



Is This a Trend or a Coincidence?

Lewis Willis

Two weeks ago *The Akron Beacon Journal* published an article in their Saturday “religion” section in which the author called on religion to reject modern corruptions of worship and return to the worship prescribed in Scripture. On May 22, 2004, a second article’s author asks the religious community to “change” its conduct. I’m wondering if we are dealing with one of those cyclical shifts we hear so much about, or is this simply coincidence?

Tom Schaefer, in his article, makes the shocking charge that “. . . our faith is a mile wide and an inch deep. More style than substance. . . . We talk a lot about religion but don’t live as if it makes much difference in our lives.” He notes that we are upset about the removal of images of the Ten Commandments from public places, and we are upset at the thought of removing “one nation under God” from our Pledge of Allegiance, while we “. . . ignore faith’s precepts that make personal demands on us.”

Schaefer cites a “hard-hitting” new book, *The Future of Christian Faith in America*, written by David Yount. In his

book, Yount asks: “Is it time to change our spiritual ways?” This concept of a need for religious change is positive and hopeful to me. We have seen religion try its own way for years and look at the shallow, ineffective product it has delivered! Modern religion will teach a disciple how to prepare a great dinner that the members will love, or how to put together a great wintertime basketball program, but, beyond that, modern religion is not supplying the needs of the worshipers in times of crisis or for eternity.

Schaefer’s review states that “spirituality” has been substituted for “religion.” This new “spirituality” is called by George Barna, an evangelical pollster, “. . . a personalized, customized form of faith views that meet personal needs, minimizes rules and absolutes, and bear little resemblance to the pure form of any of the world’s major religions . . . spirituality declares that the individual is god and can make whatever rules and travel whichever paths that suit. . . . The result is a society in free fall.” Schaefer asks, “Is it any wonder see “Coincidence?” on p. 600

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Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Mike Willis

The story of Cain murdering his brother Abel relates that God confronted Cain because of his sin. As he approaches Cain, he asks him questions, not for the purpose of learning, because God is omniscient. His asking questions are for the benefit of Cain. Although he was a murderer, still God was working to save his soul. God asked Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9). To correctly answer this question, Cain would have to say, "He is in the field where I killed him." Instead, Cain said, "I know not." This was a blatant lie, for he knew exactly what had happened to Abel. However, he lied to cover his sin.



After this lie, Cain replies to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The word "keeper" is from *Áċmar*, "keep, watch, preserve." The word is also used of a "keeper of sheep" (Gen. 30:31; 1 Sam. 17:20); he asks if he is responsible to keep his brother like Abel took care of his sheep. Cain's implication is that he is not so responsible. But the Lord shows one's responsibility to his neighbor (even more so his brother) when he said, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18).

Cain knows better. His sin leads him to make foolish statements to evade responsibility before God for his sin. The *Pulpit Commentary* quotes a statement from Willet: "He showed himself a *lyer* in saying, 'I know not;' *wicked and profane* in thinking he could hide his sin from God; *unjust* in denying himself to be his brother's keeper; *obstinate and desperate* in not confessing his sin" (80).

THE WORLD'S VIEW OF ONE'S BROTHER

How does the world answer the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" There is a portion of the world who would answer, "Absolutely not!" Every man is responsible for keeping himself. How is what happens to you any of my business? He might even argue that, if one is not able to keep himself, he deserves to perish. Therefore, in the world's view, one might think that he has no responsibility to watch for his neighbor. We see examples of this attitude toward one's neighbor in the conduct of the priest and Levite in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Fortunately, not all of the world takes this attitude toward one's neighbor. In the recent hurricane Charley which hit Florida, neighbors were watching *see "Brother's Keeper" on p. 600*

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“When All Men Speak Well Of You”

Billy Norris

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches” (Prov. 22:1). But the praise and good will of men are not to be desired above loyalty to Christ. If our lives in the service of Christ bring no reproach from any quarter, they cannot be right in the sight of God. When one teaches the gospel in its purity, and lives daily by its high principles, Satan will see to it that there be opposition.

Paul not only spoke truth by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he could confirm that truth by his own life experiences. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). In preaching Christ and him crucified, he knew what it was to be opposed on every hand, in almost every city. His life was twice threatened in Jerusalem (Acts 9:23; 23:15), he was stoned in Lystra (14:19), he was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:23).

When one conducts himself in such a way that all men speak well of him, he places himself in unenviable company and brings upon himself the disapproval of the one whose favor means more than all the praises of all men. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the late prophets” (Luke 6:26). Paul knew the impossibility of pleasing God and men at the same time. “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

Christ came on a most benevolent mission — “to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He pleased his Father (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Yet he displeased many in his day. At different times he was accused of having a demon and being crazy (John 7:20; 8:49, 51; 10:20). Why would anyone hate a character so pure in his life, so compassionate in his service to humanity? Christ has given the answer: “It (the world) hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (John 7:7). It is not enough for the disciple of Christ not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness — he has the responsibility of exposing and reproving them (Eph. 5:11). When one meets this responsibility, the world will strike back, either in actual deed or by evil word.

Many years ago J.W. McGarvey wrote of the world’s reaction to exposure of its evils. “If we adhere strictly to the virtues which Christ enjoined, we shall find that the world has an evil name for every one of them.”

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1. Contend earnestly for the faith and that is called bigotry. When Saul of Tarsus breathed “threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), he no doubt had the approval and praise of his fellow countrymen. Well appreciated, he advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries (Gal. 1:1, 4). When he learned the truth, obeyed the gospel, and contended for the faith, he became a bigot worthy of death. “But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past; the Jews plotted to kill him” (Acts 9:22, 23).

2. Teach the one way of salvation, the one church, the one faith, the one baptism, and that is called intolerance. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this is exactly what Paul taught, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

One could take the more tolerant, more gracious, more loving view — that all are going to heaven but by different ways. Though this would be far more pleasing and popular and would leave the impression of a loving spirit, it does not represent the revealed will of God, nor does it show true love for lost souls. One who loves the lost will want them to accept the one faith, be baptized with the one baptism, be a part of the one body, and thereby have the one hope.

3. Insist upon obedience to every command of God, and that is called legalism. The implied meaning of this term is that one can give too much attention to complete obedience to the word of God, can take a narrow-minded (another one of those ugly words) approach to the Scrip-

tures. Have we come to a time when the commands of God are considered of little or no consequence? If we have, we are in trouble, for through the ages God has insisted upon exact obedience to his commands. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). Impressing the vital importance of obedience, Christ equates it with love for him, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

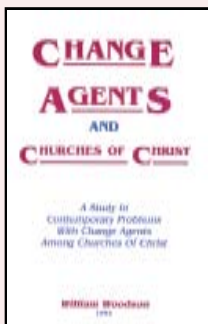
4. Put Christ’s cause first above everything else in life, and that is called fanaticism. A lady who had many disappointments in life, neglected by her husband in the last hours of her life, said, “If I miss heaven, I miss everything.” However full and pleasant our lives may be here, if we miss heaven, we miss everything. If putting Christ first in our lives, if giving up everything of earthly value in service to him is fanaticism, then this ugly term becomes a thing of beauty. The world with all its attractions has nothing to offer equal to the unending glory of the heavenly home.

Satan’s agents can conjure up ugly words to describe characteristics of the faithful — bigotry, intolerance, legalism, narrow-mindedness, fanaticism. Though they were purposefully meant to be ugly and derogatory, actually, if they represent true loyalty to Christ, they turn out to be very high compliments.

From Market Street church of Christ, Athens, Alabama

Change Agents and Churches of Christ

by William Woodson



This book contains an unanswerable refutation of change agents and their ruthless tactics among churches of Christ. Woodson says of change agents that it is time for them to go. He is an institutional preacher fighting the progressives among his own brethren His applications are relevant for non-institutional brethren as well. 324 pages.

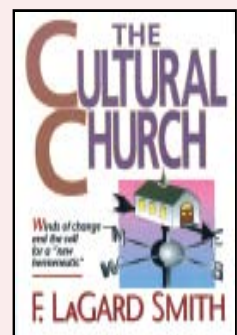
10667 PB . . . **\$9.95**

The Cultural Church

by F. LaGard Smith

This book discusses the influence of culture on the church, what lies behind the call for a “new Hermeneutic,” and asks the question, “Is there a better way to understand Scripture?” Smith is a member of the institutional church and has written on several controversial topics. 237 pages.

0-89098-1310 PB . . . **\$10.99**



The Story Behind the Know Your Bible Correspondence Course

Gene Tope

Occasionally someone will ask me when I wrote it, and why. Here is the story.

It was the year 1961. We had just returned from the U.S. and had moved to Krugersdorp, South Africa a small community seventeen miles west of the sprawling city of Johannesburg. To our knowledge Betty and I were the only Christians in the area, but with God's help we intended to sow the seed and plant the Lord's church firmly in that town. During the three previous years in Johannesburg, I had used charts and film strips with some moderate success in teaching people. But the method I found best was to sit around a table with open Bibles and teach folks the saving gospel.

Using this method with our prospects in Krugersdorp, I determined to refine this approach, limiting our study to just one particular subject each time. Rather than dealing with a lot of subjects, I discovered this type of teaching produced far better results. It was not long, maybe a year or so afterwards, I determined to put these oral lessons down on paper so the student could review what he had just learned — before going ahead to something else. Then, too, I think I was already envisioning a way in which many more lost souls could be reached, even those with whom I might not have personal contact. I knew the lessons needed to be simple, to reach as many people as possible. I was convinced the very first lesson needed to be on understanding the Bible and making a clear distinction between the Old and New Testaments. As for a final lesson, I knew that even after presenting God's plan of salvation earlier on, the student needed to be convinced of his need for baptism.

And so the *Know Your Bible* correspondence course was fashioned into much the same form as you know it today. I would arise around 5 A.M. on those cold winter mornings, sit close by our anthracite coal stove with open Bible and notebook, and work for two hours before the family ever began to stir. I'm not sure how many months it took from beginning to end of my task, but in the end I was happy with the result. I took it down to a local printer and lesson by lesson six simple black and white booklets were produced in sufficient quantities to advertise the course in the local newspaper and later on in a national magazine.



I am humbly grateful! I had no idea that my little effort would be used to the extent it has been used. I certainly had no idea in the beginning that it would be used other than locally and in South Africa. I had no idea it would ever be published for an American audience. It has been translated into a number of African languages, such as Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Shangaan, Afrikaans, as well as Spanish. I

believe it is being used in various countries around the world as well as its continued extensive use in South Africa. I have no idea how many people have been saved through the study of God's word, using the course. A number of years ago, a preacher told me of a man who, after finishing the course, had driven a hundred miles in a Canadian snow storm to be baptized. All I know is that it thrills my soul every time I hear of someone rendering obedience to the gospel as a result of their studying the *Know Your Bible* Correspondence Course. I like to think that long after I am gone, souls will still be saved because God used me in this small way.

What is the Church of Christ?

Craig Thomas

What comes to mind when you hear the word *church*? A red brick building with a cross-topped spire? A denominational organization or a hierarchy of clergymen? Indeed, if you looked up *church* in a standard dictionary both definitions would be listed.

However, most importantly, how does the Bible define *church*? In the Bible the word *church* never refers to a building or a denominational organization. It always describes *people*. When the Bible uses *church* it is describing people who have rendered obedience to God and are thus *saved*. In Ephesians 1:22-23 the inspired apostle Paul says the *church* and “*body of Christ*” are one and the same; thus synonyms describing the same *people*. In Colossians 1:18-23, Paul tells us the grand purpose of the *church*. The *church* is where sinful man is reconciled to God, that is, where man finds salvation from sin. The truthfulness of this should come as no surprise especially as we consider a very important statement Jesus made about the *church*:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My *church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

Jesus’ profound statement tells us five critical facts about the *church* found in the New Testament:

- It was built by Jesus, and thus belongs to Jesus (“*I will build My church*”).
- It was built upon a rock (“*on this rock I will build My church*”).
- It is singular, that is Jesus built only one (“*My church*”).
- It was not in existence when he lived on earth (“*I will build*”).
- It cannot fail (“*gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*”).

The *church* built by Jesus, belongs to Jesus because Jesus purchased the *church* with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Is it any wonder then that it wears his name (Rom. 16:16; Heb.

12:23; 1 Cor. 1:2)? Any *church* not purchased with Jesus’ blood, or not wearing his name, is not his *church*.

The *church* that Jesus built is built upon what “*rock*”? The rock is the foundational truth that Jesus is the Son of God. Paul said that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead “*declared*” that he was the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). Also, Peter said that the resurrection of Jesus proved that he is both “*Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). What is the significance? How could Jesus be called the “*savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23) and, how else could he add those who “*were being saved*” to his *church* (Acts 2:47) if he had not overcome sin and death? A building is only as sound as its foundation and Jesus, the resurrected Son of God, is the only foundation of his *church* (1 Cor. 3:11). Any *church* built upon any other foundation than Jesus is not his *church*.

We notice also that Jesus promised to build only one *church*, “*My church*” (Matt. 16:18). Paul confirms this by telling us that there is but “*one body*” (Eph. 4:4) and entrance into that one body is through baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The writer of Hebrews describes the *church* eloquently as the “*true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man*” (Heb. 8:2). Those Jesus “*added to the church*” (the saved) were simply called Christians (Acts 11:26). Any *church* not built by Jesus is not his *church*.

The *church* built by Jesus came into existence on the first Pentecost following his resurrection (recorded in Acts 2). People in Acts 2 heard the gospel message as Peter preached God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Upon hearing that word they became convinced of their guilt and lamented, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” (v. 37) Peter told them, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (v. 38) and when they obeyed by faith (Jas. 2:24-26) the Lord added them to his *church* (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). Any *church* that came into existence other than on the day recorded in Acts 2 is not Jesus’ *church*.

Finally, the *church* Jesus built cannot fail, the “*gates of*

Dancing

Benjamin Franklin

Why do dancers inquire of the preacher, "Is it any harm to dance?" Because it is of doubtful repute, under suspicion, not of good report. When about to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or do deeds of humanity, we never inquire, "Is it any harm?" There is no doubt about these deeds. When about to read the Scriptures, we never inquire, "Is it any harm?" When about to assemble for worship, we hear no one inquire, "Is it any harm?" We never make that inquiry when about to do anything that is manifestly right. It is the label for doubtful things. "Is it any harm to go to theater?" "Is it any harm to go to the circus show?" "Is it any harm to have church festivals?" "Is it any harm to buy lottery tickets?" "Is it any harm to go to the races?" "Is it any harm to go and see the dance?" "Is it any harm to dance?" When these questions come, if you will watch, you will see the poor weak-kneed preachers, the shaky ones. They will begin to shuffle, higggle and wriggle. "It is no worse than some plays. I am opposed to the round dance, the square dance, the French Can-Can, or the ball, with their mixed crowd," the preacher makes out to say. But the dancer proceeds: "I mean the select company, in the parlor, and limited to prudent hours, under the eye of parents." The preacher says, "That alters the case; and if your weak brother is not offended with your dancing, and you do not injure yourself, and God is not dishonored thereby, it is no harm." That is enough. The dancer returns with the joyful news: Brother _____ says, "It is no harm." That is license enough. All the dancers in the community are informed that the preacher said, "It is no harm," and his "ifs" and "provisos" are all left out, and dancing is free in the whole community.

Your preacher, after that, may tell of his "consistent opposition to dancing" till doomsday; but all the dancers will quote him on their side. He is their man. He is a strong-minded man, a man of great learning, great principles that underlie the mere truth that appears on the surface; and discourses to us of "heart culture," "the law of love," "the spirit of obedience," and delights our hearts with the profoundness of his discourses, the depth of his arguments, and the beauty and elegance of his descriptions. It is wonderful how the people admire him! Here is the outcome. The demoralizing influence runs like fire in the stubble. It is like some man said of a lie — that "it would travel half round the world before truth would get its boots on to start." A demoralizing word from a preacher will be heard, handed from hand to hand, remembered, repeated and enlarged on for an age; but words of resistance, repressing demoralization, are not often repeated, but soon forgotten; or, if repeated at all, forgotten to such an extent that the force is lost more and more, till it is finally gone forever (*The Gospel Preacher*, II:402-403).

Hades (death) cannot prevail against it." Because, Jesus, its founder, has proven that he could overcome the grave (Acts 2:24; Rom. 1:4) and thus, has become "... the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).

OUR CLAIM AND OUR AIM

Our claim and our aim are neither boastful nor arrogant. We are simply Christians, nothing more and nothing less. We are not associated with, and have no allegiance to, any denomination because denominationalism is condemned in God's word (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4). Denominationalism is antithetical to the singular nature of the church Jesus promised to build (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18). We have no earthly head and report to no earthly headquarters. Our head is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:20-23) and

he resides at the right hand of God in heaven (Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:20). Our aim and sole desire is to imitate those in the New Testament who were members of Christ's *church* (Acts 2:42, 47). To meet this goal we use God's word as our only guide (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17) for we believe, as Jesus himself said, that "he who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

350 Pineridge Ln., Sandusky, Michigan 48471

A Stack of Waffles

Craig Meyer

Are you a “waffler”?
If so, I urge you to make the needed correction in your life. Get off the fence of wishy-washiness and evil compromise. If you are not for Christ, you are against him (Matt. 12:30). Begin today by clinging to God (Josh. 23:8). Let him be the Rock of your salvation

INTRODUCTION

I love waffles for breakfast, don't you? They are best when drenched in real butter and maple syrup. Some folks enjoy them with fruit, pecans, powdered sugar, chocolate syrup, or even peanut butter! Waffles can be turned into ice cream cones. You can buy a packaged breakfast food called “Post Waffle Crisp cereal.”



Our English word “waffle” is from the Middle Dutch *wafel* (their word for wafer) and is related to the Old English *wefan* (to weave). This makes sense when we recall the grid-like pattern on this delicious breakfast treat.

“Waffle” can be used in another sense, i.e., as a verb denoting equivocation and vacillation (the latter word derived from a Latin word meaning “to sway, waver . . . 1a: to sway through lack of equilibrium b: fluctuate, oscillate; 2: to waver in mind, will, or feeling: hesitate in choice of opinions or courses; synonym see hesitate). I

have never heard (or used) the verb form of waffle in a good sense. This is not surprising since this use of the word describes a person or thing that is uncertain and unreliable.

In recent election years in the U.S., it has been common to hear politicians throw out the verb form of waffle, accusing their opponents of equivocating and vacillating concerning issues and positions. I recall back in October 1992 when presidential incumbent George Bush, Sr. was running against then Democratic hopeful Bill Clinton that the Bush campaign planned an event at a restaurant called the Waffle House, in a last-ditch effort to convey the message that Clinton was a “waffler.” Four years later, Jay Leno of “The Tonight Show” said this in a monologue before the 1996 election: “60 Minutes is hiring Bill Clinton and Bob Dole to do a point-counterpoint segment where they debate two sides to an argument. Why do you need Dole? Clinton likes to waffle, he can do both sides.” Recently, in this election year of 2004, Democratic hopeful John Kerry has been caricatured as a “waffler” (cf. Gregg and Evan Spiridellis’s Internet cartoon “This Land”).

It is not the intent of this article to make an analysis of past or present political history, but rather to show that the verb use of “waffle” has invaded the political arena and has impacted the vocabulary of American pop culture. Without resorting to gimmickry, I sincerely believe there are

some relevant spiritual lessons to be gleaned from this peculiar usage of “waffle.” I ask that you consider “A Stack of Waffles.”

Man (without God) is vacillating and unfaithful (erratic). See Proverbs 21:16; 24:21; Hosea 6:4; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 13:9; James 1:5-8; 4:8. By way of contrast, *God is faithful* (see Deut. 7:9; 31:6; 1 Kings 8:56; Pss. 36:5; 89:1; Isa. 54:10; Lam. 3:22-23; Mal. 3:6a; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 6:18; 13:5-6; Jas. 1:17; 1 Pet. 4:19. Cf. hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (*Hymns For Worship Revised* #23).

The word of Man (any human doctrine based outside the Bible) is untrustworthy and unreliable (see Matt. 15:7-9; Col. 2:8, 20-22; Tit. 1:13-14). By way of contrast, the word of God always is trustworthy and reliable (see Pss. 111:7; 119:138; Luke 1:4).

If we stand outside God’s word, we are doomed to flounder and to wander aimlessly. We must stand firmly upon God’s word. (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 4:14; Matt. 10:22; Heb. 12:1; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 3:11).

We need *less* people who are like:

- The feeble-minded Israelites on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:21). That crowd was guilty of “flip-flopping” (suddenly reversing their direction or position); they were like a “yo-yo.” Furthermore, they were “wimps” (weak and cowardly people) who “waffled” on idolatry.
- Many Israelites after the Assyrian invasion and conquest (2 Kings 17:33, 41).
- Many Israelites in the day of the prophet Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:4-5).
- The man who thinks he can serve two masters at once (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13).
- The man who thinks he can eat from two tables at once (1 Cor.

10:21).

- The man who thinks he can go forward by looking backward. (Luke 9:62).
- The man who built his house on the sand (Matt. 7:26-27).

We need *more* people who are like:

- Joseph (Gen. 39:7-18, esp. v. 9).
- Moses (Num. 12:7).
- Joshua (Josh. 24:14-15).
- Caleb (Josh. 14:6-12).
- Samuel (1 Sam. 15:22-23, 33).
- David who gave such wonderful advice to Solomon (1 Chron. 28:9).
- Josiah (2 Kings 22:2).
- The sons of Korah (Ps. 84:10-12).
- Daniel (Dan. 1:8; 6:4).
- Daniel’s three friends (Dan. 3:16-18).
- Nehemiah and his co-workers (Neh. 4:7-20; 6:15-16).
- Stephen (Acts 7:51-60).
- Peter and John (Acts 4:19-20).
- Paul (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; cf. 2 Cor. 1:15-20).
- The man who built his house on the rock. (Matt. 7:24-25; cf. 1 Cor. 10:4).
- Jesus (Luke 9:51; John 13:1; 14:18; Heb. 2:17; 10:23; Rev. 1:5; 19:11).

All these righteous souls understood the necessity of adopting a firm, unwavering stand upon God’s truth. They were individuals who refused to “waffle.” Of course, the best example from this list is Christ himself.

Correcting errors and/or repenting of sin is not the same as “waffling.” (1) No one is beyond the need for positive correction and change. (2) All Christians are commanded to grow (Eph. 4:15-16; Phil. 1:27; 2 Pet. 3:18). (3) God’s saints must put off continually that which is filthy and put on that which is clean (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10; cf. Job 17:9). (4) All who walk in the light will strive to correct and confess errors and mistakes (1

John 1:7, 9). If and when we sin, we must manifest genuine repentance; godly sorrow will produce a change in our heart (2 Cor. 7:9-10; cf. Matt. 21:28-30), resulting in a change in our life (fruit worthy of repentance — see Matt. 3:8).

If I hold a certain position and someone convinces me from the Bible that my position is incorrect (wrong) and shows me from the Bible that another position or view is correct (true), it is *not* waffling if I make the necessary change! It is *wrong* for me to remain in error when someone shows me the truth! See Acts 8:18-24; Job 11:14-15.

Finally, why do people “waffle” in the moral/spiritual arena? There are several reasons: (1) They love *self* too much (2 Tim. 3:2). (2) They love the *world* too much (2 Tim. 3:4; 1 John 2:15-16). (3) They do not love the Lord enough (Matt. 22:34-40). (4) They yield to the pressure of sinfully compromising the truth. Nehemiah refused to waffle on the plain of Ono (Neh. 6:1-4). He knew that such action would be sinful compromise with the enemies of Israel. (5) Their life is built upon shifting sand, not solid rock. See hymn “The Solid Rock” (378), especially the chorus.

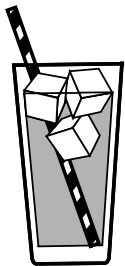
CONCLUSION

Are you a “waffler”? If so, I urge you to make the needed correction in your life. Get off the fence of wishy-washiness and evil compromise. If you are not for Christ, you are against him (Matt. 12:30). Begin today by clinging to God (Josh. 23:8). Let him be the Rock of your salvation (Pss. 18:2; 95:1). Turn away from the perilous shoals and reefs of human speculation (cf. Jude 12-13) and embrace the sure and certain word of the living God. Say as did the Psalmist: “I hastened and did not delay to keep Your commandments” (Ps. 119:60).

5:2) so that you will be able to stand on the Judgment Day (Rom. 14:10b; Eccl. 12:13-14; Matt. 25:31-33; cf.

Alcohol — Just Another Drink?

T. Sean Sullivan.



I was told one time, “A beer is just another drink.” I found this statement rather curious. I was being told that beer is just like soda pop, milk, water, or Kool-aid. So logically speaking I could conclude that soda pop, milk, water, or Kool-aid would be just like alcohol. Let’s see if this works.

Do we strictly regulate the production and sale of Kool-aid? Has there ever been a segment of our government, federated specifically for the policing of Kool-aid? Do we restrict the use and sale of Kool-aid to those who are twenty-one or older? Is Kool-aid sold specifically in Kool-aid stores where proof of age is needed before the purchase transaction can take place?

When is the last time we caught some teenagers tearing open a little foil package and dumping it into a jug of water that they were able to sneak out of the house? How often do we need to send cleaning crews out on the sides

of the roads to pick up all the discarded empty packets of Kool-aid? How many times have you heard of someone having their two quart plastic jug discovered and seized after they were attempting to produce and sell Kool-aid at their home?

Do we find people going into dark secluded bar rooms filled with smoke and music to have an afternoon shot of Kool-aid? Do we see people drinking too much Kool-aid starting to get loud, obnoxious, or violent? How many fights have ever broken out over misunderstandings brought on by the drinking of Kool-aid?

Has Kool-aid ever caused one to be drunk and involved in wild parties? Has Kool-aid ever induced adultery, fornication, unclean behavior, or lewdness? Has Kool-aid ever been behind hatred, contentions, jealousies, or outbursts of wrath? Has Kool-aid ever caused anyone to become selfish or cause dissensions? Has anyone, after drinking too much Kool-aid, ever been full of envy and driven to murder another?

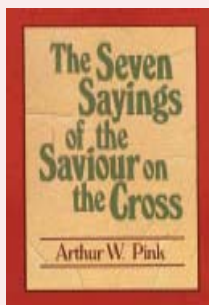
Do we see marriages splitting up because of a spouse refusing to stop drinking Kool-aid? How many people go into anonymous group meetings to declare that they are addicted to Kool-aid? Do we ever find a man desperately clinging to his last few drops of Kool-aid before he passes out in an alley somewhere? How many heartbreaking news stories do we hear about, “*another Kool-aid related accident*”?

Kool-aid is not like alcohol and alcohol is not “just another drink.” I do not want these thoughts to be taken as facetious. The truth of the matter — alcohol is the number one mind altering drug used in the United States of America.

There is only one drink that is specifically warned against in God’s word: alcohol (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18). Alcohol can destroy your mind, your body, and can certainly lead to the destruction of your soul. A product that is capable of this much harm must be put far

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The Godhead and Jesus

Don Wright

What is the Godhead? The word Godhead is found three times in the New Testament (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9), and comes from the word *Theos*. The expression denotes the state of being God. We use similar words to refer to those in the state of being children, men, or women (childhood, manhood, womanhood). Childhood describes all those in the state of being children. Godhood or Godhead describes all who have the attributes of God, i.e., all who are in the state of being God.

The Bible refers to three persons who are in the state of being God. The Father (1 Cor. 8:6), the Son (Heb. 1:8), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3, 4). All three of these persons have all of the attributes of deity, i.e., they are all omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal. In this article I am particularly interested in showing that Jesus is a member of the Godhead, and therefore he is a divine being. There are many, some even among churches of Christ, who would try to deny the deity of Christ. Let us see what the scriptures have to say about the matter.

JESUS IS JEHOVAH

One way of showing the deity of Christ is to show that the name Jehovah is applied to him. Some do not realize that Jesus is referred to by the name Jehovah, but it is true. Consider these Old Testament passages applied to Christ in the New Testament:

Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” The word *Lord* is the word *Jehovah* in the original. Now notice how this passage is applied to Jesus in Matthew 3:3: “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” In the first two verses of Matthew

3, it is clear that Isaiah spoke of John the Baptist. John is the one who would prepare the way for the Lord. Well, for whom did John prepare a way? Obviously it was for Jesus. If there is any doubt about this, compare Luke 1:76 with John 3:28. Both of these passages talk about John going before one and preparing his way. However, one indicates that he would go before Jehovah, and the other one before Christ. Be sure to take a look at that. Without question John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. Hence, we have Isaiah referring to Jesus as Jehovah in Isaiah 40:3.

Joel 2:32: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” Much of this verse sounds familiar to most, even those who have not spent a lot of time studying the book of Joel. Why? Because Paul quotes Joel in the popular epistle of Romans. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). There should be no doubt at all that Paul is referring to Christ Jesus, the Son of God. We are to confess the Lord

Jesus with our mouth, and believe that God has raised him (Christ) from the dead (v. 9). So, Paul applies the Joel passage to Jesus, but again the word Lord used by Joel is Jehovah. Joel, then, refers to the one who would be Christ, i.e., Jesus, as Jehovah.

Another combination of passages that is helpful in making the point that the name Jehovah is applied to Christ is Isaiah 8:14 and 1 Peter 2:8. Isaiah tells us that Jehovah would become a stumbling stone to the house of Israel. Peter quotes Isaiah’s words and again applies them to Jesus. Read those passages. You will see again that the one we call our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, is Jehovah.

JESUS IS GOD

This is not to say that the Father and the Son are the same person, for clearly they are not. In John 1:1 we are told the Word (Jesus before he took on flesh) was with God, i.e., with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The preposition “with” implies mutual association, and it emphasizes a personal relationship between two or more persons; hence, Jesus and the Father are two different persons. Jesus is called God, not because he is the same being as the Father, but because he is a part of the family of deity. Here is a list of passages that you can examine and see that Jesus is referred to as God: Hebrews 1:6-9; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 3:15, 16.

JESUS WAS WORSHIPED

The Bible teaches clearly that only God is to be worshiped. Jesus acknowledged this when he was being tempted by Satan to worship him (Matt. 4:10: “. . .for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”). Jesus was worshiped by his disciples after he walked on water (Matt. 14:33). (The fact that Jesus did not object to it is very revealing.) Furthermore, angels of God were commanded to worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6). This proves that Jesus is God.

JESUS CLAIMED EQUALITY WITH GOD

Every time Jesus said he was God’s Son, he was, indirectly at least, asserting his deity. He was affirming his equality with God, i.e., that he was the same kind of being as God. This is why the Jews wanted to kill Jesus when he claimed to be the Son of God. They viewed it as blasphemy. Jesus knew what they thought, but never did he tell

them that they had reached a wrong conclusion. Why not? Because their conclusion was right (John 5:17, 18; 8:24, 56-59; 10:30-33).

What about Deuteronomy 6:4? In Deuteronomy 6:4 the record says, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, The Lord is one!” Is this statement in conflict with the position that Jesus is Deity, or for that matter, with the Trinitarian doctrine of the Godhead? No! The word “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4 is the Hebrew word *echad*. According to authorities on Hebrew words, this word refers to a united one. This is certainly in harmony with New Testament passages that use the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *echad* (John 17:17-22; 1 Cor. 1:10; Matt. 19:5, etc.). The Father and the Son are one in work, word, doctrine, judgment, creation, etc.

Yes, Jesus is a part of the Godhead, and therefore deity. But does that not mean that we believe in more than one God? Am I a polytheist because of the things that I have written in this article? No! It is not polytheism to believe that there are three persons that make up the Godhead. Polytheism is believing in gods or deities. I do not believe in deities, I believe in a deity, i.e., one state of being God. I do not believe that there are a plurality of gods, I believe that there is one God. But whether I comprehend it completely or not, there are three persons who are divine in nature, and they make-up the Godhead of the Scriptures.

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An Idyllic Earthly Kingdom

Frank Himmel

“There is something fundamentally wrong with the world. It will be in war and turmoil and trouble until a new world order comes. This cannot be fulfilled until Christ returns and sets up His kingdom. Then, and only then, nations of the world will abandon their instruction of war. Then, and only then, will there be peace and tranquility over all the world for a thousand years as Christ reigns on earth” (John Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* 151). Is this the nature of Jesus’ kingdom?

PROPHECIES OF PEACE

A favorite passage of premillennialists is Isaiah 2:1-4, which foretells people hammering their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. How shall we understand these expressions? Premillennialists insist on a strictly literal interpretation — or so they say. Even they admit that people are no longer fighting with swords and spears. Common sense says we should let the New Testament inspired writers tell us what these mean.

Isaiah said these things would happen “in the last days,” an era Peter affirmed had begun on Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17). The cause would be the word of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem, precisely what Jesus ordered the apostles to do (Luke 24:47). And Paul discusses in detail how people who were once enemies have in Christ been reconciled to one another as well as to God (Eph. 2:11-22).

Another favorite passage is Isaiah 11:6-9, depicting Messiah’s reign. It says the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, cows and bears will graze together, lions will eat straw like oxen, and children will play by the holes of poisonous snakes, yet all will be unharmed. Once more, we are told this must be understood literally, despite the fact that in the preceding verses Messiah is wearing the belt of faithfulness and slaying people with his breath! Besides, Isaiah says the cause of this condition is that the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord. Can animals learn God’s plan? Would it change their very natures?

Paul cites this passage in Romans 15:12 and applies it to Gentiles (the nations) peacefully coexisting with Jews in Christ. Isaiah said God will “on that day” gather the remnant of his people. The New Testament refers to those in Christ as “the remnant of His gracious choice” (Rom. 11:5). Paying closer attention to the inspired interpretations of these and like prophecies would prevent many fanciful speculations.

“NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH”

The New Testament does promise new heavens and a new earth when Jesus comes (2 Pet. 3:13). Isaiah had used this expression to describe the kingdom of Christ (Isa. 65:17; 66:22); interestingly, he connected this phrase with the two prophecies we have already considered (65:24-25). Peter, who said that all the prophets spoke of the days of Jesus’ first coming (Acts 3:24), characteristically borrows this Old Testament expression to describe what lies beyond Jesus’ second coming. Is Peter predicting a renovated old earth? No, he explicitly says that “the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (v. 10), then for emphasis repeats that description (v. 12).

The meaning of this expression is simple. The old order of separate Jewish and heathen kingdoms passed away at Jesus’ first coming. The present order of Jesus ruling both Jews and Gentiles in a spiritual kingdom will pass away when he returns. Heaven awaits (see Rev. 21).

JESUS’ TEACHING

Jesus never depicted his kingdom as an idyllic earthly one. To the contrary, in the parable of the tares, he said that its citizens would live side-by-side with sons of the evil one (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The parable of the dragnet repeats the point (Matt. 25:47-50). Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matt. 10:34-39); that is, differing reactions to him would set former friends and loved ones at odds. He said that being a citizen of his kingdom might even cost one his life, but if so, that is the price of discipleship (Matt. 16:24-28). As he told Pilate,

“Just So You’re Sincere”

Larry Ray Hafley
Joe R. Price

Know why more people are not interested in Bible studies? Or why they often are not bothered when their ordinances of worship are challenged and refuted? Chiefly, it is because they do not think it matters *what* one believes. If one believes Jesus is the Son of God, that is good enough for many people — “After all, doctrines don’t matter; it’s what’s in a person’s heart that counts; just so one is sincere, that’s all that is important.”

Religion must be the only area in which “sincerity” rules and reigns supreme, for it is a failure in every other sphere of life:

1. *If a doctor sincerely, but mistakenly, makes an incorrect diagnosis, does his sincerity save the patient?*

2. *If a pharmacist or a nurse gives the wrong pill to the sick, do good intentions spare the person from disastrous side effects?*

3. *If a commanding officer trains off-shore guns against his own men on the beach, does the enemy suffer the consequences because he meant for them to be the target?*

4. *If a ball player runs the wrong way and scores a goal for his opponent, does his enthusiasm give the points to his team?*

“My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

For all Christians there is one hope (Eph. 4:4). It is not living in a paradise earth, but receiving an inheritance “reserved in heaven for you . . . to be revealed in the last time” (2 Pet. 1:4-5). Is that your hope?

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5. *If a driver believes he is on the right road but is headed in the wrong direction, will he reach his destination?*

6. *If a mother unknowingly serves tainted food, are her children spared?*

Who will say Jacob did not sincerely believe Joseph had been killed (Gen. 37:33)? Did his sincere grief make it so? Who will say the prophets of Baal were not sincere in their idolatry (1 Kings 18:26-29)? Sincerity did not make the religious fervor of the Samaritans and Athenians approved of God (Acts 8:9-11; 17:22-31). Saul’s intense service did not justify him (Acts 23:1; 26:9-11). Neither devout Jewish nor Gentile souls were saved in their zealous sincerity (Acts 2:5; 10:2; 11:14; Rom. 10:1-3; cf. Gal. 4:17). If an atheist is sincere, will he be saved in his sincere unbelief (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6)? If not, sincerity alone is not sufficient.

Finally, let no one be upset by this article. After all, since I sincerely believe what I have written, those who object cannot condemn me!

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

My Brother, My Lord

by Michael Tackett

A rare perspective of New Testament times through a close-up view of James, the brother of Jesus. Glimpses of Jesus as the common man from Galilee, “the carpenter’s son.” A study about James and the inheritance he left us through his writings.

Sodomy

Dick Blackford

When the AIDS crisis began, almost one hundred percent of all cases were spread by homosexual behavior. Those who were bisexual in their practices then spread it to others. Sodomy is the suicide of a society. If everyone practiced it the human race would die out. It is a running sore on the face of a nation. . . . Each downward step into decadence leads to another. If this is permitted then we can probably expect pressure in the future to legalize group marriage and pedophilia.

The ordaining of a bishop who openly practices sodomy, the corruption of priests being immoral with young boys, the accusations of pedophilia against a pop-rock icon, the efforts of some states to recognize homosexual unions and the move to approve sodomite marriages have certainly pushed the issue to the forefront.

There are three classes of homosexuals: (1) those who are ashamed of it and keep their practices a secret — the strugglers, (2) those who have or are actively correcting their sin — the healers, (3) those who are militant, arrogant and actively promoting sodomy as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

BIBLICAL DEFENSE?

Those who seek to give a biblical defense argue from what they believe was the silence of Jesus about sodomy. They say Jesus did not condemn it. We should let Jesus speak for himself. He said, “He who made them *at the beginning* made them *male* and *female*, and said, for this cause shall a *man* leave his father and mother and cleave unto his *wife*” (Matt. 19:4, 5). *That is the rule!* Let defenders of sodomy find the exception. They cannot. God did not create a third sex as militant promoters want to pretend. Notice that sodomy is a violation and rejection of the pattern God gave. Notice also that the *female* is the *wife*. Another plan has been substituted for God’s. Sodomites believe “there is no pattern.” We have often pointed out

that when men start denying that God teaches us with patterns that there is no end to which it can lead. Brethren who have ridiculed and blasphemed the idea that God teaches us by giving us patterns will be left defenseless against the sodomy movement. They will not be able to tell sodomites that God gave us a pattern for the family. Meanwhile, we should heed Paul’s admonition to “Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

Furthermore, Jesus condemned fornication, which is a general term that includes any form of illicit sex (unmarried heterosexuals, married heterosexuals with those to whom they are not married, group sex, sodomy, bestiality, pedophilia, necrophilia). All sexual acts outside a biblically sanctioned marriage are sinful.

We also have Jesus reminding his disciples of the terrible destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:29). A look at Genesis 19 shows Sodom was practicing homosexuality. Thus, the terms “sodomy” and “sodomite” have universally referred to this perversion of God’s order for the family. Same sex marriages did not even receive honorable mention. Every time sodomy is mentioned it is always in a bad light.

Even if they were right about Jesus, what should be done with numerous other Scriptures that condemn sodomy? The argument is flawed.

It is like saying John 3:16 doesn't condemn kidnapping! God, through his apostles and prophets, had other things to say on the subject. Here are a few such passages (Lev. 20:13; Judg. 18:9; 19-23; Deut. 23:17; Rom. 11:22-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:9,10; Jude 7, 8).

BRIEF HISTORY AND EFFECT ON SOCIETY

When the AIDS crisis began, almost one hundred percent of all cases were spread by homosexual behavior. Those who were bi-sexual in their practices then spread it to others. Sodomy is the suicide of a society. If everyone practiced it the human race would die out. It is a running sore on the face of a nation.

William Barclay, commenting on homosexuality, said: "This was the sin which had swept like a cancer through Greek life and which, from Greece, invaded Rome. We can scarcely realize how riddled the ancient world was with it. Even so great a man as Socrates practiced it; Plato's dialogue *The Symposium* is always said to be one of the greatest works on love in the world, but its subject is not natural but unnatural love. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors practiced unnatural vice. At this very time Nero was emperor. He had taken a boy called Sporus and had him castrated. He had then married him with a full marriage ceremony and took him home in procession to his palace and lived with him as wife. With an incredible viciousness Nero had himself married a man called Pythagoras and called him his husband. When Nero was eliminated and Otho came to the throne one of the first things he did was to take possession of Sporus. Much later than the Emperor Hadrian's name is forever associated with a Bythian youth called Antinous. He lived with him inseparably, and when he died he deified him and covered the world with his statues and immortalized his sin by calling a star after him. In this particular vice in the time of the Early Church the world was lost

to shame; and there can be little doubt that that was one of the main causes of its degeneracy and the final collapse of its civilization" (*Letters to the Corinthians* 60).

Each downward step into decadence leads to another. If this is permitted then we can probably expect pressure in the future to legalize group marriage and pedophilia.

In 1970, a White House Conference on Children declared: "America's families are in trouble — trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation" (*Time Magazine* [12/28/70]). Dr. Paul Popenoe, founder of the American Institute of Family Life, warned: "No society has ever survived after its family life deteriorated" (*Ibid.*).

It is now thirty-three years later and we are seeing their warnings coming to fruition. The glorification of sodomy is one aspect of a broader picture.

BIOLOGICAL CAUSE?

Some have surmised or wished that there was a "gay gene" that would justify homosexual behavior. None have been discovered.

A few years ago a homosexual scientist, Simon Levay, conducted studies on the brains of homosexuals who had died. He concluded that homosexuals have a smaller hypothalamus than heterosexuals. It was never determined whether this was the cause or the result of homosexuality or whether it had anything at all to do with the practice. Such studies have often been flawed by biased researchers. Such an hypothesis opens the way for every kind of perversion.

Perhaps the person who fornicates with an animal (bestiality) is merely doing what his biological makeup dictates. It may be that the pedophiles (those desiring sex with children) and the necrophiles (those with an erotic attraction to corpses)

are also motivated by a quirk of the old chromosomes or an over active hypothalamus — not to mention the sadomasochists and exhibitionists. There is as much evidence that these aberrations are biologically induced as there is for sodomy. They stand or fall together. Why "justify" only sodomy, except for the reason that sodomites have become a powerful, militant political force in society? Although some societies have been notorious for sodomy, none has legalized same-sex marriages until recent times — not even the Greek or Roman Empires.

A front running presidential candidate recently made an absurd statement. In explaining that his "Christian faith" convinced him to sign into law his state's civil-unions law: "The overwhelming evidence is that there is very significant, substantial genetic component to it. From a religious point of view, if God had thought homosexuality is a sin, he would not have created gay people."

First, there is no such evidence that there is a genetic cause, so how can it be overwhelming? Conversely, we have been overwhelmed by the absence of such proof. Even those conducting such tests have admitted this. Second, the politician tries to make God, instead of himself, appear confused. Numerous times throughout the Old and New Testaments sodomy is condemned in no uncertain terms. Yet he has God creating people that way. Where did the politician get his misinformation? The creation shows he made a *male* and a *female*. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33). Third, his twisted logic leads to justification for every form of immorality. For example, following his reasoning, "If God had thought pedophilia was a sin, he would not have created pedophiles." Or, "if God had thought bestiality was a sin, he would not have created bestialists." Or, "if God had thought stealing was a sin, he would not have created thieves." And who is to say the murderer is not simply following the dictates of his

genetic makeup? Such is the foolishness of men who are desperate to justify sin for political gain. Fourth, highly educated men are not immune from saying some really ridiculous things. Fifth, we should be concerned for our country when such men are in high positions of authority.

A POSSIBLE AND REASONABLE EXPLANATION

Some psychologists who accept God's view of sodomy as a sin, believe it is a developmental disorder and a treatable condition. Such is the view of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH). They believe "the basic cause of male homosexuality is an emotional detachment from the father or the father figure and that becomes the foundation of insecurity about the person's own masculinity and his desire to make that male connection, that male bonding" (*The Good News, Hope For Homosexuals* [Sept./Oct., 2003] 20). It is an emotional need which the individual mistakenly thinks can be fulfilled through same-sex relations. "The weight of the evidence supports the hypothesis that the probable cause of homosexuality is conditioning" (Bill W. Flatt, Jack P. Lewis, Dowell Flatt, *Counseling Homosexuals* 73).

More and more homes today are characterized by absent, distant, or weak fathers. This does not mean every child growing up in that situation will become homosexual, but it does make it more conducive for an increase in homosexuality. The homosexual is not responsible for his conditioning, but he is for his behavior. It is time for fathers to show that they are true *men*.

WILL HOMOSEXUALS RESTORE THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE?

Since so many heterosexual marriages are ending in divorce, we are being told by some in the media that homosexuals are going to restore the institution of marriage by giving us examples of true commitment. But the AIDS crisis (which early on was confined almost totally to the homosexual community and is now pandemic) shows there is great promiscuity with multiple partners and little commitment. Even if homosexuals restore commitment, which is not likely, this would not restore the institution of marriage for it consisted of a *male* and a *female* (Matt. 19:4-9).

HOMOSEXUALS CAN CHANGE

When the apostle Paul named sodomy as one of the prevalent sins at Corinth, he noted that "such *were* some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 6: 9-11). Notice, "they *were*" (past tense). In a society where sodomy was acceptable, there were people who left that way of living upon their repentance and were able to overcome this temptation.

The unproven argument that there is a biological cause

for any sin is an attack on God. It says God made people that way and then forbids the practice. It is an attempt to shift the blame to God, something Adam did in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:12). One may be sexually disoriented but it wasn't caused by God. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals are expected to control their desires. Homosexual acts, like heterosexual acts, are voluntary choices. Self-control is a forgotten virtue in our enlightened age of self-indulgence (1 Cor. 9:27).

Homosexuals are flesh and blood people as are heterosexuals. The issue has never been whether God loves them (he does) or Christ died for them (he did). It is whether God endorses or condemns homosexual activity and whether it is essential that one repent and seek God's forgiveness, just as one must for other forms of fornication. God's gift of his Son is available for all but will not benefit any who are proud in their rebellion against him.

EVOLUTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Humanists approach life from the general theory of evolution, rather than from a biblical view. Their manifesto says, "We reject all . . . moral codes that . . . suppress freedom. . . . The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered evil" (*Humanist Manifesto, I & II* 18).

The view that we are merely animals is the foundation of immorality. If what we are can be attributed to evolutionary chance, then no one is responsible and nobody can be blamed for his behavior. When left to man to determine his own moral standard (if any), he always sinks to the lowest level.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, . . . Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, . . . For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:22-28).

(Note: This article appeared in three installments in the Jonesboro SUN, Jonesboro, Arkansas.)

If a thing will go without saying — let it.

Why Do People Divorce?

Dave Morrison

We hear the terms “irreconcilable differences” or “incompatible” when the papers are drawn up in a divorce. These terms often hide the real reasons for two people, who once proclaimed love for one another, to go their separate ways. The real culprits are things like money problems, sex, religious differences, adultery, drunkenness, mental cruelty, etc. Whenever divorce is involved you can be sure “sin” of one kind or another is involved.

Many of these marriage problems can be avoided by not making mistakes in dating. A man sat down on a plane and noticed the fellow next to him had his wedding ring on the wrong finger. He said, “Sir, excuse me, but do you realize you have your wedding band on the wrong finger?” The man replied, “That’s ok, I married the wrong woman.” That is why dating is so critical.

Divorce is rampant in our country, up 500% over the last fifty years. Sixty years ago, one in eight marriages ended in divorce. Today, it is one out of two.

Why do people divorce? Two major reasons seem to surface, “unwise” decisions and “hard-heartedness.”

How can I have a happy and successful marriage? The answer is not that complex.

1. Recognize that God intends for the marriage relationship to last a lifetime. Our society has the idea that marriage is “disposable.” If things don’t work out we will just get a divorce and find someone else to marry. This attitude is ungodly. Matthew 19:3-9 makes it clear that marriage was intended to be one man and one woman for one lifetime (1 Cor. 7:10-15, 39). The child of God does not view divorce as a solution to marriage problems.

2. Realize that you are making a commitment and sealing it with an oath before God. God does not require men to make vows (promises, oaths), but God does expect those who make vows to keep them (Num. 30:2-5).

What vow do we make when we marry?

“I take thee to be my wedded wife/husband. To have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death do us part. According to God’s holy ordinance, and with this ring, I pledge thee my love.”

Your vows may have been slightly different, but it is “till death we do part.” We are promising to be with this person for the rest of our lives. God witnesses this vow. Remember, “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth” (Num. 30:2).

Marriage can be broken for only three reasons:

1. Death of a wife or husband. “For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband” (Rom. 7:2).

2. Sexual immorality can also sever the marriage. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matt. 19:9). The innocent party who divorces their spouse for the cause of fornication is free to remarry.

3. The unbeliever chooses to leave. “If the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases” (1 Cor. 7:15). This does not mean they are no longer married, but are bound to the Lord first. The word for bondage (*douloo*) in v. 15 is used one hundred times in the New Testament and not once does it refer to the marriage relationship. In v. 27 the word “bound” is used to refer to the marriage relationship, but it is a different word in the Greek (*deo*). Why did Paul not use this word in v. 15 if he was referring to marriage? Simple, he is teaching Christians that they are bound to Christ not to unbelievers. They are “not under bondage,” that is they do not have to subject themselves to the unbeliever if they choose to depart.

Christ's Church Lives Forever

Fred Melton

There are, it seems, considerable periods of time throughout history when the Lord's church was not recorded in the annals of man. However, we are thoroughly confident that as long as Christ, the head of his church lives in heaven, there is now and always was a body on earth, albeit small and insignificant to man, nevertheless, important to God.

While in England, I chanced upon an account of a small church in Furness dating back to the 1600s (seventeenth century); however, the precise date and source does now escape me. They were called the church of Christ, and items of worship were listed as the "communion" (Lord's supper) observed every first day of the week; "singing" — without an instrument, "lay preaching," contribution into a common treasury, and a plurality of elders. If this account be confirmed, it would predate the work of such English reformers as John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and the Haldane brothers by one hundred years.

Alexander Campbell was born in Antrim, Ireland in 1788 and was contemporary with Glas, Sandeman, and the Haldanes. Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell were already members of the Seceder movement, a conservative element of the Presbyterians, when they attended Glasgow University at slightly different periods. It is very probable that the religious atmosphere of that University highly influenced the thinking of both Campbells. An influence,

The believer must remain unmarried or be reconciled to their spouse (v. 11). The believer recognizes the vow even if the unbeliever chooses to depart. This does not mean they are now free to marry. Regardless of what the unbeliever may do, they are called upon by the Lord to remain unmarried or be reconciled. There is no third option.

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I might add, that did not form overnight. How long before that time had it taken shape — fifty years, one hundred, two hundred — who knows?

James Macknight also attended Glasgow University about fifty years before the Campbells where he gathered much of the material used in his Apostolic Epistles. Macknight (1721-1800) would have been almost seventy years old when Alexander Campbell was born (1788-1866). Another very real influence upon the thinking of the Campbells was taking place outside the University community about this time. Some reformers began to adopt the views of a group called the Bereans, "who after the example of the ancient Bereans, professed to build their religious system on the scriptures alone" (*Memoirs*). John Glas of the Scotch Baptist and Robert Sandeman, who had adopted independent views as far back as 1728, were preaching their ideas throughout Scotland. Sandeman "advocated weekly observance of the Lord's supper, love-feasts, weekly contributions for the poor, mutual exhortation of members (mutual ministry), plurality of elders" (Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*).

However, Sandeman's view that "faith is merely a simple assent to the testimony concerning Christ; that the word faith means nothing more than it does in common discourse" moved Richardson to comment, "It does not appear that Alexander acquired at this time anything more than a general knowledge of the history of these parties (I believe he did). If he became at all acquainted with the peculiar views of Sandeman in regard to faith, it is certain that he was far from adopting them, and that, even after his emigration to the United States, he continued to hold essentially the views on this subject entertained by Presbyterians."

The point is that such doctrines as infant baptism, frequency of the Lord's supper, church discipline, and plurality of elders were being discussed and debated early in the 1700s and did not simply arise overnight. These views certainly did not escape the notice of the Campbells. James

and Robert Haldane were from a fairly wealthy sea faring family, who financed many of the reformer's activities, and were preachers in their own right. Alexander Campbell was indeed affiliated with the Haldanes and their conservative doctrines for a time. Although Alexander may not have known Macknight personally, the Haldanes did.

"It is related that James Haldane, when a lad, made a tour along with one of his school fellows, George Ramsey, through the North of England, accompanied by his teacher, Dr. Adam. They traveled on horseback, and were accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Macknight, the well-known commentator, whose practical disregard of the Lord's day made a deep impression on his fellow travelers." In speaking of this, the author of the *Memoirs of the Haldanes* says:

Although Dr. Adam was not an enlightened man in spiritual things, he had been accustomed to reverence the outward symbols of religion. But when they had crossed the border and arrived in an Episcopalian country, Dr. Macknight persuaded his learned friend that, being now out of the bounds of the Presbytery, and under no obligation to countenance prelatical (Episcopal church government) worship, it would be very absurd to allow their journeying plans to be deranged by the intervention of the Sabbath. For a time, Dr. Adam felt very much ashamed when they entered a town or village where the church-going bells were calling the people to the services of the sanctuary. But these scruples were soon overcome by the doughty commentator."

Richardson continues,

It must not be understood, however, that Presbyterians in general sanctioned Dr. Macknight's views in regard to Jewish observances, or that such cases as those referred to, would at all fairly represent the opinions they held with regard to the first day of the week, or Sabbath, as they made it a point to call it. And such cases were just as far from representing the sentiments of Alexander Campbell and

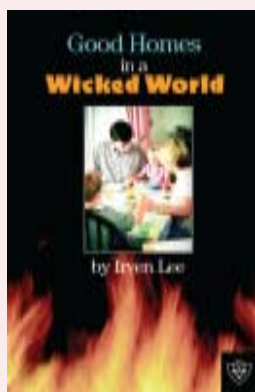
those associated with him. For, although he regarded the positive and ceremonial institutions of the Jewish law to have been fulfilled in Christ, he felt disposed to reverence and honor the day which was commemorative of the fact that Christ rose again for our justification" (Richardson, *Memoirs*).

Alexander Campbell was "greatly pleased with the free renderings and annotations of Macknight on the Epistles and Doddridge on the Acts of the Apostles, and Revelation" (*Memoirs*). There is no doubt that the writings of Macknight reflect the religious views of his day.

It is very probable that the religious thought during this period at the University and among the dissenters and reformers extended back to our Furness church of the seventeenth century and beyond. During the 1970s while traveling through Turkey and Greece, I had the opportunity to visit biblical church sites such as Ephesus, Pergamum, Troas, Philippi, and Thessalonica; there is no sign of these ancient churches left today. However, I entertain no thoughts that Christ's body, though a little thin at times, has ever been dead or disappeared from the earth, even before the common man could read or write. No doubt, God had reserved unto himself 7,000 souls that had not bowed their knee to Baal.

I believe that the terms "restoration movement" and "return to the ancient order" have one fundamental flaw. They imply that the Lord's church was restored and returned to the ancient order, when in fact, there was always a very small remnant undetected in history but acceptable to God. Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 2:1) that "some will depart from the faith" — some does not mean all. Let us take him at his word. The restoration movement simply brought the church back into historical view.

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Is God Male?

Kyle Pope

The *Kansas City Star*, in their weekend “Faith” section posed this question to a denominational preacher and a Jewish rabbi: “Should we refer to God as he, she or it, and why?” Although the two writers approached the question from different angles they both reached about the same conclusion. They suggested that it doesn’t really matter which pronoun one “chooses” because the Bible uses female and male metaphors to describe attributes of God. It seems to me that the whole issue reflects some fundamental problems which were ignored.

HUMAN GENDER

When God created human beings as well as animals he made them “male and female” (Gen. 1:27; 5:2; 6:19). These distinctions are essential for earthly reproduction. What determines whether one is male or female is a matter of physiology, chemistry, and anatomy. In most creatures, if the creature has male organs and an X and a Y chromosome, it is a male. If the creature has female organs and two X chromosomes, it is a female.

The Bible does not teach that God reproduces, has a mate or gender distinctive reproductive organs or chromosomes. God is spirit (John 4:24). Nevertheless the Bible does use masculine names and pronouns to refer to God. Yet, just as the descriptions of God and Jesus as “Father” and “Son” reflect something different than the human reproductive relationship, any description of gender must be understood in a different sense than earthly concepts of gender.

BIBLE NAMES FOR BIBLE THINGS

What is strange is the fact that both authors treated this issue as a matter of human choice. A world which imagines that it can choose its own worship, doctrine, and behavior imagines that it can choose to characterize God as it sees fit. The real question is how does God refer to himself?

Genesis 1:27 is the earliest passage where this question is addressed in relation to earthly gender. The text reads: “So God created man in His (own) image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”

(Gen. 1:27, NKJV). Several elements of this text are important. First, the name “God” is translated from the Hebrew word *elohim*. Hebrew, like most languages distinguishes nouns as either grammatically masculine or feminine. The name *elohim* is masculine. Next, we should note the verb “created.” Unlike English, Hebrew verbs have forms that not only communicate person (i.e. first person — “I,” second person — “you,” or third person — “he, she, or it”) but also gender (i.e., if the “you” is male or female, or if the third person is masculine “he” or feminine “she”). In this text the verb translated “created” is the Hebrew word *yivrah*, the masculine singular form, meaning literally “he created.” Finally, we note the phrase “His [own]image.” Hebrew communicates the pronoun “His” with a suffix attached to the end of the noun “image.” In this case the pronoun is the third person masculine “He.”

If we are to refer to God as he refers to himself, we must speak in the masculine. Anything else is not a matter of “choice” but change.

BIBLICAL DISTINCTIONS

It is clear that both men and women are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), but it is also clear that the Bible teaches that there is some sense in which there is a distinction in the nature of this likeness (or reflected glory) as it pertains to man and woman.

In Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians he is forced to address the problem that some in Corinth were having honoring gender roles in Christ. Some of the women in Corinth seem to have been rejecting a custom widely practiced in that day as a sign of submission to male authority — the wearing of a head covering. To remedy this Paul appeals to creation itself. The apostle writes through the Holy Spirit: “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:7-9).

In this text Paul appeals to the sequence of creation (i.e.,

man was created first) and then the means of creation (i.e., woman from man's rib) to suggest a distinction between God's likeness and glory to man and to woman. In the context man is the glory of God and woman is the glory of man.

This does not suggest any devaluation of women, it is simply a matter of sequence, relationship, and authority. However, it does suggest a distinction that cannot be ignored without disregarding a portion of Scripture.

MODERN GENDER WARS

It is little wonder that a generation that seeks to make women act like men and men act like women would seek to entangle God in the same gender wars that so plague our world. Does this question really stem from a desire to characterize God accurately, or does it come from the politically correct tendency towards feminism? It seems to me that many in our world are simply uncomfortable with

accepting what the Bible teaches about creation, male and female roles, and God's hand in both.

If Scripture refers to God in the masculine does this insult woman? Of course not! God is the Creator of both sexes. If man was created first, and woman was created from man, does God love woman less? Of course not! Jesus died for both men and women. If God has established different roles of authority and responsibility for men and women, is God abusing women? Of course not! It is no more an abuse of women that they are not given the role of headship in the home (Eph. 5:22, 23) than it is abusing men that they are not given the ability to bear children (Gen. 3:16).

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Everlasting Punishment

John Isaac Edwards

That the Bible teaches everlasting punishment, none can really deny. The question is not: "Will the wicked be punished?" Nor is the question: "Will the punishment be without end?" The question is: "What will be the nature of everlasting punishment?"

1. Not Loss of Being, But Loss of Well-Being. The Lord said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Here the verb "destroy" does not indicate extinction or annihilation, but ruin, loss of well-being. As the "lost" sheep did not suffer extermination, neither will the wicked suffer obliteration (Luke 15:4). So it is in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians as he stressed the final, eternal and irrevocable character of the ruin: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from* the presence of the Lord, and *from* the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9).

2. Not Unconscious Rest, But Conscious Torment. The wicked share the same fate as the devil and his angels, according to the teaching of the Lord in Matthew 25:41. Revelation 20:10 records, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Again it is written, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Rev. 14:11). The word "torment" implies consciousness. Does the warden first give anesthesia, before inflicting torture on prisoners under interrogation?

The abode of the wicked after death and judgment is commensurate with the abode of the righteous. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). To weaken the nature of the punishment is to strengthen the hands of the wicked (Ezek. 13:22).

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“Coincidence” continued from front page

that human life has been degraded to the point that any behavior is acceptable?”

AGAIN I SAY, “IT’S ABOUT TIME!”

Undoubtedly, it is time for modern religion to be called to the way of the Lord. Whatever resemblance it ever had to the religion of Christ has been sacrificed to a “give me what I want” approach that has no relation at all to the religion of Scripture. Yes, a call for “change” is appropriate and needed. And, yes, Schaefer is right when he says making this change will be like “turning around the Queen Mary,” but it is an essential change if religion is ever going to get on the same course as the Lord. Given what we see and know of denominationalism, one finds optimism hard to find in religion’s potential to change.

TO THE STANDARD

If a God-approved change is going to occur, there must be an acknowledgment of the standard for it. I suspect a worldly-minded religious community will find living according to God’s standard not only surprising, but also unacceptable.

Christ will have to be recognized as King and Lord. He is, after all, King and Lord, or ruler, of all (Rev. 17:14). His rule must be accepted; his rule is the only one that matters. However, modern religion has relegated Christ to such an unimportant role that it will find it difficult to enthrone him as King.

His headship authority will have to be accepted. He is the head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). His authority must be recognized on the earth, as it is in heaven (Matt. 28:18).

Christ exercises authority through his word. If a worthwhile change is to be wrought in modern religion, his word must be accepted. Thus, before he acts, man must go back

to Scripture for authority; every action and teaching must be authorized and validated by his word (Col. 3:17).

Religion cannot love the world if it is going to change to please God (1 John 2:15-17). The “me” generations that populate the modern religious scene will find this tenet most difficult to accept. Most of their lives center around worldly, ungodly pursuits that have become part of modern faith for most practitioners of religion; they love the world!

If a correct change is going to be made, men must love God. This love is not simply talked about; it must be lived. Love for God manifests itself by keeping his commandments (1 John 5:3). Unfortunately, commandment keeping is one of the most rejected concepts in modern religion; man does not want to be told what, or what not, to do! No absolutes are permitted that will limit men’s actions today.

CONCLUSION

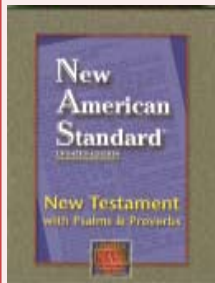
We can hope that there is a trend away from the “do anything you wish” religion of our day, but little evidence can be seen indicating that the faith community is ready to move in that direction. If it is, and if it does change, let us pray that the change will not be limited to superficial concerns. Let religion return to the “old paths” instituted by God; go all the way back to the teaching of the gospel. Patterning our worship, work, and living after the word of the Lord will save us from sin and from ourselves. But, as much as we would long to see this change occur, we are reminded of how the call to the “old paths” has been received in the past. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and *ask for the old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. *But they said, We will not walk therein*” (Jer. 6:16).

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“Brother’s Keeper” continued from page 2

out for neighbors, trying to help relieve their suffering, put their houses and lives back together, and such like conduct. There were a few who saw the misfortune of their neighbor as an opportunity to price gouge, but civil authorities saw the need of one neighbor “keeping” another neighbor; they stepped in to prosecute such greed. There is still a lot of good in men!

WHY I SHOULD BE MY BROTHER’S KEEPER

There are good reasons why one should be his brother’s keeper. Think about these:

- **He is my brother.** Especially in the case of physical relations, there should be a bond of affection between brothers. Surely Cain’s heart was not so hardened that he

had forgotten the childhood memories of his brother. There should be some brotherly kindnesses in one's heart toward a family member which stirs the heart when his brother is in trouble. Can you imagine how you would act were your brother to be missing? Would you drop everything you were doing and go in search of him? Would you be there to comfort those whose hearts were broken by his absence? How could one be so calloused as to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

• **He may get lost without my keeping.** How many times has an older brother helped a younger brother? Did you have an older brother who helped you? I had several! When I was injured in a lawn mower accident, my brother Don and brother-in-law Billy donated blood for my recovery. When I went away to college, my brother Cecil had arranged help to pay my college expenses; my brother Lewis offered me the use of his credit card to buy gas. My brothers thought that they were their brother's keeper.

At times a brother's help may keep one from heading down the wrong path in life. A brother's good example may be what gives direction to a younger brother's life. A brother's love may be what calls an erring brother to repentance. When one brother watches for the welfare of his brother, he may save his soul from death (Jas. 5:19-20).

• **I owe it to him.** Because of the bond that we have as brothers, I bear responsibility toward him to be his "keeper." Most assuredly, one is forbidden to interfere in another's life, but that is not to justify indifference and neglect.

There are obligations of a positive nature that come from the recognition that I am my brother's keeper. Paul wrote, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2). James said, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (5:19-20). Ezekiel was held responsible as a watchman over the house of Israel to warn his brother of spiritual danger. The Lord said to him, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul" (3:16-19).

Should one see his brother headed away from the path

revealed in God's word for men to walk, he has moral responsibility to reach out to save his brother. How can one who is a brother sit idly while his brother moves further and further away from God's revealed word?

FAR BEYOND FAILING TO KEEP

The sad fact of Cain's sin is that his sin went beyond failing to "keep" his brother. His sin against his brother was not indifference and neglect; it was active ill will. In Cain's case, he became jealous of his brother's acceptance before God. God tried to get Cain to repent saying, "Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:6-7). But Cain did not listen to God's rebuke. Instead, the way he handled the fact that God rejected his sacrifice and accepted Abel's sacrifice was to kill Abel. Man's conduct toward his brothers is sometimes equally hostile. Think of some examples of this active hostility.

A man is so greedy that he smuggles illegal drugs into the country and lures his neighbor's children into purchasing these drugs to satisfy his greed. In addition to persuading the youngster to violate civil law and waste his money, he also endangers his life. Such a youngster may become hooked, overdose on drugs, and die. My brother's keeper? Hardly! Rather, he is my brother's murderer! Others commit similar sins against their brethren by luring them into pornography, persuading a spouse to cheat on his mate, or tempting him with some other sin.

Active hostility comes in other forms in the local church. A brother becomes jealous of his brother's good influence in a local church. He decides that his own position will never be what he wants it to be unless he first gets rid of the brother who is so highly esteemed. If the highly esteemed brother is the preacher, the jealous brother may start a campaign saying, "It is time to make a change in preachers." Or, he may look for some local church issue as political opportunity to undermine the influence of the preacher, criticize how he handled the problem, or otherwise create such dissatisfaction with his work that he persuades a faction to run him off. Without any concern for the preacher's needs (to provide for his family), his children's needs (some give no thought to the preacher's children entering their senior year of school), or his wife's needs (her need for stability in her life), the preacher is dismissed, if not fired (after all, the preacher is disposable). To justify sinful conduct, such brethren sometimes resort to making false charges against the preacher to make brethren think that he has "gone liberal" (thus besmirching his otherwise impeccable reputation). Such conduct has occurred in enough places, that no doubt some are asking, "Is he talking about our congregation?" (The situation is hypothetical, not real.) We have witnessed it happen again

and again. Those who are determined to rule a congregation are sometimes willing to overthrow an eldership, divide a church, or run off a sizable number of members to gain control of the congregation — all in the name of loyalty of Christ, of course! Such conduct more nearly resembles that of Diotrephes (3 John) than Jesus. Jesus said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20).

Active hostility may take the form of gossip, slander, or making false charges. But, in whatever the case where this occurs, there is a clear violation of Bible ethics — ethics that predate Christian ethics. Long before Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the

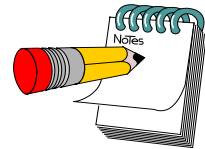
law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12), Moses wrote, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18). And long before Moses penned these words from the Pentateuch, God showed Cain that he had moral responsibility to be his brother’s keeper.

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Preachers Needed

Clyde, Ohio: The congregation at Greenlawn Church of Christ is in need of a preacher. Their preacher, Russell Pannell, has preached there since 1961. Due to his having macular degeneration of the retina, which is an incurable disease that causes blindness, his ability to teach is now limited. He is completely blind in one eye and has limited sight in the other one. They are seeking an experienced gospel preacher. They are a small congregation of 25-35 and their ability to support a preacher is limited. If they are unable to support a preacher full-time at some point in the future, there may be a need for additional outside support. For further information, please contact Russell Pannell at 419-547-9467 or write to him at 242 N. Church St., Clyde, Ohio 43410. You can also e-mail Ed Boyce at eboycejr@neo.it.com.

Quips & Quotes



No Actively Gay Pastors

“The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Narrowly voted July 2 to maintain sexuality standards for church officers. It was a significant defeat for practicing homosexuals who want to be pastors and elders.

“Delegates to the church’s General Assembly in Richmond, Virginia, voted 259-255 to retain a 1978 policy that prohibits ‘unrepentant homosexual practice’ among church officers in the 2.5 million-member church. The language, which the church’s 1993 assembly held is ‘authoritative,’ also says it is unconstitutional to ordain ‘self-affirming, practicing and unrepentant homosexuals.’

“Trying to rescind the ‘authoritative interpretation’ from 1978 was a necessary first step for groups wanting to dismantle a constitutional provision adopted in 1997. The provision mandates ‘fidelity within the covenant of marriage . . . or chastity in singleness’ for clergy.

“The ‘fidelity and chastity’ language has already survived two attempts to overturn it. The vote keeps all current standards intact until the assembly meets again in 2006 in Birmingham, Alabama.

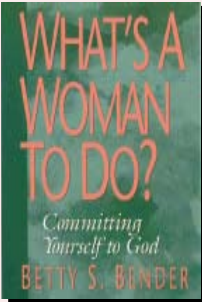
“The church’s new moderator, Rick Ufford-Chase, supports gay ordination” (Christianity Today [September 2004]. 25).

Mother Jailed For Smoking in Front of Her Children

“Richmond, VA — A Virginia mother was sentenced Thursday to 10 days in jail for defying a court order not to smoke in front of her children.

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"Tamara Silvius, 44, who has said she smokes about a pack of cigarettes a day, was led from a Caroline County courtroom in handcuffs. But the judge later allowed her to post a \$500 bond to stay out of jail while she appeals the ruling" (The Indianapolis Star [August 13, 2004], A5).

California High Court Voids Gay Marriages

"San Francisco — The California Supreme Court on Thursday voided the nearly 4,000 same-sex marriages sanctioned in San Francisco this year and ruled unanimously that the mayor overstepped his authority by issuing licenses to gay and lesbian couples.

"The court said the city's decision to issue the licenses and perform the ceremonies violated a 1977 state law that defines marriage as a union between a man and woman.

"The justices separately decided with a 502 vote to nullify the 3,995 marriages performed between Feb. 12 and March 22, when the court halted the weddings" (The Indianapolis Star [August 13, 2004], A1).

Arkansas Catholics Told to Give Up Bingo

"Little Rock, Ark. — The Roman Catholic bishop of Little Rock has outlawed bingo in his diocese to comply with state law that deems most forms of gambling illegal.

"Bishop J. Peter Sartain wrote to pastors and administrators last month in his diocese of more than 100,000 Catholics, telling them to stop the games, which are banned by the state Constitution. Only pari-mutual wagering at race tracks in Hot Springs and West Memphis are allowed.

"We're all stunned," said the Rev. Tom Byrne of Conway's St. Joseph Catholic Church and School, where bingo has supplemented the budget for 27 years.

"We don't get any tax support. Tuition is never enough to meet the expenses. Doing without it or finding an alternative is going to be difficult" (The Indianapolis Star [August 14, 2004], F3).

Same-Sex Vows Valid, Says Judge in Seattle

Seattle — Gay couples can marry under Washington state law, a judge ruled Wednesday, singling out critics who consider such unions dangerous to children.

"Ruling in favor of a challenge to the law restrict marriage to

"It's a real conflict for me when I go to a concert and find somebody in the audience who is a Republican or a fundamental Christian. It can cloud my enjoyment." Singer, Linda Ronstadt as quoted in Christianity Today, September 2004.

one man and one woman, King County Superior Court Judge William L. Downing said there is no evidence that same-sex marriage threatens youngsters in non-traditional families.

"Although many may hold strong opinions on the subject, the fact is that there are no scientifically valid studies tending to establish a negative impact on the adjustment of children raised by an intact same-sex couple as compared with those raised by an intact opposite-sex couples," Downing wrote.

"Barring same-sex marriages serves no state interest and violates the constitutional right of gay couples to due process, he ruled.

"The state Supreme Court must review the case before same-sex marriage licenses may be issued, said Jennifer Pizer, lead counsel in the case for Lambda Legal Defense" (The Indianapolis Star [August 5, 2004], A6).

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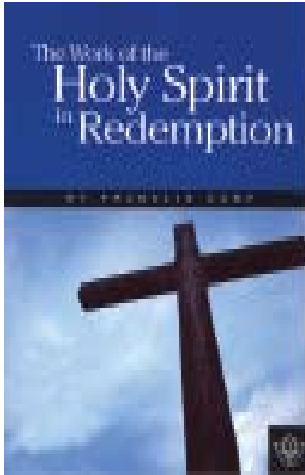
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