

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
Speaker, Robert Emerson
Study Sunday 10:00 AM
Worship Sunday 11:00 AM
Worship Sunday 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

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We would love to
study God's word
with you!



Servants during April:

Songleader: David (4/28), Chandler (5/5), Dwight (12), Stanley (19), Larry (26)

Reading: Larry; David (May)

Announcements: Robert; Marty (May)

Communion: Stanley, Marty, Chandler, David; Larry Chandler, Lakin, Mike (May)

Wednesday Lesson: Larry (5/1), Stanley (8), Kris (15), Mike (22), Larry (29),

Lawn Mowing (week starting): Larry (4/28), Kris (5/5), Billy (12), Marty (19), Stanley (26)

Singing: The Hamilton's (28), **Please note address...**17221 Forest Hill Drive--

Area Meetings: Danville Rd (4/28-5/1); Piney Grove (4/28-5/1); Hughes Road @ Gooch Lane (21 & 28 3pm); Jackson Drive (Mondays 3/11-5/13)

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

"Examine everything carefully..." -1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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ME-CENTERED RELIGION

By Bobby L. Graham

It has become increasingly fashionable to hear people protest organized or institutional religion in recent decades, as they have sought to invent their own religious systems, based on what they desire and think. This writer also finds much in current systems to protest, but for vastly different, biblical reasons. Their protests are grounded in their own selfish notions, and mine are based on the teaching of God's Word. One main impetus giving rise to the community churches of recent decades has been the emphasis on selfish desires rather than the will of God. When human beings begin to view themselves as equal to God, they begin acting so by asserting their own will over His will and arrogating to themselves divine prerogatives. The importance of the individual truly has become the central organizing thread around which so much of the thinking and teaching of our time has clustered. For this reason there has been much discussion of "The Me Generation."

Out of this emphasis on self, an entire "theology" has evolved, giving rise to me-centered religion. From beginning to end, however, such a religion is similar

to those religions so often decried by "The Me Generation," in its fundamental traits, to which we shall call attention in this article. Those traits form the basic tenets of the theology undergirding this religion.

I am my own person; nobody tells me what to do. Expressed in this assertion is the autonomy or independence of the individual from God and all others. Of course, such thinking runs into a brick wall when civil government is involved! To think that people can become so proud that they banish God from their concerns and lives in the thought that they are capable of directing their own course and that they are answerable to no one except self is the outrageous conclusion from this statement. Involved also is the idea of the authority of the individual, who views himself as supreme. He no longer is accountable to God, if there is a God. The Humanist Manifesto I and II from the last seventy years well express what has become dominant thinking with many. Many of this stripe believe that humans are the only "deity" involved in this world. Such thinking enthrones man and

dethrones God. It is difficult to appeal to such thinking for self-denial, humility, lowliness, and trust in God (Mt 16:24), or even for compassion, mercy, and kindness in human relations, when such arrogance prevails.

The entire record of divine revelation demonstrates man's amenability to God. By reason of creation God has ever had dominion over His creation. Early on, He directed Adam and Eve in their lives, though they soon manifested the spirit of self-sufficiency and autonomy that we here condemn. Whenever human beings have obeyed the Lord, whether as individuals or as nations, they have benefited greatly. On the other hand disobedience to God has always brought troubles. The Christian belongs to God in a special sense, having been bought by Him for a price, 1 Cor 6:19-20. He is obligated to live to God's glory in both body and spirit. Any doubters need to consult the inhabitants of Sodom, Jonah, or the nation of Israel to learn the value of seeking the guidance of God in their lives.

Be yourself. Guided by the basic understanding of individual autonomy, legions have fallen victim to the appeal of one strain of modern psychiatry to live out their own individual dreams, to actualize their own potential in an effort to maximize their self-realization. The most important person is "you," and the most significant culture is self-development along lines of one's own choosing. Nothing that hinders the developing of self is allowable; all else become secondary.

Against this incorrigible spirit of self-determinism lies the demand of God for the alteration of self, Gal 2:20. Only when the old self is crucified and the new self is formed in one's life, according to the

image of Jesus Christ, does one become spiritually useful to this world. To remain in the old mode of sinful living is to remain a spiritual drag and part of the world's principal problem. The changes wrought by the Lord through the power of His Spirit-given Word produce a life that is both salt and light, Mt 5:13-16. Only in subordinating oneself to the will of Christ does one escape the slavery to sin that captures the old self, Rom 6:10-18.

Your own self-realization is more important than any externally imposed creed. With the dominance of self imbedded in the modern psyche, the groundwork is likewise laid for rejection of creeds (any religious idea or ideal that infringes upon what the individual desires or conflicts with it). The stubborn will of the individual becomes the impenetrable wall guarding the person against any Biblical concept of God or man. As the Gentiles rejected the idea of God, so have many today similarly repudiated Him. Lip service is too often the only service offered, and that until conscience no longer cries out for something more. No one knows you better than you do, and nobody thinks more highly of you than you do. Thus one reasons himself into a stance of rejecting all that affords not the pleasure, contentment, or satisfaction that self demands. He then forms attitudes, speaks, and acts on the basis of what will promote his own self-realization (or self-actualization).

The value of the benevolent will of God should never be set aside. God has never spoken from whim but for man's earthly and eternal good, Deut 6:24. God's own selfish pleasure has never been the motive behind the divine mind or plan, and man's own selfish pleasure is always the motive that short-circuits the divine plan, Jas 4:3; Mt 6:24.

Express the deity (god) within you.

Though the materialist does not believe in any deity, he acts as if man is deity. He worships and serves the creature—both idols and self—rather than the Creator, Rom 1:25. Others seem to think that the human being is somewhat divine, though they fail to believe in God in any genuine Biblical sense. The outcome of this endeavor is the defying of God and the deifying of man. The saddest reality of the present is that many live their lives as if there is no God. In doing so, they impede their own spiritual development and, to some degree, obstruct the salutary influence of the Bible.


Sources of me-centered thinking...

Every major stream has its tributaries; this "stream" of thought is no exceptions. Into it have flowed the influential contributions of many decades, thus gradually conditioning the minds of people for an acceptance of what once was unthinkable. What are these sources?

- **Denominational creeds:** They have fostered the idea of diversity of thought about God and His service is acceptable. They have also encouraged people to believe what they wish, making humans the final arbiters of what they choose.
- **New Age Thought/Eastern Religions:** Being a hodgepodge of religious thought, it offers people something they want, encourages people's

autonomous view of themselves, and presents a view of humans as divine.

- **Secularism:** Possibly its major contribution has been its "Don't Worry—Be Happy" thinking.
- **Pluralism:** This concept has become a major contributing stream in its stress on there being many paths to God.
- **Ecumenicalism:** Recent decades have witnessed the merging of different religious bodies by the surrender of convictions and beliefs. In such a climate, it becomes acceptable to surrender God-required teaching to the preeminence of the individual.
- **Segmental Role of God:** Too often God has been assigned His place in life, which has usually been some small part of life or some particular time in life, instead of the totality of one's life. Such thinking motivates one think of himself as superior to God.

It is easy to see the convergence of these varied sources into the stream of me-centered religion. How many of us have not been victimized to some extent by the thinking here reviewed? May all of us guard our hearts diligently, that we might subject ourselves to God. We must view ourselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ and even speak of ourselves in this way. What a difference between the way we have viewed such matters and the way Paul frequently spoke of himself! 

Remember in Prayer

Pray for **the Hamilton's** as they return to their regular work with the Kelly Springs Road church; and thanks for your part in making our meeting a success!

Please always pray for those that

would like to but cannot meet with us, including **Lois Adams, Ruth Black, Carolyn Dennis, Tim and Dot Hice, Polly McNatt, and Hazel Teeples.** 