

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Traditional Teaching

Longtime church members have been frequently warned of the dangers of tradition. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15; Mk. 7). My impression has been that we must not allow customs of long standing to be regarded as of divine authority.

But Christ apparently quoted from Isaiah 29:13 (LXX), and in checking this out another aspect develops. In the RSV we read, "...but have removed their heart far from me, **and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them.**" This last phrase is given a footnote, "Or, learned by rote." [The NIV has, "Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." –GFS] Their fear of God is learned" in the sense of memorized doctrine — making an "A" in catechism but knowing little of the genuine fear or respect that comes from a mature grasp of God's greatness.

In this sense "traditions of men" need not be limited to doctrines that originate with men; the teaching per se may be an accurate

statement of divine truth. But it is taught and received as official Jewish doctrine — dare we say, "official Church of Christ doctrine"? It is learned "by rote" — by repetition of form or word but often without attention to meaning. The small children of church members may know "faith, repentance and baptism" well, and quote a few scriptures to go with it — as a result of catechism-type drilling on our part. This is "cute"; we may be proud of them; and yet none of this proves their hearts are given to God. When adult learning goes no deeper than "rote" it is a reflection upon all.

"Their fear of me is a commandment of men..." They fear because they are told to do so. Should we not teach men to "fear God?" Oh Yes! But teaching is incomplete that does not gender that fear by developing humility and dependence upon God. Teaching must go far deeper than the impartation of facts. In a companion passage to Isaiah, Ezekiel says, "thou art unto them as a very lovely voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (33:31-32). Sing us to sleep preacher, and be sure to say right words — old familiar doctrines which we know well, but which move us not!!!

- Robert F. Turner, Plain Talk, December, 1982

WORDS OF DYING ATHEISTS

by **Kent E. Heaton Sr.**

as originally published in the November 14, 1999 edition of *The Trenton Bulletin*

Caesar Borgia: *"While I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and am unprepared to die."*

Thomas Hobbs: *"I say again, if I had the whole world at my disposal, I would give it to live one day. I am about to take a leap into the dark."*

Thomas Payne: *"Stay with me, for God's sake; I cannot bear to be left alone ... O Lord, help me! O God, what have I done to suffer so much? What will become of me hereafter?"*

Sir Thomas Scott: *"Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."*

Voltaire: *"I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life."* (He said this to Dr. Fochin, who told him it could not be done.) *"Then I shall die and go to hell!"*

Robert Ingersoll: *"O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"* (Some say it was this way: *"Oh God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell!"*)

In the last century, a well-known atheist was riding with Alexander Campbell in a buckboard. As usual, they were discussing atheism. Campbell's visitor pointed to an ox grazing in the nearby field, and said: *"I have no more fear of death than that ox."* To which Campbell replied: *"And no more hope, either."*

We do not need a pulpit
From which to speak God's Word;
It only takes our willingness
To share what we have heard.

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"When God's Word Will Not Help You!"* (text: Mark 16:15-16); Sunday evening: *"Let's Get Beyond This!"* (Local Needs for the Old Hickory church).