

# Magazine

## Men Who Should Not Preach

Weldon Warnock

Preaching is an integral part in the scheme of redemption. Paul wrote: “. . . and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written How beautiful are the feet of them which preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:1). Though preaching the gospel is imperative and is to be proclaimed to all the world (Mark 16: 15), there are some men who should not preach. Let us notice:

**Men ignorant of the Bible should not preach.** We cannot preach what we do not know, although some try. To preach the gospel requires a lot of study and preparation. It would be impossible to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2) when we don't know the word. Those who don't know much about the Bible may have a tendency to take up the time with stories. A story can illustrate but not disseminate the truth of God's word.

Preachers are instructed to rightly divide or handle aright the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). This cannot be done unless we know what the truth is. Preachers, as well as all Christians, are to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly or abundantly (Col. 3:16). We don't learn the Bible by osmosis or by a direct communication from the Holy Spirit, but by reading and studying the Bible. Some need to be reading the Bible more and less of these Calvinistic paperback books. We might also add that some are ignorant simply because they are too lazy to study.

**Men pleasers should not preach.** “For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still please men I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). This doesn't mean that a preacher has to be rude, belligerent, and obnoxious and have everybody upset and angry with him all the time. Some might call this hard preaching, but it sounds more to me like a preacher who has “busted his gall bladder.” Men do not have to go into a tirade every time they get into the pulpit to show they are not men pleasers. To please men is to compromise truth and divine principles, to water down the gospel, to pacify some who need corrected or soft-pedal the truth in order to keep one's job.

**Preaching is an honorable work. . . . To be able to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ is a divine favor.**

Jesus warns about pleasing men. He said, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). Those who seek to please men will *get* their praise from men, but not from God. All of us who preach need to have the attitude of the apostle Paul, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in truth with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4). We should never hesitate to preach all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Preaching should be balanced, holding back nothing that is profitable (Acts 20:20), speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) regardless of the consequences.

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## Volume L

### Mike Willis

*Truth Magazine* begins its fiftieth year! It is hard to believe that *Truth Magazine* is beginning its fiftieth year of publication. The first issue of *Truth Magazine* was published in October 1955. With Volume XX, we adjusted our volume year to coincide with the calendar year, so actually our fiftieth year began in October 2005. Later this year, we plan a special issue to celebrate our fifty years of publishing *Truth Magazine*.



Born during the early years of the battle against institutionalism, especially for the purpose of battling some of the modernism showing itself in the Chicago area at that time, *Truth Magazine* set itself for the defense of the gospel from its inception. It was never intended to be a paper designed to reach the non-Christian, although much material has been published in our pages which is useful to non-Christians. Rather, *Truth Magazine* was born to discuss openly the issues troubling God's people in that day.

The paper was edited by Bryan Vinson, Jr. from its inception in October 1955 to August 1962. In 1962, my brother Cecil Willis became editor of the magazine and continued until December 1976. For an interim of about six months, I edited the paper before being officially appointed editor beginning with the May 19, 1977 issue of the paper. In December of 2006, I will finish thirty years of editing *Truth Magazine*.

Through the years, I have labored to keep the magazine a balanced journal and I think anyone who will fairly assess the yearly indices will see that we have rather successfully done that. We have published special issues throughout the years which have contained many subjects, from surveys of various books of the Bible to detailed studies of various issues. With the exception of special issues, very few issues are heavily weighted with one particular subject.

Nor have we shunned to address issues which face local churches. There is a mind set present among us that appears to think that, if one will bury his head in the sand, there will not be any issues threatening the local church. The fact that one does not know the false doctrines of his generation and the men who are preaching those doctrines does not mean those issues and men are not there. I suppose churches in the first century could have taken the same stance, "We don't want to get involved in those contentious disputes

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# Belizean Briefs (7)

**Bobby L. Graham**

**Seventh Trip.** From November 7 to November 17, 2005, Alton Bailey and I traveled to Belize to teach the gospel and to help in the Lord’s work being done by the two congregations which are now working in that Central American country. My first trip was in May of 1999. Some might wonder why I continue going to the same country in this work. The reasons are several: (1) Brethren invite me to come; (2) previous trips have been fruitful; (3) I have developed a love for the brethren in Belize; (4) interested brethren continue to provide the needed support; and (5) I have a sense of responsibility based on the foregoing reasons. Do not the Scriptures teach that responsibility results from ability and opportunity (Matt. 25:14-30)? Airfare to Belize usually amounts to \$400 to \$600, depending on the time of year, and other expenses (gasoline in the country and food costs for the hosting family) are reasonable in view of current costs elsewhere.

**Whipple Family.** Greg, Kristine, Katie, and Jonathan (with Sam being born in Belize) moved to Corozal about four years ago to work for the Lord. A few months ago they moved much closer to the village of San Narciso, where the church meets. Greg is an able man and Kristine is his supportive wife; both of them have adapted well to the necessities of working and living in Belize. A former atheist who became a Christian and preached in Rhode Island a few years, Greg moved his family after checking out the work and country on an earlier visit. He is well prepared to work in a secular society like that developing in many countries of our world. The family accepts their role in a foreign land with a sacrificial attitude.

**Mornings with Greg.** Greg asked about our studying with him during the mornings we planned to stay at his house. It became a cherished time for all of us to discuss passages, questions, problems, with some practical suggestions included from time to time. In all parts of the world Satan is ever working to cause the same people problems, church problems, and excuses with people—both saints and sinners—that we experience in our own country. It should always strengthen our faith in the inspiration and completeness of the Bible to realize that all such problems are sufficiently dealt with and solved by the teaching of the word of the Lord. The more one reads and uses the Bible, the more impressed he becomes with the adaptability of the Book to all times and places. No human author could have produced such a profound volume (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

**Sacrifices of Foreign Families.** Money, family associations, medical care, material security, safety, customary foods, contact with brethren, comforts of home like air conditioning, smooth roads, and nicer cars are some of the

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sacrifices of workers and families living in Belize. The rough roads over which most driving is done make frequent repairs necessary and newer cars/trucks impractical. Both the Whipple and the Whisler families home school their children, requiring the wives to spend more time and effort. Some brethren expect preachers to make sacrifices, but they themselves are sometimes unwilling to sacrifice. Gasoline prices close to \$5 US a gallon and foods from our country being nearly twice as much make it wise for supporting churches to consider support from the Belizean perspective, not that of the United States.

**Imported Problems.** Americans who travel or live in Belize, as in other “third-world” countries, are viewed as “rich Americans.” The mentality of many in those countries, even some untaught Christians, is to ask Americans for money and to expect to receive it. Those Americans visiting Belize often fail to understand the mentality and the susceptibility of the natives to become dependent. Handouts, even the sharing of goods by generous Christians, are sometimes the bridge to such dependency. American churches, preachers, and Christians can bestow too much money or too many possessions and generate problems for the Americans living in such situations by creating the expectation for the same largess from other Americans. When they fail to hand out as much as the visitors, for whatever the reason, the natives view them as “hard” in heart. The Americans who created the problems are then at home, and the workers left on the field have to deal with the problems.

American churches also create problems by trying to manage the evangelist’s work with the natives along lines of their own thinking, when they are not even on location to see, hear, and know or by trying to arrange a native teacher’s support to approximate an American’s support. Local church autonomy is a principle of apostolic teaching (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28), and American support to a preacher in another country where the church has no elders does not alter the principle. Some American congregations hold the deed to the overseas property, direct the preacher, and otherwise manage foreign churches, but all such attempts violate the principle of New Testament teaching. A good test for churches and individuals to use in deciding whether or how much to send to a native preacher/needy Christian is how much those brethren in that country would help him if they were able to do so. If they are unwilling to support a native preacher or to help a needy brother, it is likely unwise for Americans to do so; if they are willing to support or help, then Americans can supplement that amount. In making a decision about helping two brothers unable to work because of injuries, I spoke to Greg Whipple first about each one’s worthiness and need. Men on the ground know best about such matters.

**Alton Bailey.** A retired school teacher, assistant principal, and principal, Alton has preached the gospel full-time

for the last several years. He has traveled to South Africa twice to teach the gospel. I thought he would be an asset in this work in Belize. Like Barnabas, he is an encourager of the brethren (Acts 4:36; 11:23). He helped in preaching to the two congregations and in private studies with the two preachers and with other brothers. I count Alton a friend and an esteemed brother and am thankful for his willingness to make the trip with me.

**Life at Home.** My trips to Belize have lasted from ten to eighteen days and have cost no more than a gospel meeting in this country costs. Most brethren think such expenditure modest for the work being done. Though there have been shorter trips, it is natural to think about parents, wife, children, grandchildren, and brethren at home. Health, faith, and endurance of fellow-Christians are matters that concern most of us. News from home is sometimes difficult to get, though the Internet is now available. Telephone calling is quite costly. Prayer is always available (1 Thess. 5:17). In spite of such concerns about home, the focus is always on the work being done in Belize. Two extremes here come to mind: being so heavenly minded as to be no earthly good (so focused on spiritual theory that practical good fails to come from it) and being so consumed by earth that we lose sight of heaven (“This World Is Not My Home”). May we seek to avoid all such extremes and learn the will of Christ to practice it (Matt. 7:21ff).

**Changing Lessons.** Preachers are sometimes accused of changing their lessons because of who is in their audience. I know that I have sometimes decided to preach on something, or at least include a section relevant to somebody, when the person(s) needing it much was present. I suspect that others have done likewise. I find myself in good company, because the apostles did the same. They target their writing to their audience. Remember that Jude said he changed his content from that of the common salvation to the need to contend for the faith (Jude 3). The Hebrew writer also diverged from his line of thought concerning the high priesthood of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 5 because of the people’s spiritual dullness, so that he might reprove their immaturity and urge greater spiritual growth. The Lord was careful to have John write what was needed to the various congregations in Asia Minor, as well as Paul to Timothy, not bland generalities that profited nobody much. My lessons in Belize dealt with marriage and the family to aid in the Christians’ understanding and growth. No one took exception to what was taught; no one accused me of preaching at people. Appreciation was expressed by many.

**Early Morning Walks.** An hour of daily walking from 5:30 to 6:30 A.M. is standard with my wife and me at home. Alton and I continued this practice, which he also follows at home in slightly larger measure (70 minutes). Exercise for the body, rest for the mind, and opportunity to make new acquaintances, giving opportunity to influence with the gospel, are some of the benefits. The Spirit wrote that

bodily exercise profits a little, but it is godliness that is more profitable (1 Tim. 4:8).

**Lessons at San Narciso.** Because it is impossible to preach the entire Bible in a week, timely selection is necessary to meet existing needs. Earlier suggestions from Belize had caused me to plan this year's lessons around the theme of "Marriage and the Family." God's will in marriage (one man and one woman for life, with one exception for only one party) is what I hammered in more than one lesson. The roles of husbands, wives, and children also were dealt with in lessons. One lesson was "Finding a Wife" from Genesis 24. My final lesson urged people to weigh the present enjoyment against the future cost, because there are many objectives (pleasure, wealth, etc.) motivating all to do wrong, but they are not worth the consequences which they bring. I am thankful for the able job of translation done by our brother Abraham Jimenez, the same Abraham that I have mentioned in earlier versions of these Briefs.

**Preacher, Do Your Part.** No preacher is such a master that he deserves the royal treatment of a king, though some might act as if they think they are. Because a preacher needs to study to preach and to teach in private studies, he needs time for such a pursuit. The ivory-tower attitude, however, is dangerous, because it tends to make the preacher aloof from the people, keeps him from influencing others for good as much as he can, and further inculcates the poor attitude already held. When a preacher stays with people during a gospel meeting, he ought to show the same attitude he would expect from them if they visited him (Matt. 7:12). He ought to be willing to make his bed, pick up after himself, leave the room cleaner than he found it, take his dishes to the sink/dishwasher, and do so with a good attitude. Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Why then do some of his present-day disciples refuse to help out in such situations as I have identified? Most gracious Christians want to help the preacher and discourage his doing too much, but the attitude of unwillingness to help on the preacher's part is inexcusable. It is almost as responsible for the clergy-laity distinction that some hold as the use of religious titles is (Matt. 23:5-8).

**The Suarez Family.** Many who have visited Belize will remember the family of Roberto and Albina Suarez. These hospitable Christians have nine children: Elsie, Giovanni, Maribel, Eadie, Windy, Wilder, Jeneli, Terri, and Junior, ranging in age from one year to twenty-one years. In this amazing family, the older ones help the younger ones, the older ones work to help the family (building fences and cleaning house for others and working at a store), and all work at home when it is time to prepare for company. I have been to eat with the Suarezes more than once. The father and the oldest son also work in sugar cane fields during the six months of cane season. The parents also have been teaching their neighbors in three different stud-

ies. I also have known of Roberto selling grapefruit after the cane season "to make ends meet" for his family. They have learned the lesson of making their own way and not becoming dependent on others. Don't you wish there were more Suarezes in the world? Giovanni has already become an excellent translator in the congregation at age eighteen. Most of the time they walk to church about 2/3 mile, and they are currently building a house/restaurant that they will operate during cane season to serve meals to workers and use to keep American Christians who come to Belize to teach the gospel (Heb. 13:2). Such amazing people who are so hospitable live in a small house made of cacao poles placed next to each other. Their thatch roof has been replaced by a metal one.

**Sunday Worship at Orange Walk and San Narciso.** OW (31 present) meets from 9 to 11:00 and SN (80 present) meets from 2:30 to 5:30. It is usual for them to spend much time on the Lord's supper at both places, with fitting passages and comments from the men. At SN worship lasts two hours and classes last an hour, while OW meets together for about an hour for worship and the supper, before the children leave for their class while preaching takes place. At both places there is translation of announcements, prayers, comments, song numbers, and lessons, and at both places there are English and Spanish songs. Four translators helped at SN and one at OW. Alton spoke in both congregations, and I also spoke at SN. Since OW now has more people meeting, the brethren from SN do not make the 30-minute trip; but they do come to help on Thursday night after OW members come to SN to their classes on Wednesday. Paul Kerouac returned from Massachusetts to San Narciso during our last week in Belize. Our Belizean brethren appreciate Paul and other Americans who come to help them.

**Whisler Family.** Dana and Carol have been in Belize since February of 1999. At home live three children (Hannah, Luke, and Caleb), two of whom were born after they moved to Belize. Carol and Caleb experienced major health problems earlier this year while visiting in this country, but both are now much improved back in Orange Walk. Two mornings we studied with Dana and once with Adolfo, his translator. This dedicated and sacrificial couple has long demonstrated their devotion to the Lord's saints in Belize (1 Cor. 16:15). While Carol was very sick in Pennsylvania earlier this year, she longed to be able to return to the work in Belize.

**Dale and Selma Tosti.** Another godly couple came to Belize from New York State two years ago, and they plan to stay in the country for the foreseeable future to help wherever they can. They teach private studies, Selma teaches children's classes, and Dale speaks publicly. They helped continue Dana's studies for five months last summer while some of his family were so sick in America. They make it a point to travel to Orange Walk on Thursday night for classes. They live in Corozal on a limited retirement with

# Jewish Feasts and Festivals (3)

Kyle Campbell

In the last article we examined the new moon observance and several yearly festivals, including the Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. This final article will consider the last three yearly festivals in the Jewish culture.

## FEAST OF TABERNACLES/FEAST OF BOOTHS/FEAST OF INGATHERING/SUKKOTH

The feast of Booths or Tabernacles was the most popular festival among the people. It is mentioned in Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:33-36; 39-43; Numbers 29:12-40; Deuteronomy 16:13-16; Ezra 3:4 and Zechariah 14:16, 18-19. It began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, or five days after the Day of Atonement, and lasted for eight days. The first and eighth days included a holy convocation to the Lord and no work was done on those days.

This feast commemorated the wandering of Israel in the wilderness. The Israelites were commanded to live in

booths made of palm and willow trees during the festival to commemorate their period of wilderness wandering when they lived in temporary shelters. The feast was also accompanied by extensive animal sacrifices. The feast was also a joyful time of thanksgiving for the harvest they now enjoyed.

The observance of Tabernacles in New Testament times was quite an event. It included a procession of the people carrying palm, willow, citron and myrtle branches, which were waved aloft during the daily singing of the Hallel (Pss. 113-118) as an expression of joy. Each morning of the period of the feast priests brought water from the fountain of Siloam and poured it out as a libation on the altar. On the last day the priests marched around the altar seven times, praying for rain during the ensuing rainy season.

Four large menorahs were also set up around the temple courts and kept burning each night. Dancing and pipe-play-

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no support from churches. In December they plan to travel to Russia for a month of teaching with their son Lee and his wife, who live in Murphreesboro, Tennessee. When I think of Dale and Selma, I remember Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-4).

**U.S. Christians.** We who live in ease, luxury, and comfort need to be careful lest we become “at ease in Zion” like ancient Israel (Amos 6:1). We can do so by taking for granted our blessings—physical and spiritual—and depending on past performance for the Lord’s favor. Some of this kind come to Belize to have a vacation. On the other hand, some who want to work for Christ also come. Those wishing to work with a congregation should come only after the brethren in Belize invite them to come, though they might come on their own to work elsewhere. Workers should wisely consider the impact of their clothing, attitude toward customs and laws, and seriousness about the work

in their visit to the country. Both questionable and clearly indecent clothing will cause problems, because most of the Belizean Christians do not dress that way. Workers should also consider the people keeping you by helping them adequately with expenses incurred in travel to the airport and food. Also they should remember that American money has destroyed too many works in other countries before bestowing too much help on poorer people, whether Christians or not. Covetousness is so perilous that the Lord calls it idolatry (Col. 3:5) and warns both the rich and the aspiring poor about it (1 Tim. 6:9-10, 17-19).

I will gladly answer questions about the work or the workers in Belize, if I know the answer. I can also put you in touch with the American families in Belize.

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ing, which accompanied the feast, lasted most of the night. The Levites chanted the Psalms of Ascent (120-134), one for each of the steps between the court of Israel and the court of women. The customs at the feast (John 7:2, 14) provide the background for Jesus' statements, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37) and "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The cycle of Torah readings in the synagogue began at Tabernacles.

#### **FEAST OF DEDICATION/FEAST OF LIGHTS/HANUKKAH**

This feast is mentioned only once in the Bible (John 10:22). This feast has been the most popular of the post-biblical feasts in Judaism. It was developed in the era of the Maccabees and celebrated the cleansing and rededication of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. The feast of Dedication is observed on the 25th day of the ninth month (Chislev) and lasts for eight days.

The name "Feast of Lights" appears in Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.7.7 [325]) and is associated with the ceremonial lighting of eight lamps, an additional one on each day of the feast. This practice is derived from the legend that only one cruse of oil was found when the Jews reoccupied the temple, but it miraculously lasted for seven days so the lamp in the temple was kept burning until a new supply of oil could be consecrated.

Since this feast, commonly now known as Hanukkah, occurs so closely to Christmas, it has acquired a comparable social significance for the Jews including the custom of exchanging gifts and greeting cards.

#### **FEAST OF PURIM/FEAST OF LOTS**

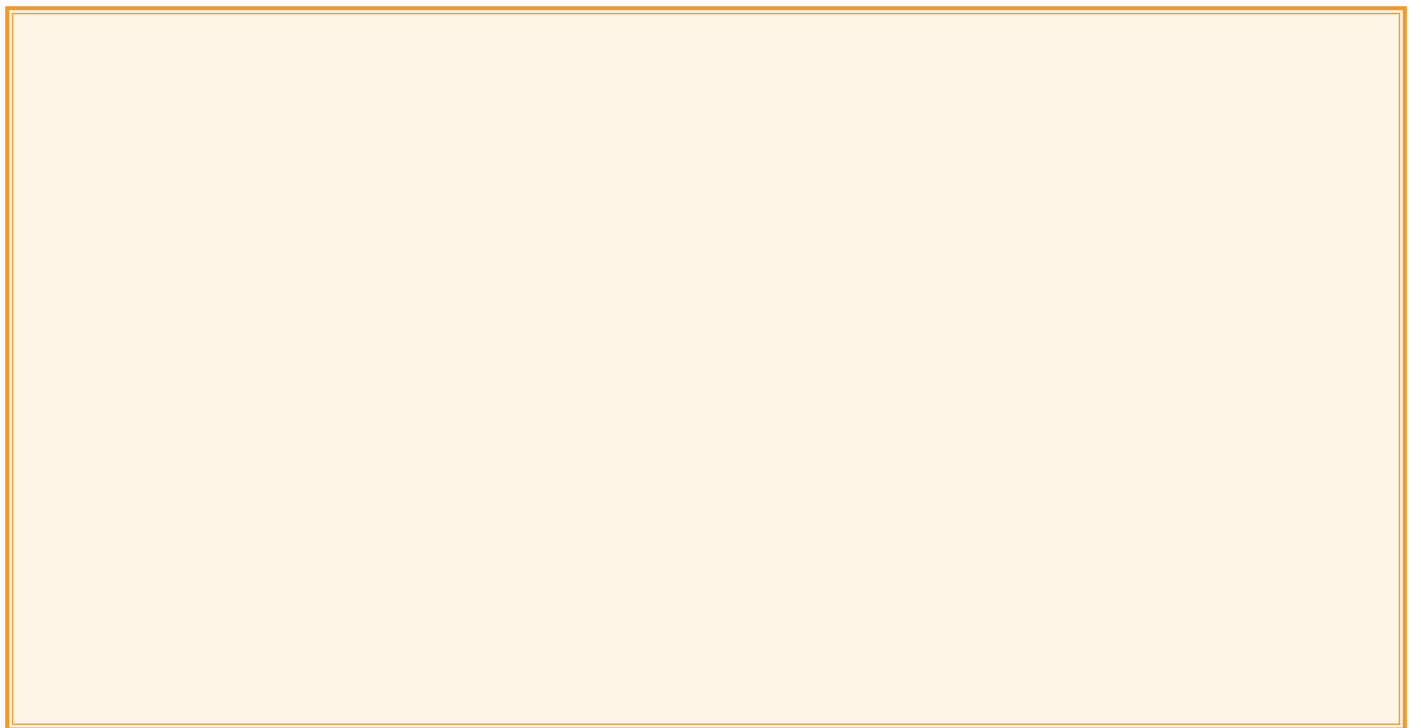
The feast of Purim is only mentioned in Esther 3:7; 9:24, 26, 28-29, 31-32. This feast commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction by an evil schemer named Haman during the days of their captivity by the Babylonians and Persians. It took its name from the Hebrew word *purim*, meaning "lots" because Haman cast lots to determine when he would carry out his plan against the Jews.

The feast of Purim took place on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month (Adar), and during its celebration the book of Esther is read as a reminder of their deliverance. Purim, which is a very joyous ceremony, is accompanied with the giving of gifts and great celebration.

As was said in the beginning of this series, any Bible student can gain a greater perspective of the events surrounding the life of Christ and the work of the apostles by studying the Jewish feasts and festivals. The Jews had a rich heritage of celebrations to God which marked the beginning or the end of the agricultural year or commemorated historic events in the Jewish nation. When we contemplate the solemn but joyous and grateful nature in which the Jews celebrated these feasts, perhaps we can learn principles for our own worship to God.

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# Is Baptism Excluded From the Gospel by Galatians 1:11-12?

Ron Halbrook

**False teachers today deny baptism is a condition of faith for receiving remission of sins. In an effort to reduce this part of the gospel to mere prattle, some of them twist Galatians 1:11-12 as supporting their denial.**

The Judaizing teachers tried to undermine the authority of Paul as a genuine Apostle of Jesus Christ. They insinuated that he made himself an Apostle and implied that his teaching was a hodgepodge of ideas and doctrines he learned from human teachers. The net effect was to reduce his teaching to mere human prattle without divine authority. Therefore, Paul began his epistle to the Galatians in the following words, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).”

Paul expressed amazement that the Galatian saints were allowing themselves to be duped and deluded so quickly by men who pervert the gospel of Christ. He warned them against receiving any gospel which deviated from the original gospel they had learned, whether the deviation should come under the flag of angels, men, or even himself (Gal. 1:6-9). He then affirmed that when he had introduced the original gospel to them, that message of salvation was delivered to them under the full authority of Jesus Christ. Paul had spoken as “the servant of Christ,” and had spoken only what had been given to him “by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men?

For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:10-12).

In support of this affirmation, Paul pointed out that after his conversion and call by Christ to be an Apostle he spent scant time with the other Apostles or brethren in Judea who conceivably could have taught him the gospel he was preaching. When he launched out into “the regions of Syria and Cilicia” preaching the gospel of Christ, he yet “was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: But they heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed” (Gal. 1:21-23).

*In short, the source or authority for both Paul’s apostleship and the gospel he preached was none other than Jesus Christ himself!* False teachers today deny baptism is a condition of faith for receiving remission of sins. In an effort to reduce this part of the gospel to mere prattle, some of them twist Galatians 1:11-12 as supporting their denial. Here is their argument: (1) Paul said he received the gospel as a revelation from Christ and was not taught it by men. (2) Ananias rather



than Christ told him to be baptized (Acts 22:16). (3) Therefore, baptism is no part of the gospel as received by Paul. The truth is that the gospel Christ revealed to Paul included the necessity of baptism as a condition of faith for receiving remission of sins.

### WHAT DID PAUL KNOW AND WHEN DID HE KNOW IT?

Saul of Tarsus excelled above many of his fellow Jews in his training and knowledge of the Law of Moses and all of the affairs and customs of the Jews (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5-6). He was part of the inner circle of power and prestige in the Jewish nation. In view of this, beyond all shadow of a doubt he knew of the preaching of John, his teaching on baptism, and how he rebuked the Jewish leadership (Matt. 3:1-12). If the preaching of John was known far and wide, the preaching of Jesus was even more widely known throughout the regions of Palestine from Galilee to Judea (John 4:1-3). This was especially true in the circle where Saul lived and moved. In battle after battle and debate after debate, the elite of the Jewish leaders were exposed and humiliated by Jesus (Matt. 15:10; Luke 13:17; 14:6). The news about the teaching, claims, and miracles of Jesus, followed by his crucifixion and resurrection, was well known to the Jewish nation from the highest leader to the lowest citizen. This very leadership had rejected Jesus and maneuvered so as to manipulate the legal system to murder him. Saul knew these things better than most of his countrymen.

Furthermore, after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Saul knew only too well of the persistence and spread of the pesky followers of Christ. To the consternation of the Jewish elite among whom he moved, they had “filled Jerusalem with (their) doctrine” and extreme measures were needed to contain them (Acts 5:28). Saul was no bystander. When Stephen preached and exposed the stubbornness of the Jews in rejecting God’s Son, in the very presence of the great Sanhedrin

Court, Saul with the other leaders rose up in fiery indignation to execute him by stoning (Acts 8:1). Overflowing with zeal to stamp out these disciples of Christ and their doctrine, Saul embarked on a journey from Jerusalem to Damascus with authority from the high priest to arrest them.

Here is the bottom line in the words of Saul himself, words spoken regarding King Agrippa’s knowledge of Christ: “none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). None of these things regarding the reports of Jesus’ teaching, claims, miracles, death, and resurrection were hidden from Saul, nor were the doctrines, practices, and activities of the Christians hidden from Saul. He was well acquainted with all of these things but simply did not believe the gospel to be true. Jesus and his followers were regarded as blasphemers against God and the Law of Moses.

### WHEN DID SAUL KNOW THE GOSPEL AS TRUE?

Luke records the appearance of Jesus Christ to Saul on the road to Damascus:

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

This is *not* when Saul first came to know of *the report* of the resurrection of Jesus, but this is when Saul first realized the report was entirely *true* and *factual*. Saul had heard the claim and report that Jesus was raised *ad nauseum*, and had fought with every fiber of his being against this report

and all of its implications. The harder he fought, the more the gospel spread, and the more frustrated he became. It was indeed hard “to kick against the pricks.” The harder he fought against the truth, the harder it goaded and gouged him.

If Jesus is raised, all things taught and practiced in his name are true. *Now*, Saul knew Jesus was indeed raised. When Jesus revealed himself to Saul as the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus, Saul faced the stark and startling reality that he had been wrong and the gospel of Christ true all along! The miraculous appearance of Christ served as revelation and confirmation of the truth of the gospel story and message, from top to bottom, from center to circumference. The appearance of the resurrected Lord did not introduce to Saul the teaching of Jesus Christ and his disciples, but this revelation convinced him of the total truth of their teaching.

The revelation or appearance of the resurrected Lord was the revelation of the truth of the gospel preached in his name.

Why did Jesus appear to Saul? This revelation of Christ did not involve the Lord filling Saul’s mind with facts, commands, and promises previously unknown to him. This resurrection appearance was necessary *to qualify Saul to become an Apostle of Jesus Christ* (Acts 1:8, 21-22; 1 Cor. 15:5-9). In the office of an Apostle, Saul would be miraculously filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, by which power he would be guided into all truth in common with the other Apostles (John 16:13; Acts 9:17). In that office, what Paul preached and taught was the result of the revelation and commandment of the Lord (Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 14:37).

### BAPTISM: INCLUDED IN OR EXCLUDED FROM THE GOSPEL REVEALED TO SAUL?

When Christ appeared to Saul, Saul asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me

to do?” The resurrected Lord, in the course of revealing himself and his will to Saul, answered, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). Christ explained that he was preparing Saul to preach what previously he had denied so vigorously, that men “may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18). The blinded, chastened persecutor of Christ and his disciples was led into Damascus, where he waited for three days while praying and fasting (Acts 9:9, 11). Christ showed him a vision of someone laying his hands on him to restore his sight. In this way, Saul would know Christ sent this man to tell him “all things which are appointed for thee to do” (Acts 22:10).

The Lord told Ananias in a vision to go to Saul and to deliver Christ’s revelation of his will for him. Christ revealed that he had appeared to Saul to qualify him to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord (Acts 9:10-16). Ananias went to Saul, laid his hands on him, and delivered to him what Christ revealed: “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou has seen and heard” (Acts 22:12-15). Saul knew that Jesus’ disciples taught men they must believe in Jesus Christ and submit to him in baptism in order to receive remission of their sins. He knew thousands of Jews had obeyed this message, but he considered it blasphemy rather than the good news of salvation. Little did he know that he himself would soon be preaching this message as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Now, for the first time, he heard this message *as a revelation of truth* delivered from Jesus Christ through Ananias in the following words: “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Having received his sight, Saul immediately “arose, and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). As soon as he ate and regained his strength, “straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:19-20).

**In the office of an Apostle, Saul would be miraculously filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, by which power he would be guided into all truth in common with the other Apostles. . . . In that office, what Paul preached and taught was the result of the revelation and commandment of the Lord.**

The gospel Paul preached included facts, commands, and promises which he had heard many times before but which he never considered to be the true message of salvation, *until he was convinced “by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gal. 1:11-12). No man taught him, reasoned with him, and convinced him of the truth of the gospel. No, he received it as true and divinely authoritative because Christ revealed *himself* to him as the resurrected Lord and Savior of mankind. In revealing *himself* to Saul, Christ revealed the gospel message as true from start to finish, from top to bottom, from center to circumference.

This revelation convinced Saul that the gospel of Christ was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

The resurrection appearance of Christ Jesus to Saul revealed the truth of the gospel in its every element and aspect, *including the necessity of baptism* as a condition of faith in order to receive the gift of cleansing from sin. The argument that Saul was convinced of the truth regarding baptism by the ministry, teaching, or reasoning of man is utterly false. Christ himself revealed to Saul that all of his teaching was true, and that he should wait in Damascus for the arrival of a preacher who, *at the behest of Christ and by the revelation of Christ*, would tell him what he must do.

Saul was baptized for *one reason*: the command given to him as a revelation from Christ!

### **BAPTISM INCLUDED IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE PREACHING OF PAUL**

As a genuine Apostle of Christ, Paul preached under the Great Commission, exactly as the other Apostles.

Jesus in the Great Commission commanded his Apostles to preach the gospel to all the world, including this: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 6:15-16). When Peter and the other Apostles first preached under the Great Commission, their preaching on the day of Pentecost exalted the crucified and risen Jesus as “both Lord and Christ.” Believing this message to be true, many in the audience “were pricked in their heart” and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter answered these believers in perfect harmony with the Great Commission: “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 2:36-38).

What the Great Commission taught about baptism was the same message Christ revealed to Saul as true. Christ revealed that Saul should wait to receive further explanation regarding what he must do, and Christ sent Ananias by revelation to tell Saul he must be baptized to wash away his sins through the name or authority of the Lord (Acts 22:16). Saul, the sinner, was told to *do* exactly

what sinners on the day of Pentecost were told to *do*, not in order to earn or merit salvation but to receive the free gift of God.

Furthermore, when Paul explained that he was now preaching the gospel as a result of Christ appearing to him, he said the saints of Judea knew him not by face but only by reputation: “But they heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed” (Gal. 1:22-23). “The faith” Saul tried to destroy included the necessity of faith, repentance, and baptism as conditions for men to receive the remission of sins in the name of the crucified and risen Lord (see Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:22-40, especially v. 38, “be baptized . . . for the remission of sins”). The gospel he once tried to destroy, he now preached including baptism.

The early preaching of the gospel by the Apostles and other disciples of Christ in Acts 1-8 clearly shows that baptism was included in this message of salvation as necessary for initial pardon from sin. Christ’s appearance to Saul to reveal the truth of the gospel convinced Saul likewise to be baptized (Acts 9:18; 22:16). Acts chapters 13-26 show that in Paul’s journeys proclaiming the gospel he taught the necessity of baptism.

For instance, when the Philippian jailor asked what he “must . . . do to be saved,” Paul told him to believe on Christ, then preached “the word of the Lord” to explain what that means, resulting in his immediate baptism. After his baptism, he “rejoiced, believing in God” (Acts 16:30-34). As a result of Paul preaching the gospel in Corinth, “many . . . hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). The Ephesians had received John’s baptism, but Paul pointed out that John’s baptism was valid only for a limited time in preparing people for the coming of the Savior. He then preached the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:1-5).

Paul’s example of preaching “the gospel of the grace of God” is an approved example for us to follow (Acts 20:24; Phil. 4:9). The words grace, faith, repentance, and baptism are not recorded in every sermon synopsis in Acts. In fact, “grace” is not mentioned in the record of any sermon to alien sinners. Yet, all of these concepts and precepts are mentioned repeatedly in the books of Acts. The totality of the gospel message included all of them as necessary for salvation and fellowship with God.

In like manner, the epistles of Paul reflect the reality that the gospel revealed to him and preached by him included the necessity of baptism as a condition for the pardon of alien sins. The theme of Romans is salvation by obedient faith, which includes the condition of baptism to enter into union with the crucified and risen Savior and thus to

receive initial forgiveness from sin (Rom. 1:5, 16-17; ch. 6). The same point is made in his letter to the Galatians: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). There Paul argued that those who are baptized by faith in Christ are heirs of the gospel blessings promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:8, 29). Thus, the Apostle clearly included baptism in the gospel which he received not of men but “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” according to this very epistle (Gal. 1:11-12).

Having baptized the Ephesians in the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul wrote and reminded them they had been saved “by grace . . . through faith,” and they had been sanctified and cleansed “by the washing of water through the word” (Acts 19:5; Eph. 2:8; 5:26). In reminding the Colossians of “the word of the truth of the gospel,” Paul reminded them that they had put off “the sins of the flesh” in spiritual circumcision. This occurred when they had been buried and raised with Christ in baptism “through the faith of the operation of God who raised him from the dead” (Col. 1:5; 2:11-12).

The evidence is clear and overwhelming. As a genuine Apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul preached the gospel of Christ under the Great Commission and preached baptism as an essential part of that message of salvation.

### **IF BAPTISM IS NO PART OF THE GOSPEL**

If, as denominational preachers insist, baptism is no part of the gospel, then why do they preach and practice baptism at all? When they give the gospel some limited definition which excludes baptism, they nullify their own preaching and practice of baptism. Why do they preach and practice something which is no part of the gospel of Christ? They offer the reason and rationale that they preach it as “doctrine” or “church ordinance” separate from the gospel.

The New Testament does not reveal or authorize us to preach “doctrines” and “church ordinances” separate from the gospel of Christ. The gospel includes all the teaching of Christ. We must not add anything to or subtract anything from this message. The Great Commission instructs us to preach the gospel so as to convert sinners into followers of Christ. This work involves, *first*, proclaiming initial pardon from sin to those who believe, repent, and submit to baptism, and, *second*, teaching them all things commanded by Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). We are not instructed to teach some kind of “doctrine” or “ordinance” *in addition to* and *outside of* the gospel of Christ. In fact, this is positively forbidden over and over (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19).

Men who deny baptism is included in the gospel require it as an additional “doctrine” or “ordinance” necessary for membership in their denominations. According to them, the

# Should Christians Be Cheerleaders?

Heath Rogers

A very disturbing story recently came out of the National Football League. Two Carolina Panthers cheerleaders were arrested at a bar in Tampa Bay, Florida, on Sunday, November 6. According to an AP news story dated 11/7/05, witnesses told the police that they “had sex in a restroom.” The story continues, “The cheerleaders were kicked off the team Monday for violating a signed code of conduct, Panthers spokesman Charlie Dayton said. The two violated a rule that bans conduct that is embarrassing to the team or organization.” This action on the part of the Panthers is understandable, but it is also laughable. Everyone knows that cheerleaders are in the NFL for sex appeal. All that these two cheerleaders did was act out what tens of thousands of men fantasize about when they are watching them perform at the games.

Apparently the connection between cheerleading and sex appeal is filtering down from the ranks of the professionals to the college and even high school cheerleading squads. If you recall, a bill was introduced (although not passed) in the Texas legislature just this past spring that would cut

down on the “sexually suggestive” performances done by cheerleaders at high school sporting events. So, over a six-month span, there are two major news stories connecting cheerleading with sex. This leads one to ask, “Should a Christian be a cheerleader?”

Does the Bible have anything to say about cheerleading? Not specifically, but there are obviously some biblical principles that apply to cheerleading. Consider the following:

**1. Immodest Dress.** The Bible commands women to dress modestly. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1 Tim. 2:9). Most high school cheerleading uniforms are anything but modest. They reveal the thigh and the midriff. All men (whether we admit it or not) know that the exposure of these parts of the female body attracts our attention and generates sexual interest. Why would a young Christian want to be dressed in such a revealing uniform?

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gospel *excluding baptism* is essential for initial salvation from sin, but *baptism* as a “doctrine” or “ordinance” *in addition to* the gospel is *emphatically essential* for entrance into their denominations. This amounts to an admission that Christ revealed none of these denominations, that they are no part of the gospel, and that they are appendages wholly unnecessary for our salvation.

## CONCLUSION: BAPTISM INCLUDED IN THE GOSPEL REVEALED TO PAUL

The gospel which Christ revealed to Paul as the true and genuine message of salvation included baptism for the remission of sins. Men who preach that initial pardon from sin is received by faith only, faith before and without baptism,

preach a different gospel from the message Christ revealed to Paul. When Christ revealed himself and the truth of the gospel to Saul, he told him to wait in Damascus where he would be told what he must do. Paul went to Damascus *by revelation*, waited *by revelation*, and obeyed what he was told to do *by revelation*: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

The gospel Paul preached was indeed revealed to him by Christ, and it included baptism (Gal. 1:11-12).

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**2. The moves done by cheerleaders excite lust.** The works of the flesh are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. Paul says that those who “do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Among these is a work called “lasciviousness” (also rendered “lewdness,” “sensuality” and “debauchery” in different translations). This word is defined as “wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, *indecent bodily movements*, unchaste handling of males and females” (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* 79-80, emphasis mine, HR). Some routines done by cheerleaders definitely fit this definition. Why would a young Christian want to be involved in a work of the flesh that will keep her from inheriting the kingdom of God?

**3. Stumbling Blocks.** Jesus warned against stumbling blocks. “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea” (Mark 9:42, NKJV). There are probably some Christians who would will dismiss the points made in this article as nonsense, claiming that cheerleading is an innocent rite of passage for young girls. Cheerleading is anything but innocent. If a young girl dresses immodestly and moves around in a suggestive way, she is inviting

sexual interest from boys—whether she realizes it or not. Have you ever heard of an enabler? An enabler is a person who contributes to the destructive behavior of another person. Cheerleaders are enablers to those who struggle with sexual thoughts and temptations. Your daughter may be naïve, innocent, pure as the driven snow—but, if she is involved in cheerleading, she is a stumbling block to others. Why would a young Christian want to place a stumbling block before others?

Cheerleading may be a traditional rite of passage, but a passage to where? For the two cheerleaders mentioned at the beginning of this article, it was a passage to a shameful embarrassment to their teammates, their fans, their friends, and their families. We live in a culture that is saturated with sex and embarrassed by a high teen pregnancy rate. How can godly parents encourage and allow their daughters to be involved in a practice like this? No one in the Bible ever glorified God by stripping down to a halter top and a mini skirt and jumping around in front of a stadium full of people. Young ladies, glorify God by acting and dressing modestly. How can this be done in a cheerleading uniform? Think about it.

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## “Of Your Father The Devil”

Larry Ray Hafley

Jesus said of some, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). That is, since they displayed his character and conduct, the devil was their spiritual father. This is how one becomes a son or daughter of Abraham and Sara—“whose daughters ye are” means that one is “of” them in that he manifests their spirit and their life in his attitudes and attributes (Rom. 4; 1 Pet. 3:6). If one is a child of Abraham, he will do the works of Abraham (John 8:39).

This is also how “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). Christ does not personally indwell my body, but he lives in me as I live according to his will, after the example of his life (Col. 2:6; 1 John 2:6).

To walk in the Spirit is to walk in accordance with the Spirit’s law, or rule, the gospel; it is to be subject to the Spirit’s law (Rom. 8:2, 6; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18; Phil. 1:9-11; 3:16-19; Col. 1:9-11; 3:16; 1 John 3:24; 4:1). Those who walk as God directs in his word are the children of God; they are *of* their Father, born of him. Those who walk after the flesh, after the appetites and desires of their own will, are of their father, the devil.

When we say of a child, “You can see his daddy in him,” what do we mean? We mean that he has his father’s ways, his mannerisms, that he “acts just like his daddy.” So, it is of the children of God and the children of the devil. When we show a life of love toward others, God dwells in us, and we dwell in him. How? “Because as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:16, 17). On the other hand, when we exhibit the traits of unbelief and bitterness toward the truth, the devil dwells in us and we in him. How? “Because as he (the devil) is, so are we in this world” (John 8:38-44).



# Old Habits

Charles Willis

Habitual behavior can be good, but most often we feel we need to change our habits to become more of what God would have us be. Ever since God created man we have struggled with our habits, but that does not excuse sinful behavior.

In 2 Kings 17:41 we read, “So, while these nations feared the Lord, they also served their idols; their children likewise and their grandchildren, as their father did, so they do to this day.” Clearly, we can pass our habits to our children and grandchildren and even further. The influence we can have on the actions, thoughts, and attitudes of our descendants is profound. The Israelites (in general) were influenced to idolatry, and it was a habit they struggled with for generations.

Their struggle perhaps began in Egypt as they were surrounded by the many gods of the Egyptians. Perhaps this is why they chose to build the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. Verse 33 of our text says, they “feared the Lord and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile.” Regardless of when they learned to worship idols, there is no doubt that by this time (in 2 Kings 17) it was a long held tradition in their culture and families.

Families like traditions and habits. When an individual believes something different from the religion of the “family” it often creates waves of unrest in a household or extended family. Some people have trouble obeying the truth of God because of a long held family belief. We tend to prefer to just “go with the flow,” even if the flow is wrong! The Israelites in our text were worshipping Jehovah while they served the idols. The preceding verses are all about what God had done for them, but “they did not listen” (v. 40), “but did according to their earlier custom.”

Our culture (in a similar way) is beginning to advocate many “faiths” which God approves. There are many similarities in these beliefs to the concept of idolatry that was evident in the lives of the Israelites. The world says: worship God any way you want, be sincere but hold to your

convictions, there are many roads that lead to heaven, just go to church somewhere, we’re all Christians and therefore the children of God because we believe Jesus is the Son of God. This has become the habit that many families have adopted, and is certainly the habit of our culture in which we are raising our children. Rather than remembering what Jehovah has done for us, many believers are adopting the views of the world and teaching them to their children through their influence.

For example, in the 1950s men began proclaiming in the Lord’s church that we should support from the Lord’s treasury things like missionary societies, orphan homes and mass evangelical efforts. These are good works (certainly), but their support from the Lord’s treasury cannot be authorized in Scripture. Today, these same men fear the Lord and also serve their idol (self) in these practices; their children likewise and their grandchildren do so to this day. When error is allowed it will influence the next generation to further error. Thus we now see in congregations the error of marriage/divorce/remarriage issues, the acceptance of open fellowship with denominations, the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, the denial of Bible doctrines such as the necessity of baptism or the reality of hell. Where did these things come from? The acceptance of an error in generations past. Their influence has been passed to the next generations.

What about us? What influence are we having on the next two or three generations? Where will the Lord’s church be, based on the influence we are exerting? Consider and contemplate these few serious matters:

**1. Modesty.** How can a Christian exert a positive influence toward godliness if we are dressed in a more immodest fashion than the world? Not too many years ago most every Christian believed that shorts (of any length) were immodest. Now we see Christians (even in our congregation) who not just wear shorts, but wear them of a length shorter than their friends. In a group, the one who stands out as the most immodestly dressed is the one who professes to be a Christian. Doesn’t this sound like our text: “while these nations

feared the Lord, they also served their idols”? We profess a belief and fear in God, but we continue to do what we want. Where will such behavior end? What will our children understand to be modest? How many generations beyond us will think nothing of wearing a bikini bathing suit? Or worse? We must be an influence for righteousness.

**2. Righteousness rather than just being seen of men.**

It is easy to put on a show of righteousness—just consider how many people drive according to the law when a police officer is sitting beside the road pointing the radar. Sadly, many people do the same thing religiously. When someone is watching they behave, but when they think no one will know, they choose to sin. Maybe it’s just a little drink of alcohol, maybe it’s a web page, perhaps it’s even a totally different set of morals when surrounded by the work crowd. God is not pleased with such behavior—that’s what was so strongly condemned in the Pharisees. We are to love God from the heart. Righteousness is to be done from the heart. Children can spot hypocrisy from a mile away. What influence are we having upon the next two generations? What are they learning from us about real righteousness.

**3. Putting God first.** Perhaps no other problem in our society so closely mimics that of the Israelites. Jehovah is not first in priority, but instead shares that position with other things. This is no where more evident than in the typical assembly statistics of congregations around the nation, including ours. It is not uncommon for a drop off of more than 30% between a Sunday morning and Sunday night. A mid week service is typically closer to 45-50% reduction in attendance. One hundred years ago things were not this way. Yes, we live in a different world than they did, however that has no bearing on priorities. Most of us can be anywhere when we feel strongly about it. Seeking “first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33)

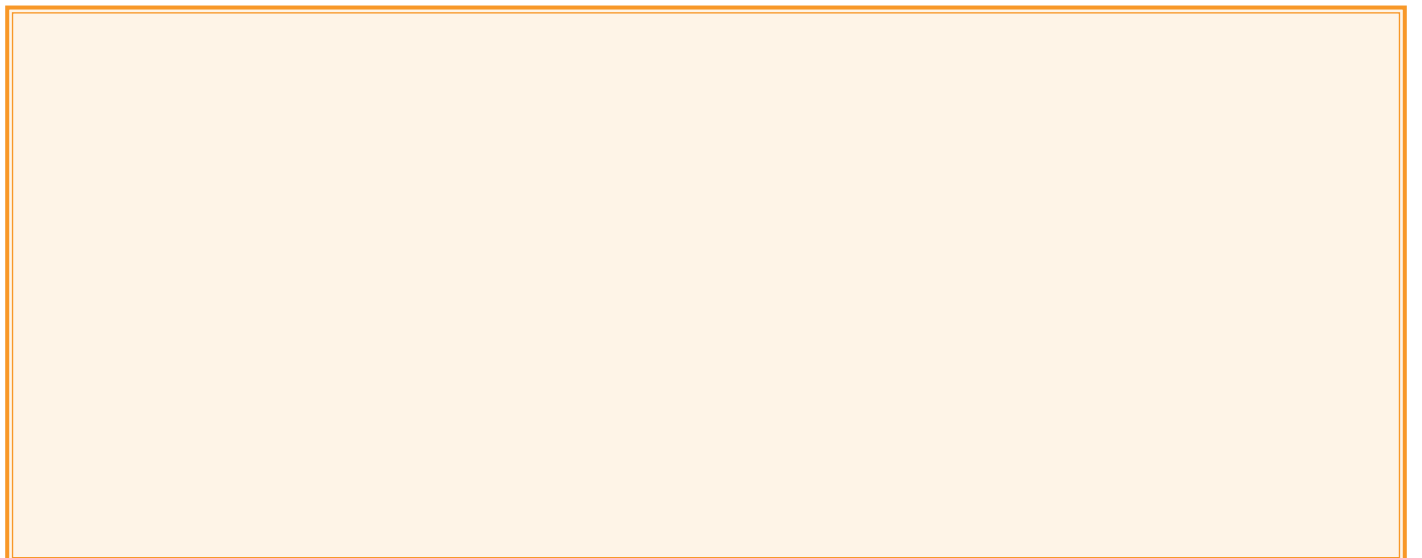
seems to be a dying sort of commitment. What influence will we have on our descendants? If we only attend two or three assemblies a month, how many should we expect they might attend? This is but one area of application of not putting God first.

**4. Studying to show ourselves approved as a workman that needeth not be ashamed.** “Those folks in the church of Christ, they know their Bible!” That *was* the sentiment of the world in 1940. It is not in 2005. There are some who know Scripture, there are many who know more than the average person in the world, but sadly many have followed the trend of the nation we live in. They read after “Christian writers,” depend on “Christian radio,” rely on “good preachers and elders” rather than putting their trust in the word of God! Study, real study, is a dying aspect of our religious life. We need a vigilant attitude to return to the book and study diligently. Why would we choose thirty minutes of Ray Ramano or David Letterman rather than thirty minutes of Matthew or Galatians? When these are our choices we must see there is a problem with priorities and attitude about the importance of study!

**5. Old habits are hard to break, but break them we must.** It may be a habit we learned from our family or even from our culture. They must be broken if we want to hope that future generations will remain faithful to God. Our influence must be exerted toward righteousness and breaking an old bad habit in our life is one way that will make an impression on our descendants. The Israelites did not listen: “The covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods” (2 Kings 17:38). We need to listen and act according to what pleases God.

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# A Study of Matthew 5:38-39

Donald Ames

In Matthew 5:38-39, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.” This passage has been widely misunderstood by a lot of people, and consequently, they have not really taken it seriously. After all who wants to get beat up, then get up, stick their chin out, and say, “Bet you can’t hit it that hard again.” In my college days (a long time ago), we used to build our loop-holes around such a passage much like the Pharisees did. “Jesus says if he hits you on one cheek, turn to him the other also—but it doesn’t say what is going to happen to him if he hits you again.” And then, with smug satisfaction, we would wave our fist in the air. Obviously, that is not in accord with the spirit Jesus was preaching.

## LEFT-HANDED PEOPLE

Pause, and act out how you would hit a person. If you are like the majority of people, you are right-handed. And if you swung a fist at someone, you are going to connect—on the left cheek. But the Bible says, “Whoever slaps you on your right cheek.” This means, if it is talking about beating someone up, it is talking to someone who is left-handed.

Let’s face it most of the population is right-handed! This apparently has always been true—even in the Bible. Men like Ehud (Judg. 3:15), the seven hundred men from Gibeah (Judg. 20:16), and those with David (1 Chron. 12:2) are singled out *because they were left-handed*. Those who were right-handed are not singled out in the same manner, with special attention being drawn to the fact they were right-handed. Now this does not mean you are abnormal if you are left-handed, nor does it mean you have to change to become like your peers. It just simply means that you are different—not like the vast majority. No other conclusion drawn on such a difference would be valid, nor does the Bible offer any. So, is Jesus addressing this passage in Matthew 5:38-39 *only* to those who are *left-handed*? Does it mean we can ignore it if the person is right-handed and slugs us on the left cheek?

Another key word we need to note in this passage is that Jesus said, “Whoever *slaps* you.” He did not say,

“If someone *slugs* you on the right cheek,” but rather if someone “slaps” you. That too shows it is not talking about “getting beat up.” When is a man likely to “slap” you on the right cheek, and how would he go about it. The only way the average man could slap you on the right cheek would be if he back-handed you one. (Are you beginning to get the picture?)

Jesus is talking about retaliation and the temper when evil people abuse you. “An eye for an eye” and “tit for tat.” None of us enjoys letting someone else get the upper hand, and especially if it is a deliberate insult or even a challenge for a duel. How we want to retaliate—and we wouldn’t settle for either a “slap” on the “right cheek”! But that does not alter anything, and only adds fuel to the fire. This is a good-time to pause and read Romans 12:17-21.

Jesus’ point, in reality, was if someone is being oppressive, shoving you around, insulting you with the back of his hand; do not retaliate in kind. Yield the ground, hold your temper, and even offer good in return. This way, the abuser will soon realize he is the one in the wrong (and if he doesn’t, there is always the government, whom God has ordained as the punisher of those who do wrong, Rom. 13), and may even change his attitude. Sounds like Jesus, hanging on the cross, and saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34; cf 1 Pet. 2:23), doesn’t it?

May this help open our eyes of understanding and also help us to develop the spirit Jesus would have of us. Many of our problems would vanish if we would but read the passage more carefully, and certainly that is true of this passage.

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# Church Growth By Dancing?

Harry Osborne

Below is an article from *The Wall Street Journal* entitled “Spirited Dancing: Dancing in Church Splits Congregations” (A1, A10, 10/14/04). As you read it, please look for how the advocates of the practice seek to justify it:

At a concert here a few miles outside San Antonio, young adults in clingy leotards and sequined vests shimmied and shook through the aisles as shouts from the crowd rose above the music.

The dancers were here to “minister” at a gospel festival at the New Creation Christian Fellowship Church. “There’s power, deliverance, healing, and declaration in dance,” said one dancer, “Lady” Michelle Nurse. “It’s a form of praise and worship.”

In recent years, black churches across the country have been starting dance ministries, in part to lure younger congregants. And that bothers some conservative souls who believe tight clothing and gyrating bodies don’t belong in a house of worship.

“When you put women in leotards in the church, it’s going to open the doors to problems because it attracts unbelievers in a fast and powerful way—and worldly women who want to show off their bodies,” says the Rev. Ron Brown, who bristles at the thought of putting a dance ministry in his First Missionary Baptist Church, a 100-member congregation in Desoto, Texas.

The two sides are turning to the Bible for support and drawing opposite conclusions. Dance partisans point to a biblical passage from the New International Version that deals with King David of Israel, who “danced before the Lord with all his might” and another passage about Moses’ prophetess sister Miriam, who danced with other women after the Lord delivered the Jews from Egypt’s oppressive rule.

Those opposed cite the same passages as merely advocating spontaneous demonstrations of the sort long seen in black churches among congregants who feel the spirit, not choreographed dance. Some white churches have dance ministries, too, but it has been more of a hot-button issue in black churches in recent years.

Today’s “praise dancing,” as it’s called, is often a mixture of different dance techniques. Dancers often perform ballet moves such as arabesques and pirouettes in combination with twirls and spins seen in modern dance and hip-hop. Often, dancers—both men and women—perform flips, lifts and clap their hands. Some praise dancers also use streamers, flags, tambourines and ankle bracelets to add color, sound and theatrics.

As in other forms of dance, Christian praise dancing is used to tell a story or demonstrate reverence. For instance, some dances are choreographed to illustrate the resurrection of Christ. Dancers will lift their hands toward heaven and kneel as if in prayer. Likewise, wearing red can represent the blood of Jesus, black evil and white purity and the cleansing of sin.

The One Accord Ministries, an Austin, Texas, organization that trains and supports dance ministries, lists more than 1,000 of them, up from just five eight years ago. “It’s the only auxiliary in the church you have to defend,” says Carl Long, who leads the more than 30 members of the Tribe of Judah dance troupe at Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church in Dallas. “Singing has never been on trial like dance.”

Earlier this year, the Tribe of Judah—wearing red and black—jumped up and down rhythmically to an up-tempo gospel song that encouraged the crowd to break loose from the bondage of sin and oppression and celebrate freedom through Christ. As the drums and guitars played harmoniously, the dancers—some in their mid-40s—quickly fell to the sanctuary floor and rolled over, at other times jumping back on their right leg and kicking the other leg up as if performing a karate move.

Organized dance has strong roots in the church. With the rise of Christianity, churches developed dance rituals for use during prayer and mass. But it was quickly attacked as lustful and decadent. In the beginning of the ninth century, Charlemagne, the Holy Roman emperor, prohibited dancing of all sorts. But his edict didn’t seem to end it in the church and actually encouraged it elsewhere.

In the case of black churches, one of the early dance ministries in the U.S. was started more than 20 years ago

by the Rev. Ethel Veal, who co-pastors God's Children's Ministries Worship Center Church, a nondenominational congregation in Baton Rouge, La. The gospel dance troupe started out using only hand gestures. When it added below-the-waist dance movements, there were complaints, and some church members fled.

When we started moving our legs and kicking them up, people asked, "You say this is of God?" says Ms. Veal, whose church has 200 members. "People thought we were out of it."

Pamela Rutherford, national co-coordinator for Christian Dance Fellowship U.S.A., a nonprofit group with about 650 members, says church leaders should accept that reaching modern churchgoers requires modern techniques. "They have to realize a lot of people are really being touched by the gospel through dance," she says.

The Rev. Vincent Jones of Shiloh Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, doesn't buy that. "I don't think we ought to make church a free-for-all just to get good numbers," Mr. Jones says. "Praise dancing is a fad and can be used as a gimmick to get people to come in."

The complaints come from the pews as well as the pulpit. Trevi Pershay, a New York resident, several years ago began an outreach dance ministry for teenagers who go from church to church performing mime, hip hop, liturgical and other dances meant to attract young people to Christianity. She says some churchgoers see thugs and hoodlums wearing baggy denim jeans, baseball caps and oversized T-shirts when they should be seeing 55 earnest teenagers dancing to Christian music. "Sometimes people will get up and walk out and at other times, they just won't applaud us," says Ms. Pershay.

New Covenant Christian Ministries, of Lithonia, Ga., has had separate dance ministries for adults, teens and children since 2001, but some worshipers still find it hard to take. A woman who attended Sunday services with her children recently walked away and vowed to never come back after seeing people line-dancing, says the Rev. D'Ann Johnson, co-pastor of the church.

To prevent such an exodus, some churches are toning down their dance ministries. At Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, the dance ministry urged performers to cover their leotards with modest skirts and oversized tops after churchgoers complained that they were too provocative. "It drove some of the men crazy, and some of the women would get upset," says the Rev. Josef Rasheed, associate minister of worship.

Despite the difficulties, churches are likely to feel more pressure to add dance to their services. The Rev. Brown of First Missionary Baptist in Desoto was so opposed to dancing in church that he refused even to watch a performance. "It does more hurt than help," he says. Last spring, however, he took in a performance at a National Baptist Convention meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. He thought the

dancing was beautiful but still isn't convinced it belongs in church.

He concedes that he may eventually have to resort to a restricted dance ministry if he is to fill the pews in his 22-month-old church: "If I had three or four good-looking women with great bodies, I'd be guaranteed an audience."

In the quest for numbers, our denominational friends have provided an ever-growing number of programs to appeal to carnal appetites. In the midst of such foolishness, however, these folks should be congratulated for one thing. They openly admitted the nature of dancing as appealing to the carnal man and the clothing associated with it as provocative and skimpy.

The only approved examples of "dancing" they can cite from the Bible are no more than joyful demonstrations (Lam. 5:15; Pss. 30:11; 149:3; 150:4). Such approved dancing was done by one alone or by groups of the same gender (Jer. 31:13; 1 Sam. 18:6; 21:11; 29:5; 2 Sam. 6:14; Exod. 15:20; Judg. 11:34). In the cases where it involves men and women dancing with one another, it is clearly condemned (Matt. 14:6-11; Mark 6:22-28; Exod. 32:19). If it involves movements enticing carnal appetites, it is characterized as *lasciviousness*, a sin repeatedly condemned (Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:3). Henry Thayer said the Greek word translated "lasciviousness" (*aselgeia*) involved "wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females" (*Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.* 79-80). He cites Romans 13:13 as an example where it is translated "wantonness." No, denominational dancers have no Bible case, but some brethren need to learn the same thing.

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# God's Children in Satan's World

Ray E. Warfel, Jr.

When in Rome do as the Romans do. For soaking up local culture this is not of itself a bad philosophy. Several years ago I bought a pair of boots while visiting my sister's family in Dallas. I felt rather at home thereafter in the Lone Star State. My wife and I have also made an agreement that, though neither of us like seafood much, if we ever travel to the Northeast we will try the clam chowder at least once. These might be lighthearted examples but they illustrate the point. There are, however, places this exercise in conformity would be foolish to try. At least once in my adult lifetime I have been in a pig pen. There was not the slightest desire within me to lie down in the filth and wallow with the hogs. In like manner, Christians must live in the world (John 17:15-16), but they have no business being of the world. One can be in the pig's sty without being a pig.

God has a standard of conduct he expects his children to meet. He has not only expressed this standard through the teaching of his inspired spokesmen (Phil. 3:15-17) but has also demonstrated it in his own behavior. The question goes then to his children, how will they behave? Consider the expectations God has of his children concerning immorality.

## **GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO FLEE IMMORALITY.**

This fact is obvious from Paul's statement, "Now flee from youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Some criticize the preaching against actions and thoughts that lead to blatant sin saying that such preachers have become modern day Pharisees and have made a "hedge around the Law." The idea these critics have is that the Pharisees, in order to insure men would not violate the Law, bound on the populous commands God had not. They will conclude that preachers, who condemn drunkenness and one drink alike, or lasciviousness and its application to the prom have restricted what is innocent to protect from what is not. The problem with this line of reasoning is that Jesus not only reproved the Pharisees for binding what God had loosed but for loosing what God had bound, for Jesus said to them, "These are the things you should have done without neglecting the others" (Matt. 23:23). Hedges are not Phariseism when

they are God made hedges. Fleeing immorality includes all sins not just the big ones, as they are thought of. Note also that Christianity does not live solely at a line, but in a direction for Paul continued his statement to Timothy, "and pursue righteousness" (2 Tim. 2:22).

God has commanded his children to flee immorality, and this is what he has done himself. The apostle said Jesus' life proved "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God keeps no company with immorality for the prophet has said, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear" (Isa. 59:2). Death, that is a separation from God, has always followed in the wake of immorality. Following Adam's rebellious meal, the fellowship he and Eve shared with God was broken. When "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5), he determined to strike them from the face of the earth. This he did save eight righteous souls. Upon the cities of Sodom and Gammorah God rained fire and brimstone for their debauchery. Someday too the Lord will separate the nations to his left and to his right, and to the left he will say, "Depart from Me" (Matt. 25:41), and will baptize these with fire (Matt. 3:11). God keeps no company with immorality.

What shall we do then? There is a notion that Christians are impervious to sin. Some manifest this thinking by attempting to walk as close to sin yet not with it. They fail to realize that this is impossible to do for Jesus has said, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 12:30). One who wishes to be near sin cannot be near Christ for sin and Christ are worlds apart. Jesus has said, "I am not of the world" (John 17:16), and also, "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). Christians must do as Jacob and "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves" (Gen. 35:2-3). Imitators of Christ cannot play with God or with sin. They must choose now to whom they will be devoted, and be determined to flee the other.

## GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO EXPOSE IMMORALITY

The Lord has said, “And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Eph. 5:11). To Timothy the apostle said, concerning the relationship of the preacher to the elders, “Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all” (1 Tim. 5:20). One may ask how this should be done: does demeanor, approach, and tact matter? Yes, but these depend much upon who is being spoken to. The apostle encouraged the Christians of Galatia, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). He again told the young preacher to preach, “with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2). One must not lose sight however, that he also said, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, (and) exhort.” God, through his prophets, has left many examples of this clear and straightforward approach. When speaking about homosexuality God said, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion” (Lev. 18:22-23). These are not alternatives to the norm; they are perversions of the right. When John spoke about the marriage of Herod to Herodias, he said, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Matt. 14:4). The king is not above the law or off limits to the preacher. Beyond this there are examples of extremely pointed names being applied to the wicked. John said of the poisonous religious leaders of his day when they came to be baptized, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7). Paul called some, who barked about the law and labored to devour men with its bite, “dogs, (and) . . . evil workers” (Phil. 3:2). Perhaps the sharpest label came from the Lord Jesus himself in responding to the worldly-minded Peter. He said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Mark 8:33). God called sin what it is.

There will be those religious leaders who will no doubt accept a new morality for a new day. Others will reject immorality but remain silent about its consequences. The question is again left to God’s faithful children, what will they do? There is only one acceptable resolution: Preach peace in the Prince of Peace but declare holy war to all the rebellious. God’s children cannot be passive about what their Father considers so serious. They cannot “live and let live” as the saying goes. Christians need to be clear and unashamed about who they are and what they do. They need to take in hand the sword God has provided (Eph. 6:17) and, like David when he faced the giant, “(run) quickly toward the battle line” (1 Sam. 17:48), so that they might cut down the champions of Catholicism, sectarianism, and immorality.

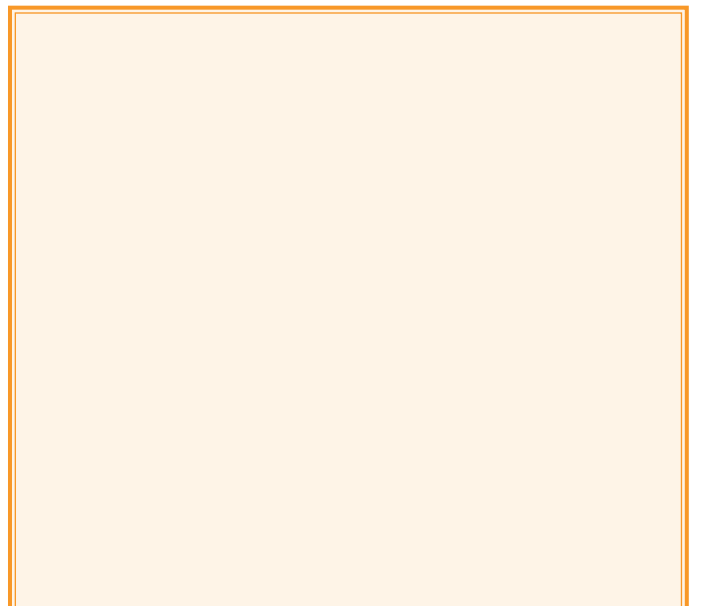
## GOD EXPECTS HIS CHILDREN TO PRESENT THE ALTERNATIVE TO IMMORALITY

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). The proposal here is not to preaching one alternative among many, but to proclaiming the one and only alternative. Jesus said of himself, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). Peter concurred with this for he said, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Christianity is the only moral path. The fact that we now read these revelations from God demonstrates that he himself led the way in presenting to the world the alternative to immorality, which example he now expects his children to emulate. The modesty that needs to be preached in America is that which needs to be preached in *National Geographic* countries. The sobriety that needs to be preached in America is that which needs to be preached in Europe, where drinking wine with a meal is common. That which truly saves men and women here today is that which needs to be trusted, held to, and boldly preached here and everywhere tomorrow. Once more, hearing God’s pointed words and seeing his personal example, the task of responding is handed to his children. Will God’s children conform to their surroundings so they can live more conveniently in Satan’s world, or like a city set upon a hill, will they scatter the darkness of immorality by letting shine the light of God’s better way?

There is a standard of conduct God expects from his children. Christians may live in Rome, but they need not become Romans. Flee all immorality. Expose its every face, and open the cell that confines mankind to a dark existence.

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# Does My Attitude Profess Godliness?

**Kesa Whitley**

God commands us in Romans 12:10 to be “kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” It is often difficult to obey this command when others, even brethren wrong us in some way. Regardless of what another man may do, does my attitude towards him profess godliness? In Luke 6:27, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and do good to them. He repeats this statement in verse 35, emphasizing its importance. Jesus exhibited this himself while on the cross. After years of teaching, performing miracles, and forgiving men of their sins, he was denied by his own apostle, Peter, and denied by all other men. Even Pilate himself could find no just cause to crucify Jesus based on the charges against him. Through all the agony and mocking, in Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed, “Father forgive them.” We must also have the attitude of Jesus.

It is equally important not to harbor bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 speaks of the “root of bitterness.” Roots feed something. When this root is bitterness, it may grow larger and overtake the Christian values God requires of us. It can inflate conflict, impose jealousy or develop hatred. None of these is a quality God wants us to have. He teaches in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men,” which includes the foolish disputes spoken of in Titus 3:8. This requires effort on our part, beginning with forgiveness. Stephen, in Acts 8:59-60 is an example for us. He stood before the council and told them they were responsible for killing Jesus. This pricked the hearts of the council and they became angry and took Stephen out of the city and stoned him. Stephen did not curse these men, but as he was dying implored the Lord not to hold them accountable for this sin. Likewise, Paul in 2 Timothy 4:16, while in prison, states he was forsaken but requested that this charge not be placed on those who forsook him.

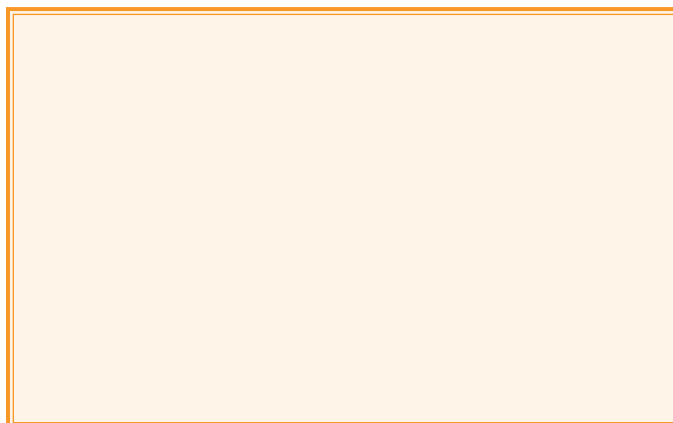
Romans 12:19-21 teaches us to not return evil to the one gave it to us, but rather do good, “. . . for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” The cliché “kill them with kindness” parallels this verse. Being kind and

not returning the wrongdoing will be more effective than any harm or punishment we may devise. Titus 2:8 says to speak with “sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” Do we speak with words of love, even when we are compelled not to, offer hospitality to those who have spoken perverse words of us, or encourage those who are busybodies as described in 1 Peter 4:15? This will be more impressive on the persecutor because the guilt of his actions will be on his conscience when he realizes we maintain an attitude that parallels Jesus’. Those who are not Christians may be provoked by our actions to inquire why we handle ourselves the way we do. This will provide an opportunity to teach them Jesus’ commands for us, and it will plant a seed which could lead to their own salvation.

In the midst of persecution, Jesus says in Hebrews 13:6 “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” Man will disappoint, inflict pain, and persecute, but Deuteronomy 4:31 says God will not forsake us. Those who are faithful and do the will of the Father will receive their reward of Heaven in the end. Matthew 6:14-15 says that God will not forgive us of our sins if we do not forgive others. It is our responsibility to maintain the right attitude, forgiving those who require our forgiveness.

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# What's Your Standard?

Norman E. Fultz

What is the standard by which you measure your life and conduct? Too many folk, I fear, are like the little boy who came running into the house and very excitedly shouted, "Mother, Mother, I am nine feet tall!" His mother tried vainly to tell him that he was exaggerating and talking nonsense. He responded that he knew for a fact that he was nine feet tall.

"What makes you think so?", she asked. "Because I measured myself," he replied. "How did you measure yourself?", she inquired. "I took off my shoe," the little boy said, "and measured myself with that. My shoes are the same size as my feet, and I'm really nine feet tall."

Well now, such reasoning we understand in the mind of a child, for his comprehension is limited. The little feet on which they walk may be what they picture when they think of something being so many "feet" by measure. A little child sees a parent picking the spent blooms of a plant and discarding them so as to generate more blooms. Later that child is picking blossoms from plants and throwing them on the ground; and when scolded for it must be terribly confused, for after all that is what it appears the parent was doing. A little child will often be involved in some mischief for which he is rebuked or punished but the standard by which he/she was measuring his behavior was a playmate who did the same thing. Now surely we can recognize the difference between such children and persons who are much older and more mature using such childish imagining to create a standard for measuring or judging their conduct. That is a little bit much, won't you agree? Lets illustrate.

The standard by which some measure their conduct is what others in society are doing. Modern society approves of gambling, drinking of alcohol, premarital sex and extra marital affairs, divorce for most any cause, *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. So, too frequently, instead of Christians being the light and salt (Matt. 5:13-14) to a society that is groping in darkness and rotting from corruption within, they drink at society's wells. Instead of lifting society to a higher plane of behavior, they allow themselves to be dragged into a pit.

Your standard of measurement for your conduct and behavior is the will of Christ. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians was, "... you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles (society) walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ" (Eph. 4:17-20). "Walk as children of light," he further counseled (Eph. 5:8). Phillip's rendering of Romans 12:1-2 is clear. "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, go give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity." Verse 9b, he translates, "Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good."

God's intent is that we "be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). As "His own special people" who have been "called from darkness to light," Christians are challenged to "as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles (society)" with a view to leading them to "glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

God's children have a much higher standard by which to measure their conduct than simply the norms of a decadent society, or even their own feelings and imaginings. It is God's word.

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## “Preachers” continued from front page

**Trouble makers should not preach.** With some preachers, trouble, dissension, and strife accompany them wherever they go. The church was at peace until they came along and created a disturbance over one of their pet hobbies. It took years to build up the church, but just a few months for them to tear it up. They have brethren fighting one another, becoming alienated after years of friendship, all because of a stubborn, hard-headed, factious preacher. He lines up his devotees behind himself by charm, sweet-talk, and flattery. He gets himself entrenched so that he can run roughshod over everybody who gets in his way. In the aftermath, the church is left in shambles. Some quit out of frustration and others join some loose, liberal church or a denomination and the attendance drops down to a handful. It is possible that the building would have to be sold as the small number cannot maintain the upkeep. In the meantime the preacher has moved on to another congregation to start his nefarious and destructive work all over again. Men like this should quit preaching and get a job at a construction company, working with the demolition crew.

We read of trouble makers in the first century church. Paul said of the Judalzers, “. . . but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7). These troublers put a “whammy” on the Galatian brethren. Paul said, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you” (Gal. 3:1)? Putting it another way Paul is saying: “O foolish Galatians, who has charmed you or cast a spell over you?” How sad that brethren permit themselves to be taken in by a flattering preacher. There are still some Absaloms around today. Paul did not employ such carnal tactics as flattery (1 Thess. 2:5). Somebody said that flattery is like soap; ninety per cent lye.”

Perverters of the gospel destroy churches, unless stopped. Factious men or heretics (Tit. 3:10) must be rejected after the first and second admonition. Heretics here are self-willed, self-opinionated men who impose their opinions on others. As a result: trouble! Too, there are those who cause trouble by wanting to control the church. It is their way or no way. Consequently, trouble develops. Preachers are to work under the elders, not over them. A preacher is not the “Pastor.”

**Men who preach for money should not preach.** Some look upon preaching as a position, a profession, as one held in the business world. Their attitude is, “I will preach if I am paid enough.” Sadly, a few have turned down holding a gospel meeting because the church did not, or could not, come up to their demands. There are young men in their early twenties who want a lucrative salary before they will preach. They could not earn that kind of money in the secular world, but they demand it from the brethren. They think in terms of a big package deal, even in some cases demanding a written contract. How times have changed!

Certainly, preachers should be paid a decent wage, commensurate with what the average wage earners are getting in the congregation. Unfortunately, a few brethren have a low esteem of preaching and pay their preachers as little as they can. Preachers have a lot of expenses that some don't realize, such as paying all social security, medical insurance, presentable clothes, books, laying aside a little for savings for old age and other things. Paul writes about the right of a preacher to be paid for his work. A laborer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. 1 Cor. 9:14). Sometimes a man may have to work at a secular job to support himself and his family. Paul made tents at times to supply his needs (Acts 18:1-3). Such work should not be beneath the dignity of any preacher. Paul was totally committed to preaching the gospel, regardless whether a church or churches paid him anything. He wrote, “. . . woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). This should be every preacher's attitude.

**Men who do not set a godly example should not preach.** Paul said to the young preacher Timothy to be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). A man who does not live up to this divine injunction is not fit to enter the pulpit and pose as a gospel preacher. All of us need to endeavor to practice what we preach, assuming we preach faithfully the word of God.

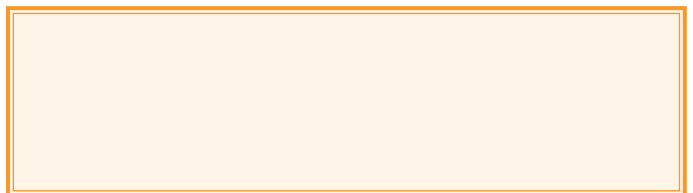
Some preachers are hypocrites and bring shame and disgrace upon the cause of Christ. They preach against adultery and then commit it. They preach against immodesty and wear immodest clothing. They preach against pornography and then watch it. They preach against lying and then lie. They preach that we should keep our word, then break their promises. They preach against dishonesty and then won't pay their debts. “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself” (Rom. 2:21)?

### CONCLUSION

Preaching is an honorable work. Regrettably, some men give it a bad name. To be able to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ is a divine favor. Paul wrote: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). May we rejoice in the fact that we have been called of God through the gospel to preach the glad tidings of good things.

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between Paul and the Judaizers. We are going to avoid controversial subjects and controversial men and just mind our own business here in Galatia.” What do you think the outcome for those churches might have been?

All that burying one’s head in the sand does for a local church is make that church vulnerable to infiltration by men who are teaching false doctrines. What usually happens is that a good eldership that is not informed about current issues begins inviting men either preaching false doctrine or upholding the hands of those who do into their local church for meetings. These polished speakers recommend others with the same mind set. When a change of preachers occurs in the local church, these elders choose a man from this same background. Without ever making a conscious decision, this church slowly becomes a part of those who are teaching loose doctrine and/or upholding the hands of those who do. Sound doctrine is replaced by so-called “positive” preaching. What is preached is not wrong, but what is not preached is truly significant. A generation grows up without having heard distinctive preaching and without the spiritual fortitude to stomach preaching like Paul had to do at Galatia in withstanding the Judaizers of his day. For these churches, those who address issues troubling the twenty-first century church are looked upon as contentious trouble makers.

*Truth Magazine* was born to address issues facing the church by trying to show Christians that a strong church is an informed church. A church is not strong by avoiding a discussion of instrumental music, church support of human institutions, the sponsoring church arrangement, and church support of recreation (such as the fellowship hall). Rather, a church is strong when it has taught its members the answers to the arguments used by those promoting the false doctrines and made its members aware of the false teachers spreading those false doctrines in order that they might avoid allowing them to enter into the spiritual flock among them (Rom. 16:17-18). Preaching which does not do this leaves the church vulnerable to apostasy.

My impression of what has been done in *Truth Magazine* is that we have not had a significant change in mission during the fifty years we have been in publication. However there has been a significant change in brethren during these fifty years. Those brethren who supported *Truth Magazine* in the fifties and sixties were in a life and death struggle with institutionalism. They appreciated the men in our ranks who were leading the battle against liberalism. There was a warm spirit of brotherliness among those standing together. Many of the brethren had to break away from liberal, institutional churches and start afresh. Some were meeting in houses converted into church buildings, a funeral home converted into a church building, a rented store front, etc. Some were struggling to erect a building. One church in

the Indianapolis area built its basement and met in it for a number of years before it could put the main auditorium on its facility. I remember my earliest years of preaching in the Indianapolis area. We preachers would get together at least once a month for a luncheon. This kept open the lines of communication between churches and strengthened the bonds of fellowship among brethren. While I was preaching in Alexandria, Indiana, churches would rotate having a Sunday afternoon singing once a month; brethren from around the area would fill their buildings.

These days have passed and a new spirit of isolation walking under the name of “church autonomy” has taken its place. Fewer brethren visit and support each other’s meetings. Brethren avoid much contact with each other, whether intentionally or because we have become so involved with the affairs of this life that we don’t have time to visit meetings. The spirit appears to be, “You run your church and we will run ours,” thus rationalizing a spirit of indifference and neglect toward our need to strengthen and encourage one another. There is not much feeling of brotherliness generated between the local congregations.

Struggling congregations have now established themselves in respectable buildings in their communities and don’t feel as much need for the support of their brethren in other parts of the city as they did in the fifties and sixties. As the congregations have grown in number, they have grown in social respectability. The kind of preaching that was done in the fifties and sixties to convert men and women from denominationalism and liberalism is not as welcome because it might offend denominational visitors. There is little appreciation for those men who led the battle to salvage brethren from institutionalism. (Those churches who used to call on a brother to defend their position in a debate will now not even invite him for a meeting because he is too hard in his preaching, although he is preaching the same sermons he preached in the 1950s and 1960s.) A generation has arisen who did not go through the fight over institutionalism and that generation is now in leadership positions in local congregations. Distinctive preaching is not in vogue; a softer approach toward converting the world is now in vogue—an approach which tries to convert the world without teaching them the difference between the Lord’s church and denominationalism. This mind set portends hard times ahead for the Lord’s local churches.

While these problems face us on one hand, on the other hand is a spirit of factionalism which is making every human judgment a requirement for salvation and a test of fellowship. Hobby riding has arisen among us that is creating an attitude toward brethren that is unhealthy and unwholesome. One issue web sites seem bent on dividing brethren. The tone of the discourse is venomous and unbrotherly. Those running these web sites write their voluminous material on the subject, with missionary zeal to

convert everyone to their judgments, but should one write a page in response, suddenly he is charged with preaching his opinions and should not be fellowshiped. Isolated quotations from articles, parts of sermons, and passing remarks are posted on Internet sites to leave an impression about a brother (that he is promoting a given doctrine) that is untrue. Particularly are the following being advocated: the church is the only collectivity which can preach the gospel (therefore, Florida College and Guardian of Truth Foundation are sinful organizations; however, Gospel Truths, Inc., The Preceptor Company, and Biblical Insights are not sinful organizations, for whatever arbitrary reasons one might imagine), the civil documents in a divorce determine who has the right to remarriage (the so-called “mental divorce” issue; many can join hands to oppose “mental divorce” but never address their inconsistencies about the civil divorce—the innocent must initiate the law suit, the innocent can counter sue, the innocent must win the judgment, etc.), and the partaking of the Lord’s supper on Sunday evening (the traditional arrangement of providing the Lord’s supper at the P.M. service is sinful; if one partakes all must partake). There are many other conscientious brethren with strong convictions about each of these issues who are not factional, are trying to abide within the Law of Christ and wrestle with issues of inconsistency as best they can (I count myself among them). Their mind set

acknowledges the gravity of the issues which all brethren face as they apply the gospel of Christ to difficult situations and their humility acknowledges that none of us has all of the answers about how to resolve the messes in which those who have disobeyed the Lord (or been the victim of those who disobeyed) have gotten themselves into. I am not talking about these brethren. They do not make their judgments conditions of salvation and tests of fellowship. They freely express their convictions without rancor and division and invite those with whom they disagree to do the same. Such attitudes and discussions are productive of good. But, factionalism is a threat that cannot be ignored; it has torn asunder too many local churches among us already and threatens to destroy more.

These issues will continue to threaten God’s people and gospel preachers will be compelled to address them. As we begin our fiftieth year, we remain committed to the same truths as when we began in October 1955 and when I began editing in 1976. We appreciate the encouragement and support that we receive from brethren from time to time and look forward to serving for many more years, the Lord willing.

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## Preachers Needed

**Center, Texas:** The church of Christ located in the James Community near Center, Texas is in need of a preacher. The preacher, Travis Ferrell, recently passed away. The congregation has a very nice brick building on about one and one-half acres and about 30-35 in attendance on Sunday mornings. They can pay \$300 weekly, so the prospective preacher would need support or secular work. If interested, contact John W. Walker at [gibnhoj@yahoo.com](mailto:gibnhoj@yahoo.com) or 110 N. Church St., Center, TX 75935.

**Sweet Home, Oregon:** The church which meets at 37th and Long Streets is seeking a preacher that is willing and able to help them grow spiritually and numerically. They are a group of about 50. They believe they are able to provide full support. If interested, please send resume and references to Ken Songer at 505 Oak Terrace, Sweet Home, OR 97386 or e-mail Ken at [kcsonger@comcast.net](mailto:kcsonger@comcast.net).

**Soldotna, Alaska:** The Funny River Road church of Christ that meets in Soldotna is looking for a mature evangelist that is solid in his knowledge of the Scriptures. Soldotna is located on the Kenai Peninsula in south central Alaska. They number about 25 in attendance and can provide partial support. If interested, send resume, references, and a tape to Funny River Road Church of Christ, P.O. Box 2288, Soldotna, AK 99669.

## Quips & Quotes

### Methodist Church Rules Against Homosexuals

“Washington — The highest court in the Methodist Church on Monday defrocked a lesbian minister in Philadelphia and reinstated a Virginia pastor who had been suspended for denying membership in his congregation to a gay man.

“The nine-member Judicial Council also voided a declaration by Methodists in the Pacific Northwest that there was a ‘difference of opinion among faithful Christians regarding sexual orientation and practice.’ The court said the declaration was an ‘historical statement without prescriptive force’ and had no bearing on church laws.

“The rulings were a victory for conservatives in the church who believe homosexual activity is a sin and want to strictly enforce a Methodist rule against ‘self-avowed, practicing’ homosexuals in ordained ministry” (*The Indianapolis Star* [November 1, 2005], A4).

### United Methodist Bishops Address Gay Membership

“Lake Junaluska, N.C. — A meeting of the United Methodist Church’s bishops has unanimously reaffirmed that ‘homosexuality is not a barrier’ to membership.

“The bishops were responding to the denomination’s highest court, which reinstated the Rev. Edward Johnson of

South Hill, Va., and ruled he had the right to bar a practicing homosexual from membership.

“The bishop said the church endorses ‘inclusiveness and justice for all as it relates to church membership.’ They did not address the church’s policy against gay relationships, which Johnson said he was upholding” (*The Indianapolis Star* [November 12, 2005], B3).

#### **Births to Unmarried Women Set a U.S. Record**

“Washington — Nearly 1.5 million babies, a record, were born to unmarried women in the United States last year, the government reported Friday. And it isn’t just teenagers any more.

“‘People have the impression that teens and unmarried mothers are synonymous,’ said Stephanie Ventura of the National Center for Health Statistics.

“But last year teens accounted for just 24 percent of unwed births, down from 50 percent in 1970, she said.

“The increase in unmarried births have been among women in their 20s, she said, particularly those 25 to 29.

“Many of the women in that age group are living with partners but still count as unwed mothers if they haven’t formally married, Ventura noted.

“Among teens, more than 80 percent of mothers were unmarried” (*The Indianapolis Star* [October 29, 2005], A4).

#### **Anglicans Ask Conservatives to Leave Episcopal Church**

“Pittsburgh — An international panel of Anglican archbishops called upon a gathering of their conservative American counterparts Friday to join them by splitting from the rest of the U.S. Episcopal Church.

“‘Yes, we will stand with you as long as you remain faithful, biblical, evangelical and orthodox.’ said Bishop Datuk Yong Ping Chung, who represents South East Asia.

“The seven archbishops from Africa, the West Indies, and Asia spoke at the Hope and a Future Conference organized by the Anglican Communion Network.

“The network is headed by Pittsburg’s Episcopal Bishop Robert W. Duncan. He helped form the group in 2003 after the Episcopal Church in the United States consecrated an openly gay priest as bishop of New Hampshire and gave tacit approval to blessing services to same-sex couples” (*The Indianapolis Star* [November 12, 2005], A6).

#### **Vatican: Gay Priests Unwelcome**

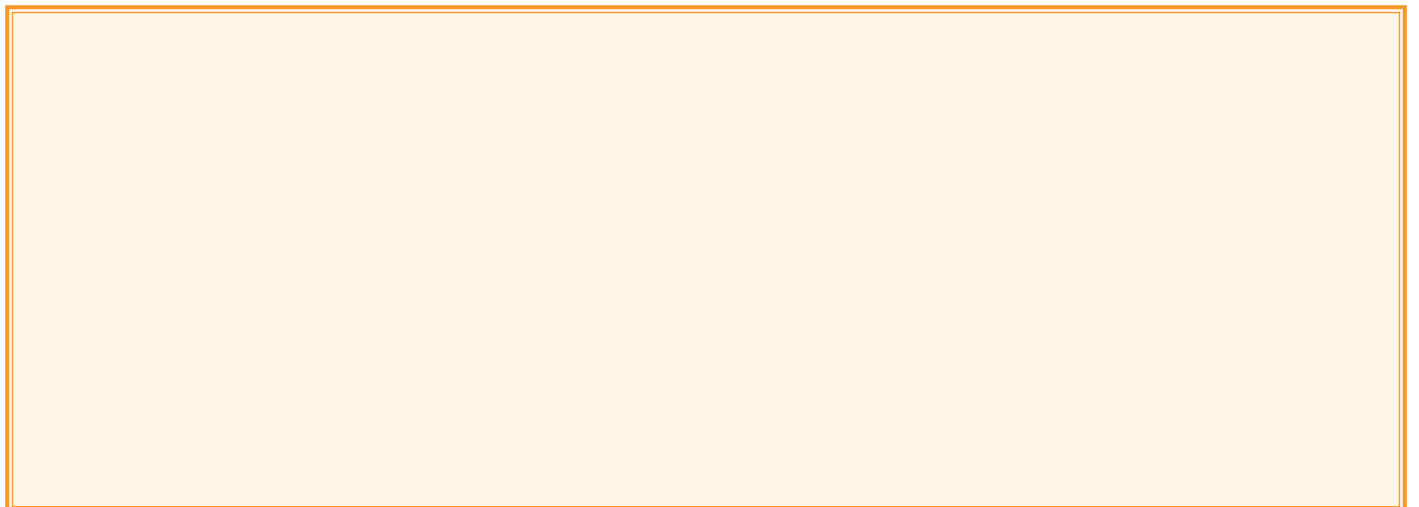
“Vatican City — Reiterating its stand against sexually active homosexuals in the priesthood, the Vatican also says in a new document that men with ‘transitory’ homosexuality must have overcome their sexual tendencies for at least three years before entering the clergy.

“The long-awaited ‘Instruction,’ due to be released next week, was posted Tuesday on the Internet by the Italian Catholic news agency Aista. Snippets of it have been reported in recent months, but this is the first time the entire document has been seen by the outside world.

“A church official who has read the document confirmed its authenticity.

“Conservative Roman Catholics who have decried the ‘gay subculture’ in seminaries will likely applaud the policy because it clarifies and perhaps toughens what the Vatican expects of seminarians and their administrators.

“Critics of the policy warned that, if enforced, it will likely result in seminarians lying about their orientation and will decrease the already dwindling number of priests in the United States even further. Estimates of the number of gays in U.S. seminaries and the priesthood range from 25 percent to 50 percent, according to a review of research by the Rev. Donald Cozzens, an author of ‘The Changing Face of the Priesthood’” (*The Indianapolis Star* [November 23, 2005], A8).



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