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## I Saw A Blind Lady Today

Richard Boone

It was a busy afternoon as Becky and I scurried around with last-minute details before “Jr.,” our third child, arrived. We needed a few items at Sam’s, and while we were there, we ate lunch (our girls love their pizza!). A family at a nearby table finished their meal and gathered their belongings to continue shopping. We were caught off-guard by the fact that the mother, who was carrying a three-month old boy, was totally blind. Our hearts broke. It was all we could do to maintain composure.

I thought about what she would never see with her children, especially that baby. She would never see his first smile, nor the gleam in his eye of the first Christmas he realizes something special is happening. She won’t see school pictures, nor his various forms of handiwork. She won’t see the anticipation and enjoyment of a birthday party, or the proud glow of a driver’s license picture. She won’t see commencement exercises (high school/college), weddings, or her grandchildren. She will, indeed, miss a lot that we take for granted.

But then I thought about a greater blindness. What about those who, with physical vision, never really see what life is all about? We know people who are in the darkness of sin, being blinded by the god of this world and ignorance (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:18). Jesus is the great light that shines in the darkness (Matt. 4:15-16), and we can be lamps by our personal godliness (Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15). In our collective work we can be pillars of truth for our respective communities (1 Tim. 3:15). As much as we strive to do in holding forth the word of truth, the saddest reality is dealing with those who are blind because they refuse to see (Matt. 13:13-17).

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Then a thought occurred to me: **Am I blind?** Am I letting opportunities slip by to be guided by God’s lamp (Ps. 119:105, 130)? Am I blinded by the glitter of this world so that the word is choked from affecting me (Mark 4:18-19)? Does my light shine to lead people to Christ or do I

see “Blind Lady” on p. 215

# Editorial

## Preach the Kingdom of God

Vol. XLII April 2, 1998 No. 7

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### Mike Willis

In recent years, much has been written to criticize the gospel preaching of a previous generation, stating that they preached the church instead of Christ. One brother did a study of restoration sermons to conclude that restoration preaching has always had a fundamental flaw in not preaching the core gospel message — the message of the cross. Bill Love wrote, “From the very first something of the core gospel was missing in our Restoration preaching” (*The Core Gospel* 152).

Another brother has recently written that when one preaches “the one true church,” “the one that worships right,” “the one that teaches the truth on baptism,” etc. he has fallen into a trap that stresses allegiance to a movement instead of allegiance to Christ. “Such an emphasis involves preaching ourselves. It’s sectarianism,” he wrote (*Christianity Magazine* 15:1, 17).

A generation has arisen that is unwilling to preach sermons that contrast the Lord’s divinely revealed church with the denominations of men. Some do not want sermons that emphasize such things as the following: (1) One must be a member of the Lord’s church in order to be saved; (2) Water baptism is a condition for salvation; (3) The New Testament reveals a pattern for the worship of the church; (4) The New Testament reveals a pattern for church organization; (5) The church that wears an unrevealed name is guilty of sin. Such sermons are offensive to our religious neighbors and, therefore, should not be preached. Without expressing this conviction so boldly as our liberal brethren have done, some among us apparently have reached the same conclusion, if one can judge by what is no longer being preached in meetings and taught in bulletins. (How long has it been since you heard a sermon on the “identifying marks of the church of Christ?”)

Please consider whether or not one moves away from the central message of the gospel when he preaches on the church.

### The Kingdom

The church is known by various names, including the “kingdom.” The figure of the “kingdom” emphasizes the royal rule of King Jesus. Luke records that Jesus revealed to his Apostles “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” after his resurrection (Acts 1:3). Indeed, he preached the kingdom both before and after his death. The word “kingdom” occurs 158 times in 150 verses in the KJV. Most of those appearances occur in the Gospels. Matthew used the word kingdom 56 times in 54 verses; Mark

see “*Kingdom of God*” on p. 215

# The Harrell Booklet on the Bounds of Christian Unity

Connie W. Adams

In November 1988, Ed Harrell wrote an article in *Christianity Magazine* entitled “Homer Hailey: False Teacher?” This article grew out of what brother Harrell called “the personal attack on Hailey” and said this article “is my personal defense of Homer Hailey as a man who has earned the respect and esteem of the Christians of our time.” He referred to “the recent personal attacks on him” and said they “seem to me to be an unheroic assault on an 85-year-old warrior.” While it was true that several brethren (this writer included) had reviewed the public teaching of brother Hailey on marriage, divorce and remarriage, after the incidents at El Cajon, California and Belen, New Mexico, *all* of these reviews took pains to express love and respect for brother Hailey as a man. Nobody attacked his character or integrity. It was his public teaching which was being examined in light of what the Bible teaches on the subject in question.

Very frankly, brother Harrell owes an apology to those who reviewed brother Hailey’s position for his mischaracterization of their reviews. Had that been forthcoming long ago, it would have relieved much of the tension which has developed since. It is one thing to review what a brother has publicly taught and quite another to indict his character. Now, in a strange twist, the character of those who have opposed the Hailey position has been seriously challenged. We have been treated to articles and lectures bemoaning the “lack of integrity” of some brethren who have been outspoken on the subject.

*This article by brother Harrell on brother Hailey is a watershed event in the history of the present controversy over Romans 14 and the issue of fellowship as it concerns the marriage, divorce and remarriage issue. It was this article which led to the series of 16 articles by brother Harrell on “The Bounds of Christian Unity” which ran from February 1989 to May 1990. Now that this has been published as a booklet, I lament the fact that the Hailey article was not included in the booklet for it provides the backdrop of this series.*

It is now being said that this series was only an historical study of how brethren have dealt with matters of difference over the years. With much of what brother Harrell wrote in this series, we have no complaint. That he is a well-trained and eminent historian is beyond dispute. But in the course of these 16 articles, he made some statements which have given voice to a widening difference over Romans 14 and the implications of it

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as it is considered in relation to the matter of divorce and remarriage. In summarizing the division which produced the Christian Church, brother Harrell wrote, "In short, by the end of the nineteenth century Christians generally recognized that the movement was dividing not because of doctrinal questions, *but because of different mindsets*" (my emphasis, CWA). *I fear that we now have different mindsets at work and the issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage and related questions of fellowship of those who would make room in the churches for adulterous marriages simply demonstrates these two mindsets.* One mindset views Romans 14 as dealing with matters of permitted liberties while the other views it as an umbrella under which all manner of differences may be tolerated, both in the realm of doctrine and morals.

Brother Harrell wrote, "It is obvious that Christians sometimes disagree about scriptural instruction, even in matters of considerable moral and doctrinal import" (*Christianity Magazine*, May 1989, 6). He proceeded to say that this is the "issue addressed in Romans 14." It is on this basis that "unity in diversity" is promoted. This same argument was advanced by W. Carl Ketcherside, Edward Fudge, R.L. Kilpatrick and others to extend the umbrella of fellowship to include instrumental music, institutionalism, premillennialism, and a host of other things. While brother Harrell would not accept the conclusions of these men, he has left the gate open just as surely as those men have. *The arguments advanced by brother Harrell have become a rallying cry for those of the same mindset.*

### **Faith and The Faith**

It is true that in Romans 14 the term "faith" is used to describe matters of conscientious scruple. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23) concerns the brother who violates his conscience. But "the faith" on the subject is "there is nothing unclean of itself" (v. 14). On that basis "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (v. 5). The issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage must be settled by the passages where God has addressed that subject (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:1-4; 1 Cor. 7). You can no more put adulterous marriages into Romans 14 than you can instrumental music or missionary societies. "The faith" will not allow it. Unauthorized practices cannot be rightly included regardless of the degree of honesty and sincerity of the proponents of such practices.

### **Harmful Consequences of Erroneous Teaching on Romans 14**

The outcroppings of this view of Romans 14 are becoming more evident with each passing day. Consider the following consequences:

1. *Error is minimized.* Questions such as "who has the list?" of things to include or exclude from Romans 14 leave the impression that truth and error are so scrambled that

we cannot sort them out and the only alternative is "unity in diversity."

2. *The danger of false teachers is obscured.* Whether or not a teacher is honest and sincere does not mitigate the damage which error does to the soul and the harm it causes to congregations. Out of this has grown the bizarre view that unless a brother possesses the character liabilities of 2 Peter 2, then we dare not call him a false teacher. 2 Peter 2 is not the only passage which deals with error or false teachers.

3. *This mindset contributes to relativism.* We have an ever increasing number of "grey areas." Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). "Buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23). Truth can be ascertained. Marriage is the most basic of all human relationships. Can we not know the will of God on such a fundamental issue? This is at the bottom of the shift in the content of preaching we are hearing. *The fear of appearing to be authoritarian, dogmatic, or one of those "black or white guys" has led to watered-down preaching with its story telling, personal experiences, lessons from movies or television shows.* Reading a passage of Scripture, putting it in context and then coming straight at the audience with practical applications would be a great novelty in some pulpits now.

4. *This mindset promotes elevating men beyond "what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).* We can all learn from good men who have studied well. All of us believe in showing "honor to whom honor" is due. But good men can be wrong and their influence can lead souls astray. No doubt, Paul had great respect for Peter, but that time at Antioch Peter was wrong in his conduct toward Gentiles and Paul withstood him "to the face" and that "before them all" (Gal. 2:11-14). Later, Peter referred to Paul as "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). We do our good friends no favor by ignoring the harmful effects of erroneous teaching.

5. *This mindset leads to fellowship with all forms of error.* If Romans 14 is elastic enough to encompass adulterous marriages, then what is to prevent acceptance of unscriptural worship in the form of instrumental music? Rubel Shelly has room for both in Romans 14. I do not charge brother Harrell or those who stand where he does with going that far. But unless I have seriously misjudged history, their students will do so. The student often outruns the teacher.

The publication of these articles in booklet form means that there is no backing away from the positions advocated to which a number of us have taken exception. The circulation of this booklet can only widen the gap for where it appears, there will be those of us who will review it and point out the dangers of statements made which some of

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# What Part Is It You Don't Understand?

Johnie Edwards

A question in a Winston ad is, "What part of 100% you don't understand?" I got to thinking about so many plain passages that so many seem not to understand. So, we ask?

1. *What Part Of Mark 16:16 You Don't Understand?* Jesus simply said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). A lot of people seem to have trouble with this passage. So, I ask, what part of this you don't understand? Did Jesus say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"? Yes or no? Is it a matter of understanding or a matter of just not wanting to obey the command to be baptized?

2. *What Part Of Acts 2:38 You Don't Understand?* Peter told believing Jews, who asked, ". . . what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) to, ". . . Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Does the passage say that repentance and baptism is *for the remission of sins*? Do you not understand it that way? Just what part of it you don't understand? Or, could it be you have been listening to some preacher tell you that baptism is not necessary in the first place?

3. *What Part Of Ephesians 5:19 You Don't Understand?*

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us believe to be erroneous. This also poses a dilemma for some of brother Harrell's close associates who said after the appearance of these articles that they did not agree with what he said about Romans 14. Do they now agree, or do they not? We shall see.

In the meantime, all of us must study our Bibles, keep open minds to any truth which has eluded us, guard our hearts, maintain proper love and respect for each other, but above all, for the truth revealed in the word of God.

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Paul wrote the Ephesians to the effect that music is to be vocal. Yet, most think the Bible teaches that the use of a mechanical instrument of music is acceptable. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs *singing* and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Just what part of this you don't understand? Did Paul say the music was to be singing? Did he saying anything at all about playing a mechanical instrument? Could it be that most folks understand the passage in light of what most churches practice or what the New Testament really says?

4. *What Part Of Acts 20:7 You Don't Understand?* The Bible teaches that early Christians met every week to observe the Lord's supper. It is written in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came to together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. . ." (Acts 20:7). What day does the first day of the week come on? Is it not Sunday? Does every week have a first day? It surely does. So, the Lord's supper is to eaten every first day of the week? What part of this you don't understand?

5. *What Part Of 1 Corinthians 16:2 You Don't Understand?* Most churches bind Old Testament tithing and take up collections every time they meet, regardless of the day. Paul ordered the Corinthians, "Upon the *first day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2). Do you understand that the day the laying by in store on is the first day of the week? Is not the giving to be according to one's prosperity? Do you see, in the passage, any other way for the church to raise its funds to do its work? Just why is it that you don't understand in this simple passage?

6. *What Part Of Ephesians 4:4 You Don't Understand?* Paul says, ". . . there is one body." He told the Colossians, ". . . for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). If there is one body and the one body is the church, how many churches do you understand that to be? One or more than one?

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# A Shocking Parade Show

Larry Ray Hafley

Under the headline above, Diane T. Byars, wrote the letter below to the editor of the *Houston Chronicle*.

On Martin Luther King Day, there was a parade in his honor down Main Street. . . I stopped to enjoy the music and the parade. But what I saw was very upsetting.

There was a drill team of about 30 young, well-developed, prepubescent girls marching proudly along, carrying a sign identifying their school. The group stopped in front of me and performed their routine — which was very suggestive. I am not a prude and even several people standing near me also were aghast. Their outfits were very revealing — they left nothing to the imagination.

Later, I looked the school name up in the telephone book and was shocked to find that it is an elementary school in the Houston Independent School District. That my tax dollars were used to finance this kind of exhibitionism is appalling to me.

Someone in authority . . . has shown very poor judgment. Someone chose their outfits and got them approved by others in authority. And what about the mothers of these girls? I have two daughters, and I would never let them wear outfits like that.

With teenage pregnancies and single motherhood for 12 and 13 year olds so prevalent, this sort of thing

seems to practically encourage inappropriate behavior. With this behavior condoned by those in authority, these young girls are being sent a clear message that early acting out sexually is OK, that teen-age preg-

nancy is OK, and that dropping out of school to become mothers is OK.

These young girls will never have the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty if they choose that route. Shame on the school's administration that dropped the ball here. The parade sponsors don't intend to promote this (sexual promiscuity, fornication, unwanted pregnancy, LRH), but they might do well to monitor the groups included in their parade so this sort of things does not recur.

I think this is very important. I am afraid for the future of these young people in such a permissive environment.

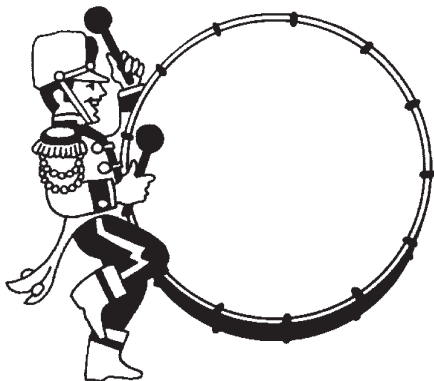
Amen! And Amen!

What is your first impression of the letter above? Do you find it hard to believe that such a letter appeared in one of the nation's top ten newspapers? Me, too. I trust that you rejoice that there are still those in this world who will speak up and speak out against lascivious behavior, indecent, immodest apparel, and who will insist that such lewd dress and demeanor never occurs again. Can you say, "Amen," to that?

## **"However, While I Agree In Principle . . ."**

From criticisms we have heard lately from some of our brethren, I wonder if we might assail the lady's wonderful words with these curious and singular objections.

*First*, who does this lady think she is? Who appointed her to be our civic "watchdog"? She is probably part of a group of "snarling curs" who have a "pack dog mentality," always ready to bite and devour those who oppose their divisive, hidden agendas. Surely, as she herself admits, those in authority did not "intend to promote" the alleged evils to which she refers, so what right does she have to bark against our well intentioned educators? She speaks of appointing monitors. What next — a "moral-monitor" civic police unit?



*Second*, who gave this lady the authority to define what is sexually “suggestive” and what is impure “exhibitionism”? Where would she draw the line? How much clothing would be enough to satisfy her definition of modesty? What kind of movement of the body would not be suggestive and exhibitionist? Is she going to provide lists and guidelines for acceptable parade dress and display? If not, she should forbid such things in her own parades, but she should allow others to conduct their own parades as they choose.

If this lady is allowed to define what is suggestive and alluring, and if we allow her to change our public parades, what will we say when she goes after our schools’ cheerleaders? Before we allow her to set public moral standards, we had better consider what her guidelines will do to the prom and other school dances. If we do not stop this lady here, what else will she want to regulate — the attire and behavior at our public swimming pools?!

*Third*, each school district is an independent, autonomous unit. Diane Byars has no right to preach her opinions about what constitutes modest dress and decorum. That is for each local district to determine. She may do what she wants with her own family, but she has no right to make laws for other local bodies.

*Fourth*, since she says that someone “has shown very poor judgment,” she admits that it falls into the category of judgment and, hence, *is not* a matter of “law and gospel.” Again, lady Byars is usurping a role which neither God nor man has given her.

*Fifth*, observe the “negative, judgmental tone” of her letter. It is filled with words of harsh criticism and cold, cutting condemnation. Does she not know that she can catch more flies with honey than she can with vinegar? Her letter is a good example of what is causing many to “tune out” what we are saying. Folks will not listen to voices of moderation and to “positive” appeals for godly living because they have been “turned off” by the wild rantings and scare tactics of women like Diane T. Byars. Perhaps if she had used less caustic, abusive language, her plea would be better received.

*Sixth*, why did the lady “go public” with her complaints? She should have gone privately to whomever was in charge and sat down with them and expressed her reservations. Did she even bother to pick up the phone and call someone in authority? We know, by her own statement, that she went to the “telephone book.” Why did she feel the need to make a “private” city parade into a public scandal? If she loved the school district and those in authority, she would have gone to them in private and would never have slandered those good, civic minded people before the world.

*Seventh*, she writes as though she is glad she witnessed the parade just so she could have something and someone to

“write up.” People like her are just trying to make a name for themselves as “great defenders” of public morality and as “saviors” of the civil state! Maybe she is trying to be appointed to the staff of *Guardian Of Public Purity*.

*Eighth*, it is apparent that lady Byars has too much time on her hands. If she would spend more time helping those “12 and 13 year olds” she so sharply condemned, perhaps she would not have time to watch a parade and pass judgment on others. It is amazing that she has time to see a parade, write condemnatory letters, and seek to regulate an independent school district’s policy. She needs to take care of her “two daughters” and let the rest of us raise our own.

*Ninth*, rather than honoring Martin Luther King, this lady mars his special day by a “trash and burn” policy. Some people seek to exalt themselves by tearing others down. The dear lady needs to learn that one cannot honor a great man by throwing hypercritical stones at his sincere, struggling disciples.

*Tenth*, it is evident that our lady critic is trying to “write a creed” for each local, independent school district to follow. Who appointed her “Pope”?! She is trying to run the civic-hood. While we agree with her in principle, we do not think she should write public policy and expect the rest of us to conform to it or else be burned at the stake. Of course, she is free to write letters and question the behavior of others, but her letter is creedal in nature. It says, “Conform to my parade style, or get out.” Her creed shows she is trying to “head up” and run her own parade.

*Finally*, perhaps we ought to call a five year moratorium against all parades. Maybe communities would be better off if we canceled all school board meetings, ceased to publish school district papers, and did away with all public teachers for a period of five years. (**Note:** It is strange that those who cry the loudest about local control and autonomy and who protest against those who would try to tell others what to do are themselves not the least bit hesitant or squeamish to tell *everyone* [every school, magazine, and *church*] what might be best for the next five years!)

(This last section *does not* express the author’s view. Any apparent reference to living men and current events is perhaps hypothetical and probably coincidental.)

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# Free Exercise of Christian Faith Endangered by Court Ruling

A ruling by the Massachusetts State Supreme Judicial Court in December has let stand a lower court ruling which allows the state to decide whether or not a parent's Christian faith might be harmful to the emotional and mental health of his/her own children.

In the case of *Kendall vs. Kendall*, differences over religion led to the breakdown of Jeffrey and Barbara Kendall's marriage. When they were married in 1988, the Kendalls agreed to raise the children in the Jewish faith. But tension developed in 1991 when Mr. Kendall joined the Boston Church of Christ, and the gulf between the Kendalls' religious views widened in 1994 when Ms. Kendall adopted Orthodox Judaism. Although the two were awarded joint legal custody of their three children, Ms. Kendall had obtained physical custody during divorce proceedings.

At the beginning of those proceedings, Ms. Kendall, the plaintiff, sought to have her husband's ability to share his faith with the children limited. She was upset because her husband was teaching the children that only people who put their trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God would go to heaven. Mrs. Kendall wanted him to stop.

The lower court agreed, concurring with a previous decision (*Melton vs. Melton*) which stated that "some limitation of the liberties of one or the other of the parents" could occur in order to "serve the best interests of the children." Those "best interests," the court made clear, would be determined by the state of Massachusetts.

Specifically, the court agreed that the children were being "harmed by exposure to [Mr. Kendall's] religious beliefs" when the father implied that Ms. Kendall would go to hell if she didn't put her faith in Christ. The Court reasoned that the resulting mental strain and emotional anxiety in the children justified limiting Mr. Kendall's religious freedom.

As a result, the court ruled that Mr. Kendall "shall not take the children to his church (whether to church services or Sunday School or church education programs); nor engage them in prayer or Bible study if it promotes rejection rather than acceptance, of their mother or their own Jewish self-identity.

"The [defendant] shall not share his religious beliefs with the children if those beliefs cause the children significant emotional distress or worry about their mother or themselves," the court said. Furthermore, the court ruled that if a disagreement arose between the Kendalls as to Mr. Kendall's religious activities with the children, then a court appointed interloper would "address the inter-religious conflict."

Brian Fahling, attorney at American Family Association Law Center, said the implications of this ruling were frightening. "First, the state has taken upon itself the authority to determine when a parent can express his faith to his children and when he cannot," Fahling said. "The U.S. Constitution grants no such authority to a judge or any other governmental representative.

"Second, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has put a potentially lethal weapon into the hands of those who despise Christianity. With this precedent, a judge can rule that, if Christian teaching causes a child — and ultimately anyone — emotional discomfort, such Christian teaching can be prohibited," he said.

The consequences of such a ruling could be expanded in unlimited fashion, Fahling said. "What if mom leaves her Christian husband for another woman? Could the father tell his children that homosexuality was a sin?" he asked. "Could a divorced Christian mother tell her children that daddy's use of pornography is a sin?"



# Abide Wherein He Is Called

Floyd D. Chappellear

There seems to be a great deal of controversy over the problem of marriage, divorce (for a cause other than fornication . . . Matt. 19:9), remarriage and subsequently obeying the gospel of Christ. Some persons argue that the person in such a position must leave his/her latest spouse in order to be in harmony with the gospel of Christ, while others argue that such a one may continue living with his/her new spouse as baptism washes away all sin (Acts 22:16).

By the force of the argument that baptism washes away the sin of the adulterous marriage it must be accepted that such a marriage is sinful even though the persons involved are not children of God. This is certainly the case. Why then is there such a controversy?

If one recognizes that such a relationship is sinful before baptism, and it is the relationship not the ceremony which is sinful, would the relationship be any less sinful after baptism? (Shall we continued in sin that grace may abound? Rom. 6:1.) It is at the point the verbal gymnastics began. Let us note carefully the arguments made to justify the continuance of the second marriage. (1) Such a relationship is sinful before baptism, (2) Baptism washes away all sin, (3) Therefore, one can live in such a relationship because the sin has been removed.

Now let us examine the argument. Proposition one and two are correct. Proposition three is incorrect because one very important aspect of proper conversion to Christ has been left out. One is required to repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3) before he is baptized. When one repents he has a change of heart and a change of actions. It is not enough to be sorry for living in sin as being sorry is not repentance, it merely leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). After he quits doing that which is wrong (repents) he is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Should one argue that he can “abide in the calling wherein he was called” (1 Cor. 7:24), he is perfectly right. The difficulty seems to be that such a person cannot see that he is not living in adultery when “called” as he quit that when he repented. To take up the adulterous life after baptism is to “abide in a calling wherein he was not called.”

By the force of the argument one must give up living with a person with whom he has no right to live. Why do we sometimes make difficult things out of things that are not difficult at all?

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*From Gospel Guardian, August 5, 1965*

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Fahling added that he has never heard of such an insidious ruling, except in Communist countries like the former Soviet Union, where parents were forbidden to teach their minor children about Christ. Communist doctrine insisted that Christianity was a mental illness, and thus dangerous to the health of a child.

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*From American Family Association Journal, February 1998, 11.*

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## Sketches of Jewish Social Life

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# The Lord's Work on the Isle of Jamaica

Kenneth D. Sils

During the second week of December in 1997, Clinton Douglas of South Bend, Indiana and I had the blessed opportunity to preach the gospel on the island of Jamaica in the Caribbean Sea. Brother Douglas has preached the gospel in Jamaica a few times and asked me if I would like to get involved in the work of our Lord with him on the island. Never before have I ventured out of America to preach, so after much thought and prayer, I was ready to embark on this most excellent adventure.

On Monday, December 8, we landed in Montego Bay where Errol Lawson, the preacher working with the Cave church of Christ, picked us up and away we went to our preaching destination that evening. Since it takes about an hour and a half to drive 30 miles through the hill country of Jamaica, we had plenty of time to talk about our agenda for the week and to help settle the "culture shock" I experienced at the airport. The plan for the week was for us to preach two gospel meetings: one with the Cave church of Christ on Monday through Thursday on the south side of the island and the other was with the church of Christ at Montego Bay on the northwest side of the Island.

There are many churches of Christ on the island of Jamaica, yet I was made aware of only three congregations that were standing against the institutional practices that have plagued our Lord's body over the past 50 years. There are two congregations on the southwest side of the island. The church of Christ at Savanna-La-Mar where J.S. Lawson preaches and the Cave church of Christ at Cave where Errol Lawton, J.S. Lawton's son, preaches. Many preachers from America have been involved in planting the seed of Jesus in these areas, especially in the Cave area, and our Lord has blessed their efforts with an increase of souls. Brother Andy Alexander eloquently wrote about this work in the *Guardian of Truth* last March and described the evangelism which took place at Cave in 1996. Two years ago, their meeting house consisted of only a foundation with two-by-fours that had a canvas overlap-

ping them. Now, the walls are up and their building is very nice compared to Jamaican standards. Two years ago, this congregation averaged 20-25, but now in two years, their membership is in the mid-forties and still moving up.

Each night of the meeting at Cave, the building was filled with members and visitors alike. One couple that is burned in my memory had just obeyed the gospel three weeks earlier and was so happy that they had found Jesus and knew they could now go to heaven. They were in their eighties! Clinton and I preached each evening and spoke on the basics, including the work of the church and the dangers of using the institutions of men in an attempt to do the work of a congregation. Although we didn't have any baptisms at Cave, we did have some very promising personal Bible studies with people in that area. A few told us they were going to get baptized if they could get to church on Sunday; yet, it rained on Sunday which makes it difficult for people to come out on the Jamaica roadways.

Over the weekend in Jamaica, we preached a meeting with the church which meets in Montego Bay where Jerry Angelo has been preaching for eight years. The church in Montego Bay meets at the YMCA in town and is about 30 in number. On Saturday, the church decided to meet at Jerry's house and have a marathon Bible study. One of the young members brought a friend named Keyn and he pounded Clinton and me with questions for almost two hours. There is a lot of denominational doctrine on the island and most of the Jamaicans I met know about Jesus, yet are filled with the doctrines of men, much like people in this country. However, Jamaicans appear eager to listen to other views, especially if you are from America. On Sunday, Clinton spoke at Savanna-La-Mar in the morning and I spoke at Cave. On Sunday evening, both Clinton and I spoke at Montego Bay where we had a very good crowd, nearing 50! Upon returning, I had several snapshots developed and placed on overhead transparencies to explain the work in detail to the congregation I am working with in South Bend. If you are

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# Applying the Bible's Teaching on Church Autonomy

Steve Wallace

For many years now there has been controversy over marriage, divorce and remarriage among those in the Lord's church. Many debates, discussions, and studies have taken place over such propositions as, "The guilty party in a divorce may remarry," "Alien sinners are not under God's marriage laws," and "The word 'adultery' refers to a legal rather than a physical, sexual act." Through such studies it has been established that those who would affirm the previous propositions are in error and that their doctrine leads to and defends people committing adultery. Also, many who believe and teach such error have been identified.

As time has passed, two different views have developed of brethren who teach and practice the above doctrines. Some believe that they are in error and need to repent of

their false teaching or be treated in accordance with 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17-18. Others look at them in quite another way. This can be seen by looking at what they have taught. It has been taught that such differences as we have with these brethren are the kind Paul addresses in Romans 14. Also, it has been pointed out that we have had differences on the Christian's participation in carnal warfare and the woman's head covering, and have not divided over them or called one another false teacher because of such differences. From this fact it has been argued that we should likewise not divide with those who teach clear error on marriage, divorce and remarriage or call such brethren false teachers. Yet another argument on how we should view such brethren is currently being advanced. I am hearing it more and more. We address it in this article.

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interested in viewing this presentation about the work in Jamaica, I will do what I can to secure a VCR copy.

The church of Christ appears to be thriving in Jamaica. Although the number of members are small, about 100 for three individual congregations, the heart of the people are zealous and dedicated in serving the Lord. Brother J.S.D. Lawton and his son, Errol are hard working servants of the Lord worthy of our support and prayers. Without their efforts, both congregations on the south side of Jamaica would be greatly hindered. The same can be said for the work of brother Angelo among the congregation in Montego Bay. All three of these men spend a great deal of their personal resources to help members get to worship and provide spiritual leadership and teaching of the doctrine of Christ to make Jamaicans children of our King.

The Christians in Jamaica are very much encouraged when their brothers and sisters in America express an interest in their spiritual well-being. In many ways, the church has the same fight of faith that we have in America and they take up this challenge with courage, love and dedication to Christ. Jesus encouraged his apostles to take the gospel of Christ to every creature (Mark 16:15). It was a joy to my heart to see the most precious faith of Christ residing in the hearts of men and women far away from our land and culture. Pray for them and let's remember to be busy following in the footsteps of Jesus here at home by, "seeking and saving the lost" (Luke 19:10)."

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*1827 Caroline St., South Bend, Indiana 46613*



How does the Bible's teaching on local church autonomy fit into this discussion? When asked about the errors we are facing on marriage, divorce and remarriage, some preachers will reply, "I believe in local church autonomy" as if that somehow answers the question. Brethren will state their convictions on unscriptural remarriage, speaking the truth of the Bible, and then say, "But I am not going to get into what (error) is being taught on this subject in another autonomous local church." You can talk to brethren about a church hiring or using a known false teacher and they will say, "That was their decision as an autonomous local church." Churches who teach error on divorce and remarriage have argued that their autonomy allows them to do so. If a brother in one church tries to warn another church about an errant preacher that church is considering using, some will cite the "restraining implications" of church autonomy as showing that no one is "to have authority beyond the local church."

Such views of local church autonomy as those above hold some pretty serious consequences in the present climate among us. This concept allows some brethren to say that they will not be a part of a church that accepts those in adulterous marriages, but then stop short of condemning those who are a part of such a church. It allows other brethren to say that their autonomy allows them to teach error. This view gives still other brethren a basis for hiring a preacher who is sound on these remarriage questions while refusing to condemn a church that hires someone who is unsound. The church autonomy argument muddies the waters in the current controversies on marriage, divorce and remarriage. It is leading many brethren to view those in error with indifference. It will cause churches to invite those who teach error to hold gospel meetings, in contradiction to the plain teaching of Christ (2 John 9-11). It will gradually lead to such brethren being accepted as if they were sound brethren. After all, if they are not viewed as being in error in the churches where they presently hold membership (and they are not according to this view), how can we view them as being in error when they come to preach or be members at the local church where we live and worship? Further, it seeks to stop the mouths of those who are teaching truth by answering a false teacher in another church, thereby allowing those "whose mouths must be stopped" to continue their erroneous teaching (Tit. 1:10-11).

**The church autonomy argument muddies the waters in the current controversies on marriage, divorce and remarriage. It is leading many brethren to view those in error with indifference.**

In light of these very real consequences we must ask, Are the above mentioned arguments proper applications of the Bible's teaching on church autonomy? We answer in the negative for the following reasons:

1. *It says that one is limited as to whom he can teach the Bible.* The Bible gives freedom in this area (Matt. 28:19-20).

2. *The Bible allows the practice of identifying false teachers in another church.* When Paul told the Philippians to "beware of dogs" (Phil. 3:2), he was clearly warning them of Judaizers in other churches. There is no mention of any such problem at Philippi and the Judaizers were clearly active in other churches (cf. epistle to the Galatians). The brethren at Philippi were to be aware of false teachers in other churches.

3. *It allows each church to make its own laws on matters of faith.* The Bible says there is one law for all churches (1 Cor. 4:17, cf. Matt. 28:18). No church can use its autonomy to do that for which there is no authority!

4. *It implies that one does wrong in passing information of error in a local church to another party who might try to help that church.* The Bible clearly allows this practice (1 Cor. 1:11; 5:1; 11:18).

5. *It says that one cannot warn another church about a false teacher it may be thinking of using to work with it.* Clearly, the brethren in Ephesus did no wrong when they wrote to the brethren in Achaia exhorting them to receive Apollos (Acts 18:27). In light of this, how could it be wrong if, in the event Apollos was a false teacher, the brethren in Ephesus wrote to the brethren in Achaia exhorting them not to receive him? Why would one be infringing on a local church's autonomy and the other clearly authorized?

6. *It implies that truth is relative and regional rather than objective and universal.* The same Gospel that is to be preached to all men is also to be abided in by all and it will judge all (Mark 16:15; 2 John 9; John 12:48). If what is preached and believed by many on the West Coast with regards to MDR is wrong in the Midwest or South, it is also wrong to those on the West Coast! The fact that many autonomous local churches in this area of the U.S. have made the decision to teach and practice these errors does not somehow make it "right for them."

### Conclusion

Before closing, let us all recognize that, after all that can be done has been done in applying the above points, local churches will have to make their own decisions as to the course they will choose in the present controversy. Churches in the first century had to make their own choices between righteousness and sin (Rev. 2:16; Matt. 7:13-14). The regrettable choices of erring brethren in the divisions

# The Humanity of Jesus

By Gene Frost

*The Humanity of Jesus*, by Gene Frost, examines the concept, presently being espoused by some within conservative churches of Christ, that in the body of Jesus resided two spirits — the Spirit of God (the Word) and a created spirit (human in limitations). This idea, along with the concept that Jesus surrendered his divine nature to become human in body, soul, and spirit, promotes a Savior in the person of a human being. Both concepts demand a spirit devoid of divinity in that it is assumed that Jesus died spiritually (was separated from God), experiencing divine vengeance for the sins of the world that he made his own. As God, it is reasoned, Jesus could not atone for our sins. These ideas are not new, but are rooted in Catholic and Calvinistic theology.

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over instrumental music and institutionalism show us that, in the end, a local church will decide where it stands. If it decides to embrace error the faithful can keep trying to teach and reach those in such churches, but no organization exists to control them. We see herein a difference between trying to bring a church under Christ's control (teaching) and trying to bring it under the control of some humanly devised hierarchy, such as exists in Roman Catholicism.

After all is said and done, Christ will judge all men. He will do so by his word (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16). Let us all encourage one another to obey and follow his word. Let there be no strife among us on this issue, for we be brethren. We are right to seek to teach and instruct those in other local churches to help them come out of error. This is as much an act of love as when we try to teach an alien sinner in another state or country. Let us not be cowed by those who refuse to help their brethren who are lost or erring!

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# Eighth Trip to the Philippines, November 7 - December 8, 1997

Jim McDonald

**Ben Cruz**, preacher for the Kapitbahayan church in Novatos, opened his home to me and he and his wife gave their bed to me. I have known Ben for five years and rejoice to see him and the Kapitbahayan church grow steadily. The church is more than double in size now from what it was the first time I met with them. It now has elders and deacons and Ben's radio program is one of the principal reasons for the success of the church. This program is Manila's only program which brethren air and is reached in many distant places, even to other islands. Reports from Palawan tell that it is heard even in that island. I preached for three different Manila area churches that first Sunday (there are about 30 churches in metro Manila), with the first baptisms on this trip occurring at Kapitbahayan. Six put on Christ in baptism.

### Prison Preaching

One of Ben's radio converts is a man named **Emilio Meagal**, a preacher who was formerly a Pentecostal preacher. Emilio had been teaching in a prison for women in Manila's City Jail and thus Ben "inherited" that work through Emilio's conversion. An appeal from another preacher to Ben to seek out (I think) his son, led Ben to seek permission to enter into one of the Philippine's highest security prisons and teach prisoners there. By chance

a cousin of Ben's happened to be the warden and this opened the door for the weekly classes Ben teaches there (with others) within this prison which (we were told) incarcerates about 6,000-8,000 men. High interest was evidenced by the students and about 60 men attend the classes. Through help from brethren and churches I had brought 700 Bibles that day and nearly 80 of these were given to these prisoners. Personal histories were given about some of these and their crimes included murder, rape, theft, and drugs.

### Pampanga, Tarlac and Pangasinan

I had scheduled a visit with **Jojo Tacbad** in Betis, Guagau, Pampanga which area still suffers from the eruption in the early nineties of Mt. Penitubo. Jojo had begun a new church in one of the barrios in July 1997 when eight out of one family had been baptized. During our visit there eleven more were baptized, including one from Bataan which will offer opportunities to conduct classes there. One who was interested but who was not baptized that day was a young widow who was about to give birth to her third child. Her husband's death left her virtually alone and penniless in the world. Brethren there begged that some temporary help be given her and so we did, from funds that individual

**A**lthough I had not initially planned to make a "solo" trip to the Philippines, that was the way it turned out. Dennie Freeman from Huntsville, Alabama had planned to go but circumstances at home were such he felt it necessary to cancel his trip. So, I traveled alone and arrived late on Saturday night, November 8, in Manila. Still, I passed through customs much more speedily than usual and soon I exited the terminal building and was met with warm greetings by the dozen or so Filipino brethren who came to welcome and help me on this journey.

Christians had given us to “use as we saw fit.”

I spoke a couple of times in Moncada, Tarlac (**Marcos Balaleng**, preacher) and then proceeded to Pangasinan, where for the next three days I was busy with a seminar for preachers (Sison) and preaching for different congregations in the area. About 50 preachers attended the lectures, including three liberal preachers for Aurora province. We met with two different congregations in Bila, where division had taken place two or three years ago. Hopefully, the two congregations have been reconciled and now worship together in the same place. By Sunday afternoon, November 16, with 34 having been baptized to that point, I was on my way to San Fernando, La Union, preparatory to visit Abra Province, one of the primary factors which prompted this eighth trip of mine.

### Abra

Abra is a mountainous “land-locked” province. Our company entered Abra from the west. Brethren in Santa Maria had hired a jeepney for our proposed four day journey to carry the 13-14 who were traveling together with me. We had hired both jeepney and driver for 500P (Pesos, or about \$15). We stopped for a couple of hours in Bengued, Abra’s capital, to greet and speak to a group of brethren in the home of **Rey Jacobs**. Abra’s economy lags behind the rest of the nation (which is bad enough). There is a paved road from Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur to Bengued, and while there is some pavement beyond Bengued to cities in the interior, after we bade brethren good-bye in Bengued and were on our way to Salapaddan (our destination) we soon ran out of pavement and the rest of the way had to be traveled over rocky, dirt roads. We had to ferry across the Abra river. Nevertheless, before day’s end we arrived in Salapaddan and the home of **Eusebio Cabannag**, preacher there and the host for this seminar.

There are many congregations in

the vicinity of Salapaddan but sadly, brethren are badly divided. There are brethren who believe in only one container for the Lord’s supper; as well as “liberal” and “conservative” brethren. And, there are several congregations which are associated with Christian churches and who call themselves “The Church of Christ, Instrumental.” We were told there are about 14 different such congregations in Abra none of which use an instrument for economic reasons, they can’t afford to buy one! But, there were other differences: they have a sort of conference they recognize themselves as identified in.

There were about 50 in attendance including preachers from all the above mentioned groups. There were two major hindrances to my speaking that day: the problem of trying to properly address such a diversity of problems in such a limited time and the added irritation of the presence of a deranged man who continually, and all day long, detracted my audience with his gestures and protestations to the things I said. Still, for all that, measured success resulted. Three one-cup preachers surrendered their opposition to “multiple-containers” which included one congregation of about 25 members; two “liberal” preachers gave up their divisive views and two Christian Church preachers renounced their belief in the use of instrumental music in worship. We hope that this movement toward unity can be realized even further in May (1998). **Jim Everett** of Cedar Park, Texas and I will be back in the same region to give more time to each particular group. We have been told a larger number of others there will give us audience then. One was also baptized in Salapaddan.

Our company proceeded next to San Juan, Abra which necessitated that we retrace our steps back to Bengued. San Juan is the home of **Isidro Tacis** and one night was spent with this preacher and his family. The congregation has a block building but there were no doors or windows in it. Several Christians from Centerville, Texas have sent suf-

ficient (hopefully) money for brethren to install the lacking items. Centerville supports brother Tacis. Five were baptized in San Juan.

### Nueva Ecija

Again we retraced our steps as we departed from Abra. We traveled many kilometers over the same road we had passed four days earlier. We were on our way to another province called Nueva Ecija and I spent the night with **Lordy Salunga** (Tarlac, Tarlac) where brethren from Nueva Ecija were to rendezvous with us. Like Abra, Nueva Ecija is also “land-locked” and has about ten congregations. I had made arrangements that the approximately 200 remaining Bibles I had left in Manila be brought to Lordy’s, but a misunderstanding in my request caused the Bibles to be left in Angeles City where Lordy preaches, rather than in Tarlac, his home. So, for the rest of my journey I could only “promise” Bibles when we could get them delivered, rather than being able to give them to brethren in the various places as I had been doing up to that point in time.

Brethren from Nueva Ecija were late in arriving and I assumed that another misunderstanding had taken place so Lordy and two other brethren with him, carried me into the western section of Nueva Ecija. Soon, however, **Gady Castres**, **Sammy Ordinario**, and **Jun Bautiste** (all preachers in Nueva Ecija) made contact with us and we were on our way once more. Several hours later (after a visit to a drive-through window of one of the region’s “McDonald’s”!) we arrived in Canaan. **Anselmo Veterbo** is the preacher for the two congregations in this region. I spoke to seven different congregations including Munoz where Gady Castres preaches. Gady is one of the best song leaders Filipino brethren have and is likely the best they have in knowledge and teaching. On an earlier trip with me, **R.J. Stevens** had met Gady and recognized Gady’s musical knowledge and ability. Jun Bautiste is a young man who finishes college

this year. He preaches for the brethren in Cabanatuan City. There are many brethren who have moved here from other areas but have fallen away. If Jun had support to work with brethren, many of them could be reclaimed and the church greatly strengthened.

### **Nueva Vizcaya and Isabela**

**Domie Jacob** and **Ferdinand Baigan** were waiting for me at Carranglan when Sammy and the other brethren carried me there. This is a very impoverished congregation with about 20 in attendance. We met under a shed of one of the brethren's home. We then traveled to Sante Fe, Nueva Vizcaya where Ferdinand preaches. I spent one night in a motel there (150P or about \$4.50) but didn't sleep much. The church in Sante Fe meets high on a mountain.

There are five or six churches in the province four of which were recently begun as a result of the radio preaching of Domie Jacob. This program is heard in many areas and is having remarkable success. I held a lectureship in Candon, Domie's home, and there were seven preachers in attendance, all of whom had formerly preached for the "one-cup" brethren. This had been a "strong-hold" for this teaching but Domie's efforts brought many of them to a proper understanding. Nine were baptized here. From Candon I traveled to San Augustin, home of **Lorenzo** and **Dennis Lazaro**, father and son "preacher team" formerly Pentecostals. Lorenzo has made a great sacrifice to obey the gospel, jeopardizing his own personal property when he left the Pentecostal church. I met also a young preacher here named **Edgardo Larrobis**, who was one of Domie's recent converts. Edgardo had formerly been with liberal brethren. Edgardo has much ability. I was much impressed by his musical knowledge and ability. If he can get a little more musical training, he will be of great worth trying to help his Filipino brethren sing.

### **Cagayan**

Four Cagayan preachers came to pick me up in Candon: **Felipe Catoles**, **Restie Graneta**, **Edgar Uggadan**, and **Francisco Pagulayan**. We spent the next several days

preaching among Cagayan churches as well as venturing into Kalinga Province. I preached at Rizal, Kalinga, in the home of **Geronimo Ganela** and among those who were present was an uncle of Geronimo's who was a Christian church preacher. He was almost persuaded but did not obey while we were there.

Kalinga province is the home of **Domingo Dangiwan**, a preacher whom I baptized about 1995 in a irrigation canal in Tabuk. Domingo is zealously carrying the gospel to minorities of his people and about ten were baptized on this trip in the same canal Domingo had been baptized in three years ago. There is no Bible in the Kalingan dialect and it is possible that Domingo will translate some portions of the New Testament into the tongue of his people. Among those I baptized was **Ricardo Bangguwoy** who had walked two days on a lame leg to hear me in Tabuk. He thought I could lay my hands on him and heal him! A recent letter from eight teenagers of this new church tells of their faith and zeal to share the gospel with their people and of their efforts to better themselves by traveling down from the mountains to Tabuk to attend the high school there. These young people could all use a little cash and used clothes to make their lot in life a little easier, for in their words, they are all from poor families.

I preached one time in Pamplana, Cagayan. I had spent the night with **Larry** and **Gerenimo Guillermo** (son and father preacher team) and they had carried me to meet with brethren here. This is also a newly formed church and many are being converted. A large company of preachers from both Ilocos Norte and Sur had arrived and there appeared to be about 300 in attendance. One of the minorities with whom brethren have been working is the "Negritos," identified by some as the "original Filipinos." Their ancestors also were "headhunters"! Thirty-one of these were baptized as a light rain was falling (Picture # 5). These also were very poor. I saw old men and women scantily clad and with no shoes at all. Some of the preachers who began this work were also touched by their needs and had earlier besought me that something be done to alleviate some of their suffering. Help was given them from the Eastside, Baytown, Texas



church but it was limited in comparison to their needs. It would provide rice for perhaps a week. There are about 60 members in this congregation.

### **Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte**

Shortly before leaving for the Philippines, the Main Street church elders in Lewisville, Texas had called asking me to deliver benevolence to some churches in northern Ilocos. There were ten of the congregations, eight of which were in a region called Pagudpud. I consented and this distribution was made at one of the congregations along the highway. The picture below shows the congregation and the preachers as they were given the distribution the Lewisville elders had directed me to give on their behalf. Droughts, floods, typhoons and the effects from El Nino have brought a great deal of suffering and hardship to many of our Filipino brethren.

### **Angeles City**

After the distribution of relief to saints in Pagudpud, I spent the night with **Materno Sibayan, Sr.** in Sinait, Ilocos Sur and next morning **Mat**, his son, accompanied me to Tarlac, Tarlac where I spent two days preaching in the Angeles City area. Lordy Salunga is the preacher in Angeles and one could not hope to find a more faithful, trustworthy servant of God than he. The Angeles City church building is modest but one of the nicest that Filipino brethren have.

Lordy is doing a splendid work in the area and also preaches over a newly initiated radio program.

### **Home**

**Fred Agulto, Ben Cruz**, and two other Manila preachers came to Angeles to carry me back to Manila where I spent my last night with Ben and Delores. Early the next morning ten brethren accompanied me to the airport where we said good-bye once again. About 28 hours later I entered the Houston terminal to be welcomed by Betty and Jimmy, my youngest son. How good to see the faces of my beloved family and to be safely home once more!

### **Epilogue**

There were 110 baptisms in the 30 days I was in the Philippines; three “one-cup” preachers and five “liberal” preachers gave up their doctrines that separate them from us and two Christian Church preachers renounced their false teaching. I had delivered funds for benevolence from two American churches to about 15 poverty-stricken churches. Since arriving home Philippine letters tell that the Christian church preacher I left in indecision in Kalinga continued his study and that both he and his wife have since been baptized; that eight women in Manila’s City Jail have been baptized (45 men were baptized by Ben after we left Manila for northern Luzon) and that the young widow in Pampanga had given birth to her third child and was preparing to be baptized. A letter from one of the former liberal preachers from Aurora reports that brethren from Pangasinan had come and strengthened the churches in Aurora and that now all the congregations are united — there are no more “liberal” churches in that province. A letter from **Abraham Agute** (Pagudpud) reports another 51 baptisms in that region. The work is prospering and the precious gospel of our Savior is being preached. God is being glorified. The Filipino fields are still “white unto harvest” and from every quarter and region of those 7,000 islands methinks I see men standing, appealing to brethren here, “Come over to the Philippines, and help us!”

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# The Ruthlessness of Satan

Tom M. Roberts

Many do not like to watch “nature shows” on television wherein predators stalk, capture, and disembowel their prey even while they kick, struggle, and scream. The food chain has many links, but from the top down, each devours the other. As one commentator said, *“There is neither vengeance nor remorse in the Kalahari.”* Eating is simply a matter of survival and those high on the food chain are not angry or embittered at those whom they eat. Hunger motivates the chain, parents must feed their off-spring to survive, and so the life and death struggle continues day after day, ageless millennia, from Eden until now.

However timid some may feel about the process, there is a fascination about watching a lion single out a lone animal from a huge herd, stalk it until the prey is within reach of a quick charge, then spring out and, without conscience or guilt, dispatch it ruthlessly. Once the prey is chosen, neither pity from the devourer nor terror from the one to be devoured changes anything. Remorseless, merciless, pitiless and unforgiving, the hunter takes the game.

There is a lesson in this about Satan that we often fail to appreciate.

## **“The Devil Is A Roaring Lion”**

Among many of the descriptions of Satan, Peter spoke of him as a lion. We are the prey, and we are warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). When Peter uses an analogy to describe our enemy, it is for the very reason that Satan has features like a lion. But the analogy breaks down in that the real lion eats only to live while Satan destroys out of anger, vengeance, resentment, and bitterness. The Devil destroys for the sake of destruction.

The reason for this, the Scripture teaches, is because Satan has been cast down and seeks vengeance. “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). Knowing his doom, Satan seeks to drag us into eternal torment with him. He is a predator, seeking prey.

One of the more chilling things revealed in the Scripture is the statement that Jesus made to Peter just prior to Jesus’ arrest. During the Supper, while the disciples argued about who was greatest, shortly before Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus turned to him and said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). What a terrible thought! Satan knew Simon Peter’s name, his weaknesses, his closeness to Jesus and he wanted to “sift” Peter to see if he could withstand the test. This statement haunts me.

Does Satan know my name? Does he desire to sift me? You? Is Satan lying in wait and stalking us like a predator after prey? Who can deny it? Like the lion, Satan has no remorse nor conscience. There is no pity, no mercy, no fair rules of conduct. He is an “adversary” that is absolutely ruthless.

Do we need to be convinced as to Satan’s ruthlessness? Look at his history among men.

We can only imagine the beauty of the Garden of Eden and the fellowship that existed between God and man. Sin ruined Eden and man’s life has never been the same. Our lives have been corrupted, shameful sin has plagued us

**Never once has Satan said, “Enough, no more, I am satisfied.” Not one time has the Devil wished for the salvation of a single individual. Not once has Satan allowed a sinner to go free out of pity.**

and death is our lot. Satan, knowing all this, lied without compassion and said, "You shalt not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Did Satan care that we would loose fellowship with God, be exiled from the Garden, and die both physically and spiritually? No, he intended to do exactly what he did, to bring misery and destruction into the lives of mankind.

The broken trail of human error can be traced (due to Satan's influence) through Abel's death by the hand of his brother, the increase of sin until God sent the flood upon all the earth, the betrayal of Esau by Jacob, the sale of Joseph by his brothers, the cruel treatment of Israel in Egypt by Pharaohs, the cycle of sin among the Judges, the sins of the kings of Israel through idolatry, Israel's captivities among the nations, the slaughter of infants at Bethlehem, Jesus' death on the cross, the martyrdom of the saints, and, even to this present day, the turmoil of sin in society and our personal lives.

Never once has Satan said, "Enough, no more, I am satisfied." Not one time has the Devil wished for the salvation of a single individual. Not once has Satan allowed a sinner to go free out of pity. The torment of the rich man in Hades (Luke 16) did not assuage his appetite for more victims. Eight million Jews sent to their deaths by Hitler did not satiate.

But let's make this personal. Satan has no mercy, he is ruthless. Have you lost a dear relative to death unprepared for eternity? A son? A daughter? Do you know someone under the influence of alcohol or other, stronger drugs? The Devil devours the lost, even if it is your loved one. Are your grandchildren being led astray? Only the Devil rejoices, but he does rejoice. He has "asked to have them." He has "asked to have you." His hatred knows no limits.

Look at the havoc among churches by the evil action of Satan. Fellowship is destroyed, friendships are ruined, the cause of Christ is made a "hiss and a byword," and the Devil is happy! Denominations are in the grip of error, sin abounds. While time remains, the work of evil continues.

I understand that nature has gone awry due to the curse of sin on the earth. The prey being taken by the predator is the result of Eden's loss. We will never see the Garden again and Satan is loose among us. The worst horror films from Hollywood cannot match the reality of the Demon from Hell that lies in wait for each of us.

Modernism says that the fear of Satan described above is paranoia, mental sickness, and schizophrenia. That, dear friend, would be a relief. But Satan is real, altogether, and very much at work on planet Earth.

It is only in Christ that we have any hope of winning this battle. Each of us has felt the power of Satan each time we sin. We all have been "wretched" as Paul was, under the curse of sin (Rom. 7:24), wondering "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" This "roaring lion" has claimed us all as victims (Rom. 3:23). But Paul rejoiced in victory: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25).

By God's grace and man's obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9), by the remedial power of the blood of Christ, Satan can be, and has been, conquered. All our life we have feared the Devil because of sin and death. Jesus changed all that by coming in the flesh, enduring temptation, overcoming sin and death, and setting us free. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

The hapless gazelle has little chance against the prowling lion, but we have Jesus on our side. When he warned Peter about Satan "desiring to have you," Jesus also said, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (v. 32).

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# Does Character Matter?

Harry Osborne

Does character matter anymore? Do you care whether one tells the truth, exemplifies fidelity, avoids intoxication or exhibits other factors consistent with good character? Some polls in recent weeks have suggested that many are willing to excuse a President with significant character flaws because they discount the importance of character to leadership, especially when they think he brings them economic advantages. It seems to me that the same tendency may be seen throughout our society.

One need not think very hard to come up with several cases of esteemed athletes widely used in advertising and other ways who have been caught in various unlawful or unethical actions. The defense of their continued use is that the athletes are not intended to be role models in character, even though they are taken as such by many young people. When disciplinary action is taken against offenders, it rarely amounts to more than a slap on the wrist.

This disregard of character is sometimes taught at an early age. Have you seen coaches of young children seek to win even if it meant cheating? It is a sad fact that youth sports are being marred by adults who bring foul language and alcohol usage into the presence of children. Is that a proper influence regarding character to be placed before our children or does such matter to us?

The same questions could be asked about the effect of teachers, governmental officials and others who have influence in our society. If their character is flawed, can they be trusted to lead in their given areas? The Bible declares that character issues should be carefully viewed and that one without good character should not be trusted for leadership. For example, notice these statements of Scripture about the importance of good character in leaders.

Regarding the need for righteousness — “It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is

right” (Prov. 16:12-13).

Regarding the need to speak the truth — “Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, much less lying lips to a prince” (Prov. 17:7). “The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment” (Prov. 12:19).

Regarding the need to shun promiscuity — “Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings” (Prov. 31:3). “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32-33).

Regarding the need to avoid intoxicants — “It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes to seek intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted” (Prov. 31:4-5).

If the need for character was seen by those guided by God’s inspiration, why is our society increasingly showing disregard for the importance of character? If a man’s words cannot be trusted, how can his leadership? If a man’s words are filled with filth, why should we expect anything different with his actions? If he is given to drugs and alcohol, how can we be confident in his sobriety at times when wise judgment is needed?

Character does matter! In fact, one’s character is the best gauge we have by which to judge one’s fitness for leadership. If we disregard flaws in one’s character and put him or her in a place of leadership over our children or our country, we are inviting disaster upon ourselves. God has always blessed righteousness and punished evil. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah?

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# Max Lucado Espouses Baptist Doctrine

Donald P. Ames

Max Lucado is supposedly a gospel preacher, and also a prolific writer. I fear his desires to be successful in the latter have colored his thinking so he can no longer espouse the former. From several sources quotes are appearing showing he is now openly espousing Baptist doctrine. Consider with me his comments taken from *God's Inspirational Promise Book* (Word Publishing, 1996, 35). After Quoting Ephesians 2:8-9 and Hebrews 4:15, he adds the following note:

You may be decent. You may pay taxes and kiss your kids and sleep with a clean conscience. But apart from Christ you aren't holy. So how can you go to heaven?

Only believe. Accept the work already done, the work of Jesus on the cross.

Accept the goodness of Jesus Christ. Abandon your own works and accept his. Abandon your own decency and accept his. Stand before God in his name, not yours.

It's that easy? There was nothing easy about it at all. The cross was heavy, the blood was real, and the price was extravagant. It would have bankrupted you or me, so he paid it for us. Call it simple. Call it a gift. But don't call it easy.

Call it what it is. Call it grace. That was all he had to say about what you must do to go to heaven. As a gospel preacher, he should be well aware of the fact salvation is to those who obey Christ (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus spelled out his terms very clearly in Mark 16:16, when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The same was taught by the apostles in Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6: 3-7; 1 Peter 3:21; etc. Does he refer to any of these passages? No! Instead he calls for one to take on the personal righteousness of Christ in place of our own obedience. Christ made the perfect sacrifice in that it was without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22). And while that sacrifice takes away our sins upon obedience, we must still answer for unrepented sins we commit (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 1:5-

10). Christ's *personal righteousness* is *not* transferable! So where does he place baptism? Does he believe it is necessary? Not from the above quote he doesn't. So let's turn a little further into the book (49) and see what he has to say about obedience to God. He points out that we *don't have* to do *much*, but we *have* to do *something*. He then proceeds to list some suggestions of things we could do:

- Write a letter
- Ask forgiveness
- Call a counselor
- Confess
- Call mom
- Visit a doctor
- Be baptized
- Feed a hungry person
- Pray
- Teach
- Go
- Do something that demonstrates faith

In other words, he believes that being baptized is about essential as a visit to a doctor or writing a letter. It is something you do to let others know you *are saved*, not something essential for the remission of sins! What proof does he offer that it is unessential? *None!* Like Baptists, he practices the "pass over" on that topic!

Max Lucado is still widely used by liberals as a gospel preacher, and some are proud "we have such a prolific writer amongst us," but from what he has written, and the deception he has spread, he needs to be exposed for what he is: a *false teacher who has espoused Baptist doctrine*. I do not claim him as a brother *in Christ* unless he turns back in repentance, and those buying his books are merely helping his cause. Instead, we need to "spread the word" so others may be pre-warned!

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“For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8).

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# “What Is Wrong With Dancing?”

Gene Taylor

There was an interesting article by Jennifer Lee in *The Wall Street Journal* Monday, August 11 (“Before the Fall: Small Church Seeks the Purity of Eden” 1). It told of a church that held “clothing-optional” services.

The one-room church with its lace curtains could be any other small-town church in America until the lay preacher, Harry Westcott, steps out from behind the pulpit naked except for white sneakers and a black watch. The accompanist, his fingers skimming the keyboard of the Wurlitzer, is similarly undressed.

Thus begins the services of a non-denominational church at Cedar Waters Village nudist resort in Nottingham, New Hampshire. This village “claims to be the first Christian nudist resort in the U.S.” It was founded in 1950.

The bulk of the article goes on to relate the argumentation and justification these nudists give for their practices. They include such things as “People were always baptized nude until the second or third century,” “Nude is natural. The philosophy is body acceptance,” and “If you believe that the human body is a creation of God in his own image, there is nothing shameful or harmful about being nude.” I have come to expect such typical rationalizations for such aberrant behavior. As a matter of fact, I heard these same arguments used by a minister of a denominational church in Texas some 25 years ago to justify using an exotic dancer in worship services. It seems that anyone who wants to engage in any practice can somehow justify it.

Some so-called “Christians” are that way. Those who claim to be members of the body of Christ but cling to worldly practices often seek such justification.

Those who claim to serve Christ but enjoy drinking alcoholic beverages try to justify their practice by saying such things as, “Well, Jesus drank wine”; “Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach’s sake”; or “You know, the Bible doesn’t condemn social drinking or just having a drink in the privacy of your home as long as it’s done in moderation.” The Bible does condemn “strong drink” (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-32) and drunkenness (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21) and common sense ought to cause anyone in their right mind to realize where the use of alcohol leads. It leads to death from alcohol poisoning as with the LSU student who recently died after pledging a fraternity. It leads to impairment of faculties and death when driving as in the fatal automobile accident of Princess Diana. Be smart enough to abstain from alcohol completely. Even at Cedar Waters Village, a nudist resort, “alcohol isn’t allowed.”

Others who claim to be members of the church justify dancing in much the same way. Quoting again from the article in *The Wall Street Journal*, it said, “Sexual promiscuity and excessive physical contact aren’t tolerated. All dancing even square dancing — must be done clothed because, as Mr. Westcott explains, ‘Dancing is a vertical manifestation of a horizontal desire.’” Even nudists can see the dangers involved in dancing. Why can’t some of those who claim to be Christians? It is because it is something they want to do and, as we have already seen, when someone really wants to do something, he will go to great lengths to justify it in his own mind and the minds of others. The problem is, though, no matter how he may try, he cannot change the mind or will of Almighty God.

**Have you studied  
your Bible today?**

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via Reflections On Truth, Zion, Illinois, September 1997

## The Meaning of “Kingdom”

The word “kingdom” is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. It sometimes is used of the kingdoms of men (Matt. 12:25; 24:7; etc.). However, it is used to refer to the kingdom of Christ in two senses:

1. *The Church.* Thayer says, “Jesus employed the phrase *kingdom of God* or *of heaven* to indicate *that perfect order of things which he was about to establish, in which all those of every nation who should believe in him were to be gathered together in one society, dedicated and intimately united to God, and made partakers of eternal salvation.* This kingdom is spoken of as now begun and actually present, inasmuch as its foundations have already been laid by Christ and its benefits realized among men that believe in him” (97).

This was the kingdom that Jesus spoke about being near “at hand” (Matt. 4:17). He said, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). Jesus promised to give to Peter the “keys” of this kingdom (a figure that compares the kingdom of God to a palace and the keys being used of “the power of admitting into it and excluding from it,” Thayer 97) and then identified this kingdom as the church (Matt. 16:18-19).

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build *my church*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the *kingdom of heaven*: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This kingdom is a “spiritual kingdom” (in contrast to one in which its citizens establish its goals with military force, John 18:36) which does not come with “observation,” because it is “within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

Jesus promised to drink the fruit of the vine with his disciples in the kingdom. He said, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29). We “commune” with the Lord each Lord’s day when we partake of the Lord’s supper in his kingdom, the church.

The kingdom/church was established on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. Those who have been “born again” are citizens in the that kingdom (John 3:3, 5). First century saints were already holding citizenship in that kingdom (Col. 1:13-14). It was established in their day.

2. *Heaven.* The word “kingdom” is also used by the Lord to refer to the blessings of heaven. Thayer continues, “But

## “Blind Lady” continued from front page

hide it under a bushel? Suddenly, the possibility of that great blindness became personal! God, help me not to be shortsighted, even to blindness, but to grow and live in such a way to make my calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:5-11). Help me to help others do the same.

Yes, I saw a blind lady today, and she helped me to see so many important lessons.

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## “Kingdom of God” continued from page 2

used it 21 times in 19 verses; Luke used it 45 times in 43 verses; John 5 times in 3 verses. The Gospels which record the life of Jesus use the word “kingdom” 127 times in 119 verses, more than any other part of the New Testament! One is immediately drawn to this conclusion: *one cannot faithfully preach Christ unless he preaches what Christ revealed about the kingdom!* The dichotomy that is created between preaching Christ and his church is a false dichotomy.

### Jesus Commanded Men to Preach the Kingdom

The Lord himself went out preaching the kingdom.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. 4:23).

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people (Matt. 9:35).

And he said unto them, *I must preach the kingdom of God* to other cities also: for *therefore am I sent* (Luke 4:43).

Furthermore, he commanded that his Apostles and other disciples do the same.

And as ye go, *preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 10:7).

And he sent them to *preach the kingdom of God*, and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2).

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but *go thou and preach the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:60).

The man who does not go forth preaching the kingdom does not do what Jesus commanded that men do!

far more frequently the kingdom of heaven is spoken of as a future blessing, since its consummate establishment is to be looked for on Christ's solemn return from the skies, the dead being called to life again, the ills and wrongs which burden the present state of things being done away, the powers hostile to God being vanquished" (97). Because the kingdom/church that Christ established is an eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:44), a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28), a kingdom that will be delivered up to the Father when Jesus comes again (1 Cor. 15:24), heaven itself is called the kingdom of God.

This usage occurs in many passages. When Jesus spoke about the danger of trusting riches, he uses the word in this sense. He said,

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the *kingdom of heaven*. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the *kingdom of God*. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be *saved*? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall *inherit everlasting life* (Matt. 19:23-29).

Notice in this text that the "kingdom of heaven" is equivalent in meaning to being "saved" and inheriting "eternal life." A similar usage occurs in Matthew 25:34 where inheriting the kingdom is equivalent to participation in the Wedding Feast of the Son (Matt. 25:10), entering the "joys of the Lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23), and "everlasting life" (Matt. 25:46). Entering the kingdom is the opposite of eternal damnation in Mark 9:47 — "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the *kingdom of God* with one eye, than having two eyes to be *cast into hell fire*."

To preach the "kingdom," as Jesus commanded, one must preach about both uses of the kingdom. Those who wish to preach about "everlasting life" but not about the church are only preaching half of what the Lord taught about the kingdom. Inasmuch as only those who are citizens of the kingdom on earth (church) will participate in the heavenly kingdom, one most certainly must be preaching what Christ said about his kingdom.

### **Except Ye Be Converted, You Cannot Enter the Kingdom**

Jesus taught that one must converted to enter the kingdom of God. He said,

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3).

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, the Lord told him how to enter the kingdom.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

The moral qualifications for entrance into the kingdom of God are as follows: (1) *One must be poor in spirit*. In the Beatitudes, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). This spirit is the attitude that realizes that one cannot save himself; without Christ he is eternally lost. This must be followed by other traits. Jesus continued, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). The blessing to those mourning is to those who mourn over their sins, not merely unhappy people. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). The "meek" are those who "receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21). Meekness is that yielding disposition that submits its will to the will of God. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). One must earnestly desire righteousness in order to receive it.

(2) *One must repent of his sins*. When Jesus went forth preaching the good news of the kingdom, it was coupled with the command "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; cf. 3:2).

(3) *One must be "born of the water and of the Spirit"* (John 3:3, 5). This is a reference to water baptism as a condition for membership in the kingdom.

(4) *One must "obey" the Lord*. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

When one preaches this message, he is sowing the seed of the kingdom into the hearts of men (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). Some men's hearts will be like the wayside ground, some like the stony ground, some like the thorny ground, and some like the good ground. Not all will receive Jesus'



word, but only those who do can be born again.

### Those Outside the Kingdom Are Lost

Jesus said as much and we dare not preach any less. Consider his words:

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west (Gentiles, mw), and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom (the Jews, mw) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:11-12; cf. Luke 13:28-29).

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 13:41-43).

Outside the kingdom there is “outer darkness,” “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” being cast into a “furnace of fire” where there is “wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The conclusion is obvious: *Unless one is a citizen in the Lord’s kingdom, he is eternally lost!*

### Some Things Jesus Emphasized About Citizenship

1. *Those who break the least of his commandments cannot be a citizen in the kingdom.* “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19-20).

2. *One should seek the kingdom of heaven above everything else.* Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). In his parables of the Treasure in the Field (Matt. 13:44-45) and the Goodly Pearl (Matt. 13:46), Jesus emphasized that one must be willing to give up everything in order to attain the kingdom. Some may even be required to become “eunuchs” for the kingdom of heaven’s sake (Matt. 19:14).

3. *One must show a humble disposition.* Jesus said that men must be converted and become as a little child, rather than have a competitive disposition that seeks a lordly position over men (Matt. 18:1-4).

4. *The “Tares” in the kingdom will be removed at Judgment.* In his Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:25-40), Jesus emphasized that those men who are unfit “members” of his earthly kingdom (the church) will be separated from the

“wheat” by his angels on the day of judgment. He compared how the gospel draws different men to a fisherman throwing out his net, saying,

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:47-50).

Those who put their hands to the plow and then look back are not fit to enter the kingdom of heaven (Luke 9:57).

### Conclusion

Men should never tire of preaching the kingdom of God. One cannot faithfully preach Christ without preaching what Christ revealed and preached about his kingdom. Those who are ashamed of what Christ revealed about his kingdom are ashamed of Christ! Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). Some brethren appear to be ashamed of what Christ said about his kingdom and, for that reason, are trying to create a less offensive message that will be more readily received by the world. Let us not be ensnared by the false message that we need more “Christ centered preaching” and less “church centered preaching.” It is a false dichotomy.

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# Beer Bottle Epitaph

Larry Ray Hafley

Harry Caray, the famed baseball announcer who died recently, has been widely eulogized and remembered by those of the world. He was a profane, beer drinking man of the world. In fact, his drinking exploits were so fabled that he was labeled, "The mayor of Rush Street," a notorious "Bourbon Street" in Chicago.

At the gates of Wrigley Field, home of the Cubs for whom he broadcast, fans brought hundreds of beer bottles and beer cans with flowers and messages stuck therein. They did this as a kindly tribute to their beer guzzling, broadcast hero.

How sad (1 John 2:14-17). Imagine that a man's life and soul are so trivial, so mundane, so earthy and worldly that his most prominent memento is a beer bottle! The figure, the emblem of his life is an empty beer can with a flower stuck in it! How pitiful. How pathetic.

Before we disdain the man, what of ourselves? What would our memorial insignia be? A pair of dice? A lottery ticket? A dirty magazine? A TV set? How many of us could be represented by a Bible or some form of Bible teaching? Will our friends think it strange that our funeral is surrounded by the trappings of religious and spiritual things (1 Pet. 4:3, 4)? At your funeral, will Bible reading, gospel singing, and prayers seem to be a strange contrast to the life you have lived? If so, you have no right to make light of Harry Caray. Further, you have no right to expect the rest of us to lie for you at your funeral. Your life is telling the truth about you. So which will be most appropriate with which to adorn your casket, a Bible or a beer bottle?

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

## Is It Lawful?

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## Field Reports



**Keith Sharp, 23502 Route 11, Calcium, New York 13616:** Brother Foy Short has spent the majority of his life in Southern Africa. He is fluent in two native African languages. He now lives in White House, Tennessee, where he labors to produce a Bible concordance in Ndebele, one of the languages of Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). He visited Zimbabwe last summer and labored in the bush of southwest Zimbabwe for an extended period, visiting directly with preaches and churches there.

There has been a serious drought in this area for fourteen years, which has caused food shortage to the point of starvation. I saw these problems myself when I was there two and a half years ago. Brother Short reports that the drought has only partially subsided, and there are still food shortages, though not as severe as before.

Due to the loving efforts of brethren in Zimbabwe, South Africa and America, no brethren in Zimbabwe have starved. American brethren have been sending contributions to brother Short, who acts as a messenger to forward these funds to Zimbabwe. Brethren Dennis Clark and Newsman Gumbo of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe travel into the bush each month, acting as messengers, and distribute the relief aid to the churches according to need. Their work is dangerous, since they are carrying large amounts of cash in an impoverished country where armed robbery is common. They keep careful records of funds received and dispersed, which they share with brother Short. Brother Short sends a detailed report to all who assist.

The Hillside congregation in Bulawayo, with about 35 members, the Greendale congregation in Harare, six members, and the Brakpan congregation near Johannesburg, about 40 members, help a total of \$350 a month. An additional \$1500 a month is needed to supply the basic food needs of brethren in the bush of southwest Zimbabwe. If you can help, write to H.F. Short, 302 Cedarbrook Dr., White House, TN 37188.

**Vernon Bracknell, 175 Lockwood, Red Bud, Illinois 62278:** The church of Christ that meets at 175 Lockwood, Red Bud, Illinois is pleased to report that they are now assembling in a new building that was made available through the dedication of a gospel preacher, brother Leslie Sloan, the local members, and generous contributions from so

many individual members of the Lord's body. It is so hard to find words with which to express our appreciation. We hope thanks will suffice.

The church has met in rented buildings for about fourteen years, and had reached the point that no meeting places were available to accommodate the size of the group, or that we could afford. For such a small town, 3000 population, rent is terribly high.

If any should be traveling in our area, we invite you to worship with us. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 202, Red Bud, IL 62278. You can call Vernon Bracknell at 618-785-2359 or William A. Retzer at 618-785-2452 for information.



#### **Church Pews Needed**

The church at Midland, Texas would like to purchase four used pews. These need to be approximately 12 feet long. Wade Gamblin, 4731 W. Cuthbert St., Midland, Texas 79703.

#### **Free Tract, "Why I Left The Denominational Church of Christ," Available**

Last year, the article "Why I Left The Denominational Church of Christ" appeared in print. The request for it to be put into tract form has been outstanding. To allow full and free distribution, I have added it to my website. It is laid out in a three-fold tract form, to be printed on legal sized paper, available in Works, Word, txt and MS Publisher formats. Publisher gives the best results. They are "zipped." You are welcome to download and copy for distribution as you wish. It is available at: <http://users.chipshot.net/~wgoforth/liberals.zip> (Wayne Goforth, wgoforth@chipshot.net, P.O. Box 366, Vernon, TX 76385, 940 553-4920).

#### **Hispanics Have Highest Teen Birthrate**

"Washington — The percentage of Hispanic teen-agers who gave birth has surpassed that of black teen-agers for the first time, with both groups more than twice as likely as whites to become mothers before they turn 20, the federal government reported Thursday.

"In 1995, nearly 11 percent of Hispanic teen-agers gave birth, compared with about 10 percent of black teen-agers and 4 percent of non-Hispanic white teen-agers. While the rates for black and white teen-agers have declined

in recent years, the figures for Hispanics have continued to rise, driver by a 32 percent increase among Mexican Americans since 1989.

"The figures represent an important benchmark in teen-age birthrates and provide more evidence that Hispanics, the nation's fastest-growing minority group, increasingly are suffering from the problems that historically have plagued African Americans. In 1995, for example, the poverty rate among Hispanics was greater than the figure for blacks for the first time. Hispanics also have higher out-of-wedlock birthrates than African Americans and have the lowest rates of high school and college graduation" (Barbara Vobejda and Pamela Constable, *The Indianapolis Star* [February 13, 1998], A9).

#### **A Biblical Impasse**

"Can public school students study the New Testament without learning about the Resurrection?"

"No, says the National Council for Bible curriculum in Public Schools. Yes, says U.S. District Judge Elizabeth Kovachevich, who has ordered the Fort Myers, Fla., school board to scuttle the council's curriculum and find another.

"The judge said it was difficult to see how an account of the Resurrection could be presented as history without indoctrinating students in the Christian religion.

"Elizabeth Ridenour, president of the council, views the judge's order as blatantly hostile because it would allow schools to teach the Bible only if they 'cancel out the main issue.'

"The council's instructional materials reportedly have been adopted by public school districts in 22 states. Its curriculum is a bare chronology of biblical events that implies historical accuracy or at least offers no viewpoints that question it.

"The Resurrection, of course, is the main issue of the New Testament, the core of Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus. There is no Christianity without the Resurrection" (Editorial from *The Indianapolis Star* [February 16, 1998], A10).



**Hermiston, Oregon:** This small congregation (20 members) in eastern Oregon is looking for a preacher to work with them on a full-time basis. They have \$1000.00 a month available for partial support. If interested, please contact Jim Shropshire at 541-567-0383.