apply to him. But his wise earthly father, though he has wealth and power, does not comply. How much more will God, our heavenly Father, encourage His children to live by the rules, without special exceptions?

What happens if the rich kid has an imprudent father? His son wants special treatment and gets it. The rules are bent for him, over and over and over. He does not learn the lesson of his failures here on earth. He is shielded from the consequences of his actions. Obviously this hurts the son, but what of the onlookers? What do neighbors think of the powerful dad who pulls strings so his kid gets away with things other kids cannot get away with? What do schoolmates think of the rich kid's privilege? Does it warm their hearts? Are they drawn to respect dad and admire the son?

Breaking the rules for favored sons makes for difficult relationships. Thus, when God performs miracles for some, He complicates the conversion of others. He knows that. He filled a book with the evidence. He suffers anguish over the selfishness of His children. They ask and ask, mindless of the repercussions. How many perverse generations have demanded special favors of Him? Jesus said:

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign..." Matthew 12:39 Conspicuous by their Absence

Why do the Epistles have a scarcity of miracles? God miraculously healed every sick person introduced in the Gospels and Acts, but none in the Epistles. For example, Paul's said, "Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick" (2 Timothy 4:20).

Paul's first letter to his good friend shows that Timothy had a reputation as a physically unhealthy person who suffered from "frequent infirmities."

...use a little wine for your stomach's sake and for your frequent infirmities. 1 Timothy 5:23 The Epistles tell of no specific miracles. Paul knew of Timothy's continuing health problems. This means that Paul himself did not heal Timothy of this persistent problem. Further, of course, neither could Timothy nor any of the believers around him heal this ailment. Moreover, Paul does not even instruct Timothy to seek deliverance by praying for healing or anointing with oil.

Notice that Christians who pray for God to miraculously fix their cars only pray for repairs they cannot see with their eyes. If a car does not start, some believers will ask God to fix it rather than asking Him for wisdom in the situation. However, believers never ever pray for a repair of something visibly wrong with the car. For example, Christians never pray and ask God to supernaturally fix a flat tire. Why? If a knob is broken off or a windshield is busted out, Christians do not ask God to fix those things. Why? Because they know, deep within, even if they have a hard time admitting it, that God will not fix those things no matter how much faith they have. However, a mechanical problem that they cannot see presents a blind faith opportunity to deceive

themselves. The uncertainty that goes with hidden problems leaves enough chance that the car just might start on the next attempt (as cars so often do). So, Christians claim a miracle when the car starts on the next try.

Christians should admit that they do not possess the physical redemption of their earthly bodies. For if they did possess that redemption, then they would not long for it. So remember to glorify God in trials and difficulties because that is when His power will shine brightest.

...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us... For... we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it... Romans 8:17, Romans 8:22-25 By Bob Enyart, KGOV.com talk show host and pastor of Denver Bible Church. Read Bob's best-selling manuscript, The Plot <<http://www.kgov.com/store/detail/literature/theplot.html>>! This unpublished work analyzes each of the 343 miracles in Scripture and provides an overview of the entire Bible. Get The Plot online <<http://www.kgov.com/store/detail/literature/theplot.html>> or by calling 1-888-8Enyart.

Why Was Canaan Cursed?

Why Was Canaan Cursed? by Bob Enyart

Why did Noah curse his grandson Canaan? This boy's father, Ham, saw Noah's nakedness, and as a result, Noah cursed Canaan, who became the patriarch of Israel's enemies, the Canaanites. The story seems capricious on the surface, in contrast to so much reasonable history in Genesis. Let's take another look at what happened. The various tribes of Canaanites are listed in Genesis 10:15-18, including the Sidonians, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites. The Canaanites settled in familiar areas including Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of Gaza (Genesis 10:19). The hostility with their namesakes (and mixed descendants) continued right up until Christ for example when He resisted ministering to "a woman of Canaan" (Matthew 15:22). But why did Canaan and therefore his descendants become cursed? Reading the account in Genesis 9:1-29, many suppose that after Noah became drunk, Ham saw his father naked, and as a result, Noah cursed Ham's son Canaan. I submit that is not at all what happened. For that story, at least on its surface, would be an especially arbitrary and capricious origin for Canaan, Israel's great nemesis. Here is what actually happened: The story is not so much about Noah, or Ham, but about Canaan. As shown below, seeing the nakedness of a man is a common Hebrew expression for having sex with his wife (Leviticus 20:11). Canaan lived a cursed life because he was conceived by a perverse union. Noah's kids, Japheth, Shem, and Ham lived for about a century in the wicked pre-flood world. The statement that "Ham was the father of Canaan" (Genesis 9:18) begins this passage, which then quickly repeats "Ham, the father of Canaan" (Genesis 9:22), as though the author wants his readers not to miss the relationship. The story ends with three mentions of Canaan including "Cursed be Canaan" (Genesis 9:25). The first chapters of the Bible quickly cover 1,600 years of sinful human history. Yet, there is no mention of intoxication until after the flood, until Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk. While Noah was inebriated, one of his sons, Ham, committed incest with Noah's wife. Taking advantage of his father's drunkenness, Ham, who had lived before the flood in a sexually perverse society, had intercourse with his own mother, impregnating her and thereby fathering Canaan. So because Noah's own wife bore Canaan, the story twice clarified for its ancient audience that "Ham was the father of Canaan," not Noah, as the earliest Canaanites may have misrepresented their heritage! Of Israel's nearby enemies, not all were Canaanites. For example, the Moabites and Ammonites were the product of other parent/child relations. Again involving drunkenness, Abraham's nephew Lot impregnated his daughters who gave birth to the Moabites and Ammonites (Genesis 19:36-38). Any child conceived in this way, regardless of mutational considerations, enters life set up to fail. Canaan had his grandmother for a mother, his grandfather for an uncle, his mother for a great aunt, his father for a cousin, and, worst of all, his brother for a father (half-brother, that is). Early humans reproduced with siblings and first cousins without harm because genetic deterioration had not become a significant factor. But mutation severity likely grew quickly after the Flood, moving God in the Mosaic Law to prohibit relations between close relatives (Leviticus 18:1-30; Leviticus 20:1-27). But even prior to the Flood, a parent/child relation would have produced a twisted family.

As all authors and peoples do, Moses and the Jews used figures of speech. Some of the Bible's figures of speech are euphemisms that promote modesty. For example, instead of saying that Adam had sexual intercourse with Eve, the Bible more politely says that "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived" (Genesis 4:1). And Moses writes, "the man who lies with" rather than using the modern and more crude phrase, "has sex with." The reader who misses these common figures of speech will misunderstand the plain meaning of various passages. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. And God through Moses used the same decency when describing other physical relations. For example, when prohibiting incest in the Mosaic Law, rather than saying, a man shall not have intercourse with his mother, Moses wrote that he shall not "uncover his father's nakedness."

'The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness...' Leviticus 20:11
When Moses also wrote that Ham saw his father's nakedness, that was a respectful (and appreciated) way of saying that he copulated with her. See how frequently Moses and the Scriptures use this Hebrew figure of speech:

'If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. ... 'If a man takes his brother's wife... He has uncovered his brother's nakedness.' Leviticus 20:20-21

Committing incest with any female "near of kin" can be described as "uncovering his nakedness" (Leviticus 18:6), referring to the appropriate male relative, including the nakedness of your father (with your mother, Leviticus 18:7), or your sister, granddaughter, stepsister, aunt, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law (Leviticus 18:9-15). Of course, this can also be described in more literal terms as uncovering the woman's nakedness, but it can also be referred to, idiomatically, as referring to the husband's, father's, brothers, uncle's, or son's nakedness. Her nakedness can equal his nakedness because as Paul writes, your body is "not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19), and from this perspective, your mother's body belongs to your father. Thus: 'The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness' (Leviticus 18:8). Again, "It is your father's nakedness!"

Ezekiel used this figure of speech in this Hebrew parallelism: "In you [O Israel] men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women..." (Ezekiel 22:10). And Habakkuk condemns not the sin of homosexuality but of getting your neighbor drunk in order to seduce his wife, when he warns: "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness!" (Habakkuk 2:15; See also Leviticus 18:10, Leviticus 18:14, Leviticus 18:17-18; 1 Samuel 20:30; and Ezekiel 22:10-11.) Habakkuk warns against looking upon a neighbor's nakedness, which is just the slightest alternate form of uncovering his nakedness.

So, understanding this common Hebrew figure of speech enables the reader to comprehend Moses' 3,500-year-old account of why Noah cursed Canaan:

...Ham was the father of Canaan... And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent [his own drunkenness left his wife vulnerable and exposed to Ham's wickedness]. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father [that is, he had sex with Noah's wife, Ham's own mother], and told his two brothers outside [as wicked people often brag of their sin, and as misery

loves company, and perhaps even inviting them to do likewise]. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father [refusing to further abuse her]. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness [i.e., their mother's nude body]. So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him [because he found out from his wife and his sons]. Then he said [after he learned of the pregnancy]: "Cursed be Canaan [whose father was Ham]..." Genesis 9:18, Genesis 9:20-25

Why do Christian readers often miss this real story of Canaan? The undermining of Genesis as literal and rational history leads believers, even many authorities, to neglect serious study of Genesis and much of the Old Testament. Christians read that Ham saw his father's nakedness and therefore Noah cursed baby Canaan. That may seem capricious and arbitrary to many, but millions of Christians are conditioned to take the Bible with a grain of salt. After all, if the masses assume that they cannot trust the Bible's six literal days of Creation, nor its story of Noah's Ark and a global flood, then why worry about a silly detail like Noah blaming his grandchild for his own drunken behavior.

Canaan's true story shows the tragic reality of a child being set up to fail by the wickedness of his father. Thus Noah cursed Canaan as a statement of that reality, not as a hex or evil spell, but as a warning to others against following in Ham's wicked ways. So incest set the background for centuries of conflict between Noah's Hamitic descendents, especially those through Canaan, against the descendants of Shem, the Semites, especially the Jews, to whom God promised the land of the Canaanites.

While the story of Canaan's curse follows the Creation and Flood accounts, rightly understood it helps us to see that all throughout, Genesis is a rational book of history. From Bob Enyart's unpublished manuscript, The Plot <<http://kgov.com/store/detail/literature/theplot.html>>.

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