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here is an insidious, exasperating, infuriating but fascinating scourge upon our land. It weaves its way through school and government, market and home; it touches our lives in ways unimagined as little as fifteen or twenty years ago. What is this hideous scourge? Is it a strange new virus, a plague to snatch away our children and shorten our own lives? Is it a gruesome clone of a prehistoric beast, rampaging through our cities to squash trailer parks and small wood-frame houses? No, it's neither of these.

It's called "political-correctness"—"PC", for short.

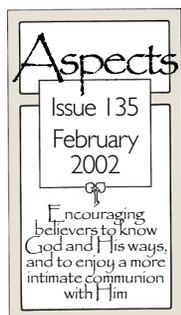
Today we live in a world where children, in their schools, are routinely taught how to use condoms when they have sex, but these same schools will not permit anyone to speak the name of Jesus. Most schools will permit the wearing of a t-shirt printed with the words "Gay Pride," but not one printed with "Straight Pride." We live in a world where television news, Hollywood films, magazines and newspapers routinely permit just about any subject to be publicized under the First Amendment's "freedom of speech,"—so long as that speech is not about the Christian God, or worse, Jesus Christ.

The latest example of this scourge came to light a few weeks ago when it was revealed that the curriculum at certain public middle schools in California includes the teaching of Islam to a depth heretofore unknown. The "simulations" include role playing, costuming, reading and memorizing of

verses from the Koran, taking a Muslim name, learning the tenets of the Islamic faith, and staging a pretend *jihad* —that is, carrying out the religious duty of a war against infidels (unbelievers), or enemies of Islam.

The public schools in California so stealthily slipped this course into the 7th grade curriculum that even another 7th grade teacher, Elizabeth Christina Lemings, was totally in the dark that this was being taught until her son, Joseph, who is a 7th grader in the same school where she teaches, brought home the handouts. "We could never teach Christianity like this," Lemings said during an on-site interview. "We can't even mention the name of Jesus in the public schools, but over there..." she pointed to the building next to hers, "they teach Islam as the true religion, and students are taught about Islam and how to pray to Allah." (ASSIST News Service)

Today, Islam—especially, remarkably, post-September 11—is politically correct, while Christianity remains the butt of low humor. But, by the curious rationale of today's entertainment industry, if Christianity *is* portrayed in a favorable light, in television shows or movies, then it must be of the Catholic



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○ where are kings and empires now of old that went and came?

variety; protestant evangelicals must still be portrayed as buffoons. Today certain things are lauded, while other things are treated with disdain, and all must stand before the bar of politically correct justice. But then, as Solomon wrote,

**That which has been is that which will be,
And that which has been done is that
which will be done.
So there is nothing new under the sun.
Ecclesiastes 1:9**

Jesus, too, lived in a political world. The Jewish people had all kinds of political parties: the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots. In addition, there were the unavoidable politics of being ruled over by the Roman Empire. Some things were permitted, others frowned upon, and it was not politically expedient to be branded a trouble-maker. But with all of that, Jesus did not waste much energy trying to be politically correct.

Let's pretend. It is less than a week before Jesus is to be crucified. He is in Jerusalem, and just about to enter the temple. Let's pretend we are privy to an imaginary, inaudible conversation between Jesus and an emissary from the Father of Lies...

Beedy-Bub: Listen, Jesus, before you go in there, let's talk.

Jesus: I can't hear you over the clamor of commerce.

Beedy-Bub: Well, that's what I'd like to chat about.

Jesus: You're wasting my time.

Beedy-Bub: Listen, people have to make a living.

Jesus: Not in my Father's house.

Beedy-Bub: Anyway, the Jews aren't calling the shots—

the Romans are.

Jesus: What little you know of things. They have no more power than you.

Beedy-Bub: All right then, what about your own people?

Jesus: What about them?

Beedy-Bub: Think of what you could do for them. How will they ever hear your message if you're arrested—or worse?

Jesus: The Father's truth doesn't live or die by the frailty of this flesh.

Beedy-Bub: Jesus, listen: How will it look? Your thrashing about isn't going to help your cause at all. It'll only make people mad—the *wrong* people. Trust me, you don't want to offend them.

Jesus: But I've come here to offend. Now, get out of my way.

At some point in his or her walk with the Son, the Christian must decide: Will I be politically correct, or *Biblically* correct. Will I bend and sway with the fickle customs of the earthly powerful, or will I stand firmly for what I know to be the right?

Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching. Mark 11:15-18

But, Lord, Thy Church is praying yet, a thousand years the same.

Riding the Waves

When I was a child, growing up in the '50s, they were called "negroes." If you referred to people with black or brown skin as being "colored," it was considered a derogatory remark, identifying the speaker with examples of the worst, deep-south form of racism. Later, in the '60s and '70s, most dark-skinned individuals preferred to be called "black," as in "Black Power." Forgetting to use the prescribed terminology in conversation could elicit dark looks of contempt from individuals of most any skin color.

Then later, some decided that "Afro-American" or "African-American" would be the label of choice. Now, in these early years of the twenty-first century, we have been told that people with black or brown skin are to be referred to as either "African-American," "black," or, encompassing also a number of other groups, ideally: "people of color" (as if those belonging to the Caucasian race *have* no color).

Now, would someone please enlighten me: What is the essential difference between the

terms “people of color” (good) and “colored people” (bad)?

This is the fundamental problem with trying to be politically correct. It is like lying: you are never quite sure what has been said before and never sure who to agree with. Or it is like fashion: just when you have finally pieced together the most fabulous ensemble, you discover that it has become abruptly *unfashionable*. Just when you have memorized what is In and what is Out, the In has become the Out and the Out the In!

The Bible has a way of referring to this way of living: wind-blown.

In Paul’s letter to the Christians at Ephesus, he describes for them the healthy body (church), in which there is mutual love, humility, gentleness; a family in which everyone contributes toward the equipping of everyone else. And the result?

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:14-16

We are often told to “vote our conscience”—as if our conscience were the ultimate arbiter of what is good and right. But the mature Christian—the one who has been nurtured by a supportive, affirming body; the one who has studied under the ministry of God, rather than the spurious counsel of the world—is one who has learned how to differentiate between the whisperings of conscience and the counsel of the Spirit. Our conscience is too easily influenced by a world in which wrong is made to be right by whichever group carries the biggest stick.

The Christian has no business trying to be politically correct. His or her energies should be focused on being, instead, *Biblically* correct. Trends and fads and political agendas become little more than annoying, buzzing flies about the head of one who has his eyes set only on Jesus.

In the current political and media-soaked climate, it is a challenging but ultimately rewarding strategy to keep Paul’s teaching in mind. It is helpful to remember that it is precisely those who ride the crest of every fashionable cause—be it gay rights, ozone depletion, whales, global warming, destruction of rain forests, or the most momentarily polite terminology for some subgroup—who are the infants, and it is those who speak the truth of Christ in love who are the mature.

We mark her goodly battlements, and her foundation strong;

The church can be a place of strength and Bible-based encouragement, or it can become a mirror of the society in which it dwells. The modern trend is toward “feel good” churches: low impact, no pain. An article in the *Des Moines Register* several years ago described just such a church (as told by its pastor):

Services will be at 10:30 a.m., late enough for people to sleep in. They will be over by 11:30,

usually earlier, to get people home in time for football games and other activities. There will be no collection plates, to avoid the “guilt trips” people have about contributing to a church. A box for offerings will be placed at the back of the church. [The Pastor] also said he does not believe in Sunday School. “You tie up so many people in service activities they don’t get out into the neighborhoods.” The goal is to make church non-threatening. “Never

would I say, ‘Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand.’ People want to be anonymous.”

I was encouraged by a letter to the editor that followed a few weeks later:

Churches that chase exclusively after what is “contemporary” in our culture, be it music, preaching or programming, unfortunately soon discover that it is a never-ending game that the church always

loses. The church has a timeless message for people in an age of increasingly rapid change. If there is any truth to the maxim, “the medium is the message,” maybe pastors and other church leaders should not be so quick to assume that people will settle for receiving a most precious gift wrapped in cheap, disposable, ever-changing packaging. (Philip Spencer, chair, Music Department, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa)

A Sure Foundation

On what do we stand against this sometimes overwhelming tide of political correctness? If all about us the winds are blowing and the waves crashing, upon what will we gain a sure footing against the gale? Peter describes the situation perfectly:

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture:

“Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.”

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“The stone which the builders rejected,

This became the very corner stone,” and,

“A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 1 Peter 2:4-8

Ancient builders would carve out of the living rock a massive slab that would be carefully trimmed and smoothed and planed. Once it was perfect, it would be placed into position to become the cornerstone upon which the rest of a building would rest and be aligned. If the cornerstone were of inferior quality, or set on a bad footing, it would deteriorate and crumble, bringing down the rest of the building with it. If the cornerstone were positioned incorrectly, the entire building would be out of alignment.

But, in a spiritual sense, the Christian has none of these concerns, for our “building” rests upon the most perfect Cornerstone ever fitted into place. It contains supernatural strength and will not, during all of time, crumble under the weight of its bearing load. It is aligned so perfectly, so absolutely, that even Satan’s foul breath cannot waft through the cracks of the building it supports.

Curiously, however, this Stone that offers the believer such solid footing, is the same rock that others trip over. Just as Peter describes, Jesus continues to be an offense to those who do not recognize Him as the foundation of everything eternal.

There are a lot of stubbed toes out there.

But the imagery of Jesus as a rock or stone is a little obscure for some. What we are really talking about is *truth*.

Jesus said to [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:6

For the Christian, truth is objective; there is a truth sitting out there waiting to be grasped, and His name is Jesus. Truth, for the unbeliever, is subjective; his truth ebbs and flows with the tides of human flotsam that wash upon his shore. Truth for the unbeliever is influenced by

his own temperament, feelings, experience; it is defined by expediency, comfort, discomfort, and peer pressure.

Truth, for the Christian, is rare, precious, and to be cherished. Truth, for those without Christ, is cheap, convenient, and easily swapped for tomorrow’s *new* truth.

In Chili where the ground is subject to frequent earthquakes, the houses are built of lowly height and of unenduring structure. It is of little use to dig deep foundations, and pile up high walls where the very earth is unstable. It would be foolish to build as for ages when the whole edifice may be in ruins in a week. Here we see a lesson for our worldly schemes and possessions. This poor fleeting world is not worth building our hopes and joys on it as though they could last long. We must treat it as a treacherous soil, and build but lightly on it, and we shall be wise. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

We hear within the solemn voice of her unending song.

For not like kingdoms of the world Thy holy Church, O God;

*Though the angry surges roll on my tempest-driven soul,
I am peaceful, for I know, wildly though the winds may blow,
I've an anchor safe and sure, that can evermore endure.*

*Mighty tides about me sweep, perils lurk within the deep,
Angry clouds o'ershade the sky, and the tempest rises high;
Still I stand the tempest's shock, for my anchor grips the Rock.*

*I can feel the anchor fast as I meet each sudden blast,
And the cable, though unseen, bears the heavy strain between;
Through the storm I safely ride, till the turning of the tide.*

*Troubles almost 'whelm the soul; griefs like billows o'er me roll;
Tempters seek to lure astray; storms obscure the light of day:
But in Christ I can be bold, I've an anchor that shall hold.*

*And it holds, my anchor holds;
Blow your wildest, then, O gale,
On my bark so small and frail;
By His grace I shall not fail,
For my anchor holds, my anchor holds.*

(W. C. Martin)

Though earthquake shocks are threatening her, and tempests are abroad;

The Sword of the Spirit

The intent of the Bible was to provide a guide by which all human beings could live in loving harmony with each other. It is time that those of the religious right stop judging gay people for sins that do not apply to them and never did. (a letter to the editor of a local newspaper)

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. (Shakespeare)

The writer to the Hebrews was not just spouting comforting drivel, but doctrinal truth when he wrote:

For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of

those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:16-18

Jesus truly was challenged by many of the same temptations experienced by us, including the temptation to go along with the politically expedient—to blend in, to not be a bother, to not rock the boat. Time and again, however, He met the challenge brandishing only one weapon: the word of God. When Satan whispered sweet nothings in His ear in the desert, Jesus answered back with a shout:

"It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds

out of the mouth of God.’ ” Matthew 4:4
(quoting Deuteronomy 8:3)

When the Pharisees and scribes felt it necessary and politic to point out the soiled hands of His disciples, Jesus boldly pointed out the soiled condition of their own hearts with:

“Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:
‘This people honors Me with their lips,
But their heart is far away from Me.
‘But in vain do they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’
Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” Mark 7:6-8
(quoting Isaiah 29:13)

Even in the moment of His death, bearing the agonies of the world upon his tortured body, Jesus quoted Scripture:

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Luke 23:46 (quoting Psalm 31:5)

Everything—*everything* must be tested by the eternal truth of God’s word. No politician, no lobbyist, no coalition of activists, no neighborhood group, city council or ad hoc committee can set the rules determining right from wrong.

God *is* right—He is the very essence of justice. His righteousness does not stand outside the workings of our day-to-day society; it is not something utterly detached, pristine so as to be unreachable, even incomprehensible. God’s righteousness and justice—His right and wrong—stand beside us every day in the checkout line; they sit with us as we watch the evening news; they dwell within our minds as we share our thoughts and positions with others.

God’s word is eternal, and we need never guess. We need never wonder what God might think if *He* were in this situation. For He is, and His position is written for all time in the pages of His book: the Holy Bible.

Unshaken as eternal hills, immovable she stands,



*The Spirit breathes upon the Word, and brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford a sanctifying light.*

*A glory gilds the sacred page, majestic like the sun,
It gives a light to every age; it gives, but borrows none.*

*The hand that gave it still supplies the gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise: they rise, but never set.*

*Let everlasting thanks be Thine for such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine with beams of heavenly day.*

*My soul rejoices to pursue the steps of Him I love,
Till glory breaks upon my view in brighter worlds above.*

(William Cowper)

Stationary Truth

Like a mongrel pup chasing his tail, the purveyors and disciples of the politically correct run endlessly in circles—never quite accomplishing anything, and never believing in any one principle worth a sacrifice. Because they do not believe in right or wrong, they are, ultimately, neither. Because “right” is something of their own invention, in their world everyone is always right; because “right” is a constantly moving target, nothing in their world can ever be wrong. And because the politically correct repeatedly devise a new “truth” for each occasion, they do not believe in absolute truth. For them, everything is truth, and nothing is truth.

It’s like living on roller skates... with a tailwind.

Jesus Christ does not just know what is right—

He is right. Jesus does not just know the truth—He is truth.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. John 1:14,17

And those who are His followers are to have no truck with the fickle whims of a fallen world. Truth and right, for them, are absolutes. Let the world chase its tail, traveling in endless, meaningless circles. But let the believer focus his life like a laser on the one from above who brought with Him sacrifice, purpose, substance, and ultimate, eternal truth.

Six Benefits of Being Spiritually Informed

Why is it so important to be well grounded in the truth of God? Let me suggest six specific reasons. There may be many more, but these six are essential. Each one is something we must personally enter into.

Knowledge gives substance to faith. On what do those who do not know the truth rely? On emotion, on feelings, on someone else’s opinion, on a book, on tradition, or some other empty, humanistic hope. And the result? Their faith lacks substance.

Knowledge stabilizes us during times of testing. When we know what God has said, and then we go through a period of pain when the bottom virtually drops out of our life, we don’t panic. The knowledge we have gained stabilizes us and equips us with essential, calming fortitude when the tests come.

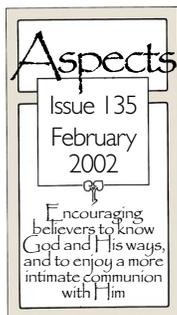
Knowledge enables us to handle the Bible accurately. By knowing the general themes of Scripture, we are better able to handle the Scripture intelligently and wisely.

Knowledge equips us to detect and confront error. When you know where you stand spiritually, no one can get you off course. You can’t be intimidated. Your antennae have been sensitized.

It makes us confident in our daily walk. Show me a person who stumbles along in their Christian faith, and I’ll show you a person who isn’t exposing himself or herself to a consistent intake of the Scriptures. Biblical knowledge and personal confidence are like Siamese twins, inseparably linked together.

A good foundation of spiritual truth filters out our fears and superstitions. I think we would all be amazed if we knew how many people operated their lives from superstition and fear. God’s truth has a way of silencing those erroneous voices that would otherwise siphon our inner energy and immobilize us. (Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Returning to Our Roots* [Multnomah Press, 1986], 25-26)

A mountain that shall fill the earth, a house not made of hands.
(A. Cleveland Coxe)



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