

What Constitutes Worship?

There are many answers to the above question. Some are correct, some have elements of truth to them, and other answers one would receive are simply in error. Of course, it is this way with every subject from Scripture one might bring up. However, we would expect the answer from the head of a theological school to be more exact, and accurate than the average person. We certainly would expect their answer to be more centered around service to God than politics. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and it is certainly not restricted to the individual that came to my attention late last week. Now, to be fair, the subject at hand was not worship, but the addressing of the subject intruded into the arena of what constitutes worship, and the individual drew no distinctions.

Before getting going on this, it is only fair to give a brief background of the individual so their qualifications can be duly noted and kept in mind. The following is extracted from the brief bio posted with her column at the Newsweek/Washington Post website, Faith section:

Rev. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite is president of Chicago Theological Seminary and senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. She has been a professor of theology at the seminary for 20 years and director of its graduate degree center for five years. Her area of expertise is contextual theologies of liberation, specializing in issues of violence and violation. An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ since 1974, the "On Faith" panelist is the author or editor of thirteen books and has been a translator for two translations of the Bible.

((http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/susan_brooks_thistlethwaite/2008/03/is_nothing_sacred.html))

I won't even get into all that is in error in the writeup. Not that it is not her history. It is. It is that her endeavors run so counter to the express commandments of God. Perhaps that is why it never impinged upon her conscience to address the issue of "note takers" during the time of the sermon somewhat differently. Some quotes of what she wrote follow:

"A member of Trinity United Church of Christ, the church once led by Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright and where Senator Obama is a member, told me there are "spies" among them in the pews, strangers who take notes during the service and try to record the message.

Check it out for yourself. Go to the Trinity UCC website, select "Why The Black Church Won't Shut Up!", and listen to Rev. Otis Moss politely ask that there be "no recording equipment." He repeats over and over, "We are in worship. We are in worship." When visitors are asked to stand, you can see those with paper and pencil in hand. Are these folks members of the press or political operatives? Impossible to know if they don't, as Rev. Moss requests, sign in.

This is what happens when politics intrudes into the sanctuary of the church, a sacred space."

"Challenging your pastor's freedom in the pulpit is bad. Spying on people at prayer is reprehensible.

Is this what the assaults of the past decades on the wall of separation between church and state has led us to? Is there no such thing as sacred space anymore?"

"A church is sacred space and to violate that space by engaging in "Swift-boat" type distortions and even spying is un-American. This is not us, this is not the bedrock principle of our founders and those leaders we have most respected. Our churches and our faith commitments are out of bounds in the tumult of political contests."

“Let us pull back from this disastrous course of mixing religion and politics before we destroy something so unique and precious it has been the envy of the whole world.”
(([ibid](#)))

Notice something odd about her response to the issue at hand? In reading all the comments about her column, I noticed something missing there as well. What is it? It is the acknowledgement of a major component of worship – learning. Now, it is not necessary to take notes to learn, but it sure helps retain what was spoken. Moreover, we have the express invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of Him.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
(Matthew 11:28-30)

You know, when you don't care about someone or something, you don't bother learning about them, or it – at all. To me, it is telling that Hannah of ancient Israel knew far more of what the LORD God is about than the head of a theological school.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. *(I Samuel 2:3)*

Somehow I don't think the Lord Jesus Christ would have been at all upset if someone had sat in front of Him taking notes while he preached and taught. What mattered to the LORD was the heart of the person, and their desire to learn of God. After all, since He was preaching the truth, He had no concerns about what they wanted to do with His words, as He knew the effect the words would have upon them.

The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent

officers to take him. (*John 7:32*)

So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. (*John 7:43-45*)

No, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke openly because He knew the time was not yet, and He knew that it was necessary that the word be preached openly. Moreover, since the LORD God is a God of knowledge, it is essential that people learn. I don't see the Lord being displeased with this at all.

Knowing this, we can come forward to our day and time and understand that if people have to take notes, or record the message to recall what was said later, then there ought be no problem with that. If one preaches expressly from the Scripture, then all that need be done in defense of what was said is point to chapter and verse, and show that the Bible does indeed say that.

The problem here is that worship, and what constitutes worship is not at all understood. When someone is a "fan" of an actor, or performer, they try to learn everything they can about that person. If someone is a fanatic about golf, fishing or guns, we find that they always take notes, record, or otherwise preserve a record of the things said about the subject they worship. We also find they are devoted to their particular interest, almost to the exclusion of everything else. It is like some popular television shows – there are some who can never get enough information about a particular show (*Star Trek and M.A.S.H. come to mind*), and they record or otherwise obtain every scrap of information they can about the series.

Funny how that is not the case when people come into the house of God. Instead, they are discouraged from taking notes and

recording the preaching, and are told they need to have a “worshipful” attitude. It makes one really wonder why doesn’t it?

You know, we needn’t worry what man will do with the words spoken from the pulpit. No, we need to be concerned about what God has determined about the words spoken from the pulpit.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 5:19*)

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (*Matthew 12:34-37*)

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite misses the point.

A Wrong Heart – A Final Look

Though there are many things that can be focused on concerning the deviation from, and misuse of Scripture of Pastor Wright in his sermons, there is one last thing I would like to point out as it is largely misunderstood, and misapplied by

“Christian” leaders, to the detriment of those under their influence, and to the Gospel of Christ.

In looking at this, we must first be ever reminded that the reason the Gospel exists is because man has absolutely no capacity to make himself righteous in any degree whatsoever. This will ever remain true as righteousness is an absolute quality that one either has in totality, or not at all. We must also remember that the standard of righteousness is the LORD God Himself, Who is infinitely righteous. The result of this is the utter condemnation of man as we are by nature evil, and we cannot change our nature by our own efforts. Thus the solution the LORD God offers us, is salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood that was shed for our atonement.

However, throughout man’s history on this earth, man has ever sought to find a way to make himself righteous in the sight of God outside of Christ, and in so doing, prove himself to be equal with his Creator. Typically, man does this by perverting the gospel into a system of works for salvation. However, there are systems of belief that ignore God altogether, and seek to find peace and righteousness through a means other than justification before God. Humanism is one such system.

Now, this is not to say that Humanism came into existence within the last 300 years or so. Actually, humanism has existed under one label or another for several millennia. Recently, humanism found organized expression under the label of communism. Central to the belief of humanism and communism is the idea that man can improve himself, by his own efforts. In communism, this ideal is known as the “new communist man” that is freed from the chains of religion, tradition and superstition. The communists believe, like all humanists have, that once man reaches this condition, there will be peace throughout the earth. However, there cannot be any opposition to this ideal, as that would create conditions that would drag humanity into conflict again. Hence, “peace” is preached, and war is railed against.

As I noted in previous posts, there is a definitive link between Pastor Wright, the UCC and communism. Moreover, that the "Christianity" preached by Pastor Wright and the UCC is nothing more than decorative wrapping for the socialism (communism) they advocate. Even so it is with the advocacy of "peace." The following is a partial transcript from CNN's Anderson Cooper Blog, in which contributor Roland Martin presents a favorable view of what Wright stated on April 13, 2003:

"Wright's scriptural focus was Luke 19:37-44 (reading from the New Revised Standard Version).

In this sermon, Wright spoke about the military rule during biblical days, led by Pontius Pilate. It was clear, through his language, such as "occupying military brigade" that he was making an analogy to the war in Iraq.

"War does not make for peace," he said. "Fighting for peace is like raping for virginity."

"War does not make for peace. War only makes for escalating violence and a mindset to pay the enemy back by any means necessary," he said." (([The G_____ America Sermon](#)))

Now, I looked at Luke 9:37-44, in both the King James Version, and the New Revised Standard Version, and what the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem has to do with the rant against government (specifically the American government) that Wright engaged in is beyond me. While it is true that the Lord spoke of Jerusalem's coming destruction, it had nothing to do with government, and everything to do with the Jews rejection of their covenant with the LORD God. As I have noted previously, this is frequently the case with those who have another agenda besides serving the LORD God and preaching the Gospel of Christ.

Nonetheless, Pastor Wright then makes the comments about "war" and how it is that war cannot solve problems, and cannot bring peace. If we understand the implication of this, we will

understand that it also is a condemnation of anyone who engages in war. Anyone who has a warrior mentality, or warrior spirit about then is condemned as they will engage in war as a necessary, though unpleasant endeavor.

This is dangerous ground to walk on. Scripturally, for one to take this position, without immediately qualifying it, is to stand in opposition to the LORD God Himself. Why? Because one takes it upon themselves to rebuke the LORD:

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. (*Exodus 15:1-3*)

Moreover, it is to rebuke the servant of the LORD, a man after God's own heart: King David.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. (*I Samuel 16:17-19*)

Notice, that the Scripture plainly records the testimony of David, even before he took the throne of Israel and before he killed Goliath the Gittite: that David was a "man of war" and "the LORD is with him." How could the LORD be pleased with David, if the LORD Himself were not a man of war as Moses testified? Plainly, He would not be.

Now, I know that many will point to the New Testament and declare that the LORD God of the Old is not the same as Christ

of the New. However, I must strongly disagree with that position as the New Testament only provides confirmation of the statements made in the Old. After all, the LORD God of the Old Testament is the same LORD God in the New. In fact, quite frequently, the LORD spoken of in the Old Testament is none other than Christ Himself. Nonetheless, let's look at what the New Testament declares:

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (*Revelation 19:11-16*)

Plainly, the acknowledgement that the leader of Heaven's army is called "The Word of God" positively identifies Him as none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Notice also that out of Christ's mouth "goeth a sharp sword, that he should smite the nations:" which is to say that He will engage them in war, and they shall be smitten and fall by the words that proceed out of His mouth. Of course, verse 21, of the chapter does clearly state that:

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (*Revelation 19:21*)

Now, rather than leave a skewed impression of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ordained Savior of the world, a little

context is in order. The LORD is a man of war, but He did not start this war. Nevertheless, he will end it. No, Satan, who used to be called Lucifer, started this war when he rebelled against the LORD and attempted to take the throne of God. In Isaiah, chapter 14, and Ezekiel, chapter 28, we are told of Lucifer's rebellion in which, as a covering cherub, he decided that his high position serving God wasn't good enough, and he determined that he ought to rule. Sadly, he deceived a third of the angelic host, and they followed him in his rebellion. The LORD's response to this should not be unexpected – He rose to battle.

However, the LORD does not fight the way we fight, and He was not going to change His plan of creation simply because His creatures exercised their free will and rebelled. Thus, Satan brought his war against God to this earth and conquered Adam. As a result, all the race of man are embroiled in this war as well, and all wars of this world are but shadows and illustrations of the real war Satan launched against God.

Due to this, we might as well give up on man ever creating peace by his own efforts. It is pointless and futile, and only someone holding to Humanist doctrine would engage in such thinking. Which is exactly why Pastor Wright makes the claims he does about war. After all, if he supposedly knows the Bible, why doesn't he know about the above passages? It is because his heart is in the wrong place.

Validation

Over the last week or so the issue of Pastor Jeremiah Wright's remarks from the pulpit have dominated the coverage of Barack

Obama's campaign for President. While it has come to light that the controversial remarks of Pastor Wright were quotes from U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck, they were not condemned when Wright used them in his message.

It is well known in advertising that the strongest advertising method existent is personal favorable reference. The next strongest is impersonal favorable mention, and negative mention follows shortly thereafter. The best way to not advertise, or validate something is to not mention it at all. Thus, when someone is referenced in a message, the speaker has basically three options:

- 1. They can state they agree with the person quoted.*
- 2. They can state they disagree.*
- 3. They can remain silent and let everyone guess.*

However, it is implicitly understood: unless you specifically state your level of disagreement with the person you are quoting, it means that you agree with them to a certain extent, even up to and including total agreement. Otherwise, why do you find their statements valuable?

So it is with Pastor Wright and his quotation of Edward Peck. The pastor did not see fit anywhere in the sermon to specifically distance himself from Edward Peck and his statements. Instead, according to a blog that supports Pastor Wright, the Pastor's comments were:

"We are indignant that the stuff that we have done overseas is brought back into our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost. Violence begets violence. Hatred begets hatred. And terrorism begets terrorism. A white ambassador said that y'all, not a black militant. Not a reverend who preaches about racism. An ambassador whose eyes

are wide open and who is trying to get us to wake up and move away from this dangerous precipice upon which we are now poised. The ambassador said the people we have wounded don't have the military capability we have. but they do have individuals who are willing to die and take thousands with them. And we need to come to grips with that."
((<http://www.rolandsmartin.com/blog/?p=144>))

No, whether America is doing everything right or not, there are some specific things that the ambassador stated that are strictly unscriptural and should have been qualified in some way. Instead, the statement "And we need to come to grips with that." does indicate an approval of all the statements quoted. However, the greater problem is this: Pastor Wright's concern was not that Americans are not obedient to the gospel and should be, as that would radically alter this nation for the better. No, Wright's concern was for "social justice." The clarion call was for this nation to fight racism, AIDS, provide better healthcare, etc.

"We have got to change the way we have been doing things as a society," he said. He then said we can't stop messing over people and thinking they can't touch us. He then said we may need to declare war on racism, injustice and greed, instead of war on other countries. "Maybe we need to declare war on AIDS. In five minutes the Congress found \$40 billion to rebuild New York and the families that died in sudden death, do you think we can find the money to make medicine available for people who are dying a slow death? Maybe we need to declare war on the nation's healthcare system that leaves the nation's poor with no health coverage? Maybe we need to declare war on the mishandled educational system and provide quality education for everybody, every citizen, based on their ability to learn, not their ability to pay. This is a time for social transformation."
((<http://www.rolandsmartin.com/blog/?p=144>))

As I pointed out in the first post, this is the specific problem with Pastor Wright and the UCC in general. Where, just where in the Bible does it state that we are to focus on social issues? Feeding the poor, caring for the sick, infirmed and elderly are all adjuncts to preaching and teaching the word of God. After all, even a well-fed, healthy person dies, and when they die, if they are not prepared to stand in judgement before God, they end up in Hell – for all eternity. Plainly, unless one is born-again in Christ, through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, all the “social justice” in the world won’t do them one iota of good.

What we have here is a clear intent to advocate for things that really don’t change hearts, and thus the behavior of men. Rather, it appears that the reason the social issues are used, are for the specific and express purpose of bludgeoning those who appear to be enfranchised and demand that the playing field be leveled. Plainly, this is what Ambassador Peck is about as his name appears prominently in socialist circles. In searching further, it is also plain that the UCC is deeply involved in the socialist movement as well. This comes as no surprise as a blog article from UCCtruths (<http://ucctruths.blogspot.com/2008/03/united-church-of-christ-and-faln.html>) highlights the successful efforts of the United Church of Christ to obtain pardons for two FALN criminals who were convicted of carrying out bombings in New York and Chicago back the late 70’s and early 80’s. The UCC is also deeply involved in the Interfaith Alliance, which is a left-oriented (socialist) political organization wrapping itself in the guise of religion.

The real problem with this whole mess is the deception that continues daily within the UCC about its true intentions. Whether the average UCC member realizes it or not, the leadership of that denomination is really not interested in promoting the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, what they are interested in is the promotion of Communism, all the while

wrapping it in the banner and blanket of Christianity. Otherwise, they (including Pastor Wright) would be far more concerned with the state of men's souls than they are. I am hard pressed to find anything that solidly preaches the gospel in the writings I have seen. Rather, what I do find is the usage of some (one or two verses) scripture to front a rant about the unfairness in American society, and how the "government" ought to be used to make everything more equal. The evidence of this is plain in the partial transcripts of Pastor Wright's sermons posted on CNN's Anderson Cooper Blog: ([The 9-11 Sermon](#)) ([The G_____ America Sermon](#)) and in the continuing focus of his messages until his retirement.

Unfortunately, Pastor Wright and the UCC are not alone in this endeavor, and neither is it restricted solely to the liberal "churches" and denominations that exist in this country. No, there are a considerable number of conservative, even fundamental, Bible-believing churches that have allowed themselves to be caught up in the political and social issues of the day, much to the detriment of preaching the Gospel. We would all do well to heed the apostle Paul's stated focus, as it really is the only way any society ever changes for the better. What is amazing is that history does attest to this fact, if only we care to look. What was the apostle Paul's focus? It's quite impossible to miss:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (*I Corinthians 2:1-2*)

After all, why validate what you don't agree with?

A Wrong Heart – A Second Look

In yesterday's post, I commented on Pastor Jeremiah Wright's comments concerning America and the attitude he took toward this country and whether it was Biblical or not. Moreover, I commented on the defense of Wright by the President of the UCC, John Thomas, and whether the focus of the UCC was proper and what that focus meant in the context of serving the LORD.

It is apparent that a second look into the whole motivation behind the UCC is warranted as Pastor Wright's comments, and President John Thomas' defense of them brings to light very troubling issues in the United Churches of Christ as a denomination. What is telling about the focus of Wright's comments is that they were not condemning of America because it has turned its back on the LORD God, and forsaken the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, he condemned America for waging war against those in this world that the majority of Americans see as evil.

"We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye," Rev. Wright said in a sermon on Sept. 16, 2001.

"We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost," he told his congregation. (<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4443788>)

Now, knowing something about history, and knowing that America did not start World War II, and in fact resisted being dragged into it; it is apparent that Pastor Wright made his statement divorced from any historical context. Apparently Pastor Wright

would have preferred that tens of thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) more die in an invasion of the Japanese home islands, rather than the use of only two weapons that quickly convinced the Emperor of Japan that further resistance would only result in defeat and the senseless loss of life of his subjects. Moreover, the dropping of those particular bombs also broke the idea in Japan that the Emperor was a god to be worshiped.

Knowing this, one must wonder what motivates someone to draw a moral equivalence between America's use of nuclear weapons on Japan during wartime, and the attacks upon America on September 11, 2001. However, that motivation is laid bare by his follow-on statement which is also quoted above. Whether one really understands everything about the issue of Israel and Palestine, if one has read, understood and believes the Scripture, as Pastor Wright claims he does, then claiming that America supports state-sponsored terrorism against the Palestinians is nothing short of coming straight out of the Devil's mouth. The only nation that is supposedly "attacking" the Palestinians is Israel, and anyone who knows the facts about the current government in Israel, knows that the Olmert administration virtually sits on its hands as Israeli citizens are subjected to daily rocket attacks. If this happened in any other country in the world, that country would be in the process of wiping their opponents off the face of the earth. No, other than their fight for independence, Israel has shown remarkable restraint in dealing with their neighbors since they became a nation. Moreover, American support of Israel has frequently been contingent upon that demonstration of restraint.

However, that is not what is so demonic about Wright's claim. Wright's claim about state terrorism being used against the Palestinians goes beyond the mere issue of Israeli relations with them. As any student of the Scripture knows, the land that Israel possesses, historically belongs to them, given to

them by no less than the LORD God Himself. Plainly, by the Scripture, Gaza and the West Bank both belong to Israel, and Israel has every right to claim them, settle them, and govern them. Moreover, the Jews are still God's chosen people, and He will use them again. Are they out of the will and service of God? Yes, they are. However, that does not mean that anyone and everyone is free to chastise and correct them. No, they belong to God, and God is dealing with them. For anyone to take a position in opposition to Israel, is to side with the Devil and the enemies of God. In this the Scripture is express:

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. (*Deuteronomy 32:7-10*)

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. (*Zechariah 2:8*)

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD. (*Psalms 147:19-20*)

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. (*Isaiah 41:8-9*)

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (*Malachi 3:6*)

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (*Romans 11:1-5*)

In Revelation, chapter 7, and in Zechariah, chapter 12, we are plainly told that there is coming a day in which Israel will turn and again be used of the LORD God as a witness to this world. In fact, the evidence in Scripture is extensive as it pertains to Israel and the fact that they have an everlasting covenant with God. We are also warned in the New Testament not to boast about our standing with God at the expense of Israel. Thus, the only one that would dare to levy charge against Israel and seek Israel's destruction is the Devil.

What does this then state about the heart and motivation of Pastor Wright, and John Thomas, President of the UCC who defended him? What does it state about the heart of Barack Obama who dismissed Wright's statements as merely "It sounds like he was trying to be provocative,"?

I do not know what would satisfy others as sufficient evidence, but for me the above Scriptures are enough to show that anyone who attacks Israel stands against the will of God. However, there is one other passage that plainly demonstrates who has always stood behind the attempted destruction of the Jews throughout their history:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. (*Revelation 12:1-6*)

I don't pretend to understand all the parallels in the above passage, but I do know the woman parallels Israel, the child is the Lord Jesus Christ, the dragon is Satan, the stars of heaven are angels, and the wilderness is the world. Hence, the meaning is clear. This passage shows who continually seeks the destruction of Israel, and who it is that influences men to rail against the Jews. Are the Jews perfect? No, they are fallen men just like everyone else, and they need the salvation that Christ offers, just like everyone else. But to claim that Yasser Arafat, the PLO, Hamas and others like them are justified in claiming that every Jew needs to be wiped off the face of the earth, and to say that our support of Israel when it responds to those efforts militarily is a reason for God to judge us, is straight out of the heart and mind of the Devil. By extension, to defend someone who makes such statements, is to be more than comfortable with the pronouncements of Satan.

Is America under judgement? Sadly, yes she is. But not because of her support of Israel, or her use of nuclear weapons in wartime, or even her stand against communist influence in

South Africa. ((America's support of South Africa was not because they engaged in apartheid, or that successive administrations hated blacks. Rather, it was due to having little to no choice in who we supported in attempting to stem the spread of communism. At least the South Africa government wasn't communist, and under those regimes, the gospel could be preached to everyone. Perhaps they weren't a whole lot better, but they did have some respect for the law. The communists have none at all, and always seek to stop the spread of the gospel.)) America is under judgement because she has forsaken her Maker, the Supreme Judge of the World, and has turned her back upon God, and forsaken the right way in favor of her own way.

Why is it that Pastor Wright couldn't say those things to his congregation on September 16, 2001? Perhaps, it is because he really isn't interested in having America turn back to God. Why didn't President John Thomas soundly condemn the statements of Pastor Wright? Perhaps it is because he actually shares his views. Were I in the United Churches of Christ, I would set about finding a church that is actually interested in serving God, instead of standing against Him.

UPDATE 03/22/08 Since I don't go poking into every corner of the Internet, and I really am not all that interested in politics, I missed the proof of all I stated above. Since this whole controversy broke, people have decided to dig into everything Pastor Wright and TUCC are engaged in. Well, the proof of the above assertion is posted on [BizzyBlog's post](#) concerning a certain "Pastor's Pages" article from July 22nd. The Pastor's Pages for that issue were given over to a known Hamas operative. Nice – and in a "Christian church" at that.

A Wrong Heart

I don't usually comment on current events, or the antics of the more notable individuals in this society, however, what has come to light of late begs for comment. This is especially true when no one bothers to even find out what the Scripture actually states concerning the statement or event that created such a stir.

In this Presidential campaign there has been a return to some unpleasant ugliness that one would have hoped didn't exist in America. However, if you know and understand the nature of man, then you know what an impossibility that is. However, aside from the mainstream media's censorship of Ron Paul on the Republican side, the Democrats have had their circus going to full effect with the "conflict" between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. And now, there is this latest event precipitated by Barack Obama's pastor, Jeremiah Wright.

Now, Pastor Wright was the pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago and is the man Barack Obama looks to for guidance in spiritual things. This would not be altogether bad, except for two glaring things:

- 1. The apparent heart and attitude of Pastor Wright.*
- 2. The unscriptural approach to the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

What brought this to light are some of the statements made by Pastor Wright during his messages delivered from the pulpit.

Now, to be certain, the pulpit is not the place for personal opinion. It is the place where one is to expound upon the subjects the Lord has for His people to instruct, to reprove, and to exhort them to serve Him better; and to clarify His doctrines in accordance with His word, which is the Scripture. For one to go beyond that and put words in the mouth of God, or to demand God's wrath upon a nation is egregiously wrong and tantamount to blasphemy.

The following was reported as direct quotes made by Pastor Wright from the pulpit. I will leave blank the offending portions of the statements made.

"The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America.' No, no, no, G__ ___ America, that's in the Bible for killing innocent people," he said in a 2003 sermon. "G__ ___ America for treating our citizens as less than human. G__ ___ America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme." ((<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4443788>))

You know, I don't find this attitude anywhere, in any of the prophets of the Old Testament, and I certainly do not find this attitude in the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Remarkably, though the apostle Paul was arrested, beaten, imprisoned unlawfully, I do not find this attitude in him either. Do we find condemnation of the nations of ancient time in the Old Testament? We certainly do. But not with this kind of heart and attitude.

Moreover, no one, but no one, tells the LORD God who He is going to condemn, and who He is going to bless. All we can ever do is ask. We are told expressly to ask for the LORD to bless, but conversely, we are not told to ask for condemnation of someone, or some nation:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy

neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

What the Lord Jesus Christ instructed on the mount is a far cry from the attitude and heart expressed by Pastor Wright. It does make one wonder who Pastor Wright is following doesn't it? After all, his attitude is more akin to the attitude expressed by James and John, which was rebuked by the Lord Jesus Christ:

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. (Luke 9:51-56)

Of course, that Pastor Wright should have such an attitude is not surprising as he has turned away from the Gospel of Christ as the focus of his ministry, and replaced it with something else – *social justice*. In a statement from John Thomas, the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, the promotion of “*social justice*” is prominent:

“But on the gritty streets of Chicago’s south side where Trinity has planted itself, race continues to play favorites in failing urban school systems, unresponsive health care systems, crumbling infrastructure, and meager economic development. Are we to pretend all is well because much is, in fact, better than it used to be? Is it racist to name the racial divides that continue to afflict our nation, and to do so loudly?”
(<http://www.ucc.org/news/responding-to-wright.html>)

You know, when you abandon the gospel in favor of social justice, don’t expect the LORD to bless, and don’t expect the hearts of individuals to change. When you go further and demand that God condemn a nation, you are of another spirit, which is not of God. It is sad that the President of UCC attempted to paint the prophet Jeremiah with this heart and attitude, and then identify with him in an attempt to justify the words of Pastor Wright. What is missing here is the distinction between acknowledging the judgement levied by the LORD God, and the demanding of God’s judgement upon a nation. Plainly, Pastor Wright would be happy if God judged America and destroyed her. What he seems to have missed is the fact that the LORD God is unhappy with him as well, and Pastor Wright’s anger at America for social injustice may bring about the opposite effect.

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. (*Proverbs 24:17-18*)

It makes one wonder who is the head of the UCC and Trinity Church of Christ – the Lord Jesus Christ, or the Devil. After all, they are interested in social justice, and not the gospel of Christ.

