



## It's About Time!

Lewis Willis

The writer of an article in *The Akron Beacon Journal* (5/8/04) discusses a movement in some denominations concerning their worship practices. The article, written by Jim Remson, focuses on a new book, *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, published by the Philadelphia-based Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. The message of the book is that much of modern worship has shifted in focus from praising God, to satisfying the needs of the worshiper.

The essays, by several authors, quote many luminaries from protestant history. John Calvin, the sixteenth-century pillar of the Protestant Reformation Movement, is quoted as saying: “God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His word.” Remson says, “. . . the ultimate authority the book cites for its worship model is the Bible itself.”

The book affirms what is designated as *the regulative principle of worship*. The writers say this regulative principle holds that “God specifically commanded the elements he desired in worship. . . . To and from these, we may neither add nor take away.” The authors say, however, that Protestant bodies, such

as Pentecostal, Non-denominational, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Baptist churches, have added to and subtracted from the worship God authorized.

In its Philadelphia conference last month, the alliance promoted regulative worship, which it says is drawn from scriptural instructions and warnings. A feud has erupted which has been called “the worship wars.” Critics say this change in worship action is “outdated, puritanical and as chilly as the northern European climes that nurtured it.” In other words, to worship as God appoints is totally unacceptable to most people in modern religion. This has been the problem since apostasy from truth first manifested itself.

### Interesting Quotes

Here are some excerpts from *Give Praise To God*:

There are two ways to commit idolatry: worship something other than the true God, or worship the true God in the wrong way.

see “It's About Time” on p. 504

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## The Limits of Unity-in-Diversity

Mike Willis

For years, the denominations has preached and practiced unity-in-diversity. From these denominational sources some of our own brethren have learned unity-in-diversity and have applied it to issues among us such as premillennialism, instrumental music, church support of human institutions, divorce and remarriage, and other subjects. As we wrestle with the issue of unity-in-diversity among ourselves, new developments are occurring among the denominations.



We have chronicled on our “Quips and Quotes” pages, the problems which the denominations have faced over the issue of homosexuality. Some of those who have clamoured for unity-in-diversity have reached the limits to their diversity on the issue of homosexuality. Typical of those who have reached their limits is an editorial in the July 2004 issue of *Christianity Today* entitled “No-Fault Division.” The editorial was introduced by a statement from the United Methodists:

William Hinson, president of a major renewal organization, dropped a bombshell during May’s United Methodist General Conference: “I believe the time has come when we must begin to explore an amicable and just separation that will free us both from our cycle of pain and conflict” (see “Pondering A Divorce,” 50).

The group which Hinson represents numbers 650,000 members.

In the accompanying article, “Pondering a Divorce” (50), Kathleen K. Rutledge reported,

Away from the conference floor, influential leaders from both sides held conversations about the church’s future. One night around 10 P.M., representatives from the left and right sat down to talk informally. For nearly two hours, 20 top leaders shared their perspectives and experiences. The results of the meeting were quite the opposite of what they initially intended. Instead of discovering common ground, evangelicals said, they realized how far apart the two sides are.

“Unity-in-Diversity” on p. 505

## Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

### Preaching in Germany and Italy

We were recently in gospel meetings at Ramstein, Germany and Udine, Italy, our second time at both places. There is a large U.S. air base at Ramstein. The church there is made up of service men and their dependents with a few civilian employees of the government. Steve Wallace works with this congregation and has been able to help not only that work, but also the work in Lithuania and eastern Europe and also has made several trips to the Philippines. His wife, Mary, is librarian at the base. Some come from solid backgrounds while others have an institutional background and learn the truth while they are there. Present attendance runs in the forties. They have not had much success in reaching German people in the area, even though Steve speaks German fluently.

The church at Udine, Italy has made good progress since we were there fifteen years ago. Udine is a city of about 100,000 in northeastern Italy. Valerio Marchi is the very able preacher here. From twelve-fifteen people when we were there last, they have grown to 65-70 in attendance. There are about twenty members from Ghana in West Africa, who have moved there to work. The rest are Italians or spouses of Italians. They have a good number of young people. Our time at both places was most enjoyable and we hope profitable to these churches.

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### No Rank in the Kingdom

On our way from Ramstein to Udine, we worshiped with a small group at Stuttgart, Germany on a Lord's Day. They meet in the apartment of a service man on the army base there. There were thirteen of us present that day. Among them were two sergeants, a captain, and a two-star general. But they were all in civilian clothes, and called each other by first names. Had I not known their rank in advance, I would not have detected it by dress or demeanor. In the kingdom of God we are all of equal rank. We are brethren and fellow-workers.

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### “Binding Where Jesus Did Not Bind”

It is just as wrong to loose where the Lord has bound as it is to bind where he has not bound. When it comes to the issue of divorce and remarriage, we must be careful to respect exactly what the Lord has said. There is a good

*continued on next page*

#### **It's About Time**

Lewis Willis..... front page

#### **The Limits of Unity-in-Diversity**

Mike Willis ..... 2

#### **Editorial Left-overs**

Connie W. Adams ..... 3

#### **The Throne of David**

Frank Himmel..... 6

#### **What If . . .**

Brian Anderson..... 7

#### **Reading the Bible From Cover to Cover**

Abraham Smith..... 8

#### **The Consecrated Life**

Bobby Witherington ..... 10

#### **Mrs. Jairus Stayed Home**

Larry Ray Hafley ..... 12

#### **They Continued Steadfastly in Prayer**

Harry Osborne ..... 13

#### **Homosexuality: What does the Bible Say?**

David McPherson ..... 15

#### **Things More Important Than Life**

Steve Wallace..... 16

#### **Why I Left Catholicism**

Aaron Erhardt ..... 18

#### **“Verily, We Are Guilty”**

Olen Holderby ..... 20

#### **Restoring the Kingdom to Israel**

Marc W. Gibson..... 22

#### **Brotherly Love**

Donald Willis..... 23

deal of tension now over what is being called “mental divorce” in which a party who was put away for some other cause than fornication may later put away a mate who either marries again or else commits adultery after the fact of the divorce. Jesus said, “And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matt. 5:32). The same thing is stated in Matthew 19:9. When we have exhausted all the emotional arguments about fairness, and the intricacies of what constitutes “putting away,” these passages will still say what they have always said. We can minimize the matter all we want to and call this an invention of man, but it still is what the Lord said. We can quibble about “who gets to the courthouse first” and the like, but the Lord still said, “Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” It is not binding where Jesus did not bind to say that one who has been divorced is not free to marry for that is precisely what Jesus said. If what is described here does not constitute a mental dismissal, or a second putting away, after the marriage has ended legally and in fact, then I am at a loss as to what to call it. Our own personal experiences in dealing with difficult marital tangles may be interesting, but they do not set aside what the Lord has plainly said.

### Foreigners

On our way to Italy from Germany, we spent three days

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in Switzerland. We arrived on a Sunday night in a little town called Altdorf. The travel agency at the train station was closed; it was about a mile into the heart of town and it was raining. The ticket agent said a bus would be along in about thirty minutes, so we waited. When it came, the driver spoke no English but did understand that we wanted to go to Zentrum (downtown). Since we arrived by train from Germany, we had no Swiss franks and he would not take U.S. currency. Nor would he accept Euros. Finally he shrugged and indicated he would take us anyhow. When we got to the heart of the city, businesses were closed, including the hotel where we had planned to stay. We spotted a light at a hotel a few feet farther and they had a room. There was only one place open for food, and we were glad to get pizza. It turned out well. My wife asked, “Are we having an adventure?” I assured her we were. We found the Swiss kind and helpful and the scenery is beyond description. But it reminded me of what Peter said about being “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet. 2:11). We are foreign to the world and it is to us. As the song goes, “This world is not my home, I’m just ‘a passing through.’”

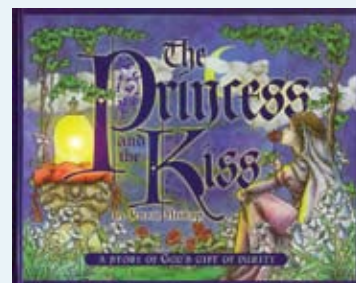
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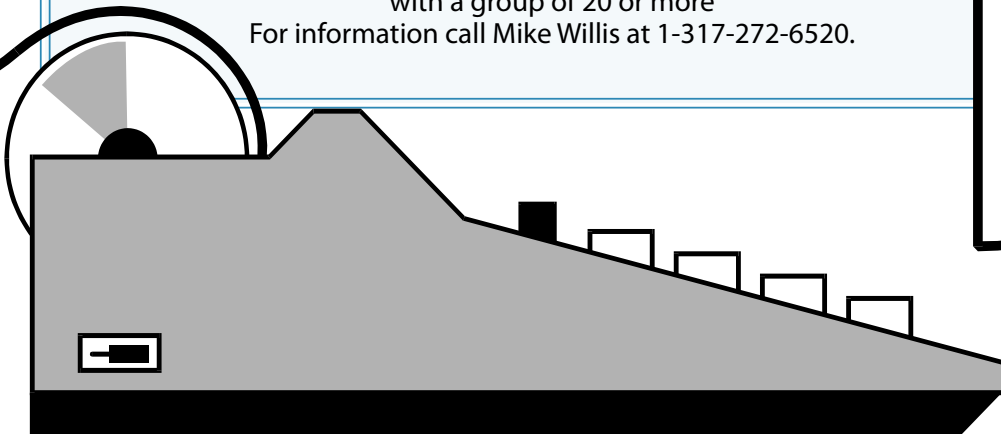
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# The Throne of David

Frank Himmel

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“David’s son, the Lord Jesus Christ, must return to the earth, bodily and literally, in order to reign over David’s covenanted kingdom. The allegation that Christ is seated on the Father’s throne reigning over a spiritual kingdom, the church, does not fulfill the promises of the covenant” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* 114). Does God’s promise to David necessitate an earthly kingdom with Jesus ruling at Jerusalem, as premillennialists say?

## The Promise

David was a man after God’s heart. He wanted to build a temple for God. Instead, God promised to build a “house” for him. “. . . I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:12-13). Just as God’s “house” is his people, not a building (Eph. 2:19-22), so the promised “house” of David was his family, a family of kings, one of whom would build a building such as David envisioned.

## Initial Fulfillment in Solomon

David was succeeded on the throne by his son Solomon. It was he who built the temple. David saw him as the fulfillment of God’s promise (1 Chron. 22:9-11). Solomon saw himself that way, too (1 Kings 8:18-20). Solomon’s rule is variously described: he sat on his own throne (1 Kings 1:47), on David’s throne (1 Kings 2:12), on the throne of Israel (1 Kings 8:20), and on the throne of the Lord (1 Chron. 29:23). *Throne* simply indicates the position of rule. It was God’s rule, executed through David’s line. It was “the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel” (1 Chron. 28:5).

God’s promise of ongoing rule was conditioned on obedience (1 Chron. 28:7). In time, David’s descendants became disobedient and their rule was suspended. The last king in the line was Jehoiachin (Coniah). God told Jeremiah to write him childless: none of his descendants would prosper on the throne of David, ruling in Judah (Jer. 22:30).

## Greater Fulfillment in Christ

Jesus is a descendant of David (Rom. 1:3). Gabriel told Mary that God would give him the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32-33). In the first gospel sermon, Peter quoted God’s promise to David, then affirmed that Jesus had ascended into heaven, exalted to the right hand of the Father where he now rules (Acts 2:30-36).

Jesus later wrote through John, “To him who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21). Again, it is the Father’s rule executed through David’s line, this time through Jesus Christ.

Premillennialists object to a heavenly reign as the fulfillment of God’s Old Testament promises; however, that is precisely the application of them that inspired first-century preachers made. Peter said, “. . . all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days” (Acts 3:24). Indeed, a heavenly reign is the only one which can meet the Old Testament criteria. Consider . . .

- Jesus is a descendant of Coniah (Matt. 1:11). Remember, no one of his descendants could prosper reigning in Judah (Jer. 22:30).
- Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4), which means he is king and priest at the same time. Zechariah 6:12 says, “He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” Yet the author of Hebrews notes that Jesus could not be a priest on earth because he is of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Heb. 8:4). (Interestingly, some premillennialists call for a reinstatement of the Law of Moses in conjunction with the earthly reign of Christ, the very law which prohibits him from an earthly reign!) If Jesus is priest in heaven, he is king there. If he is not king, he is not priest, in which case we do not have the benefits of his priestly function — namely, salvation!
- Daniel foresaw the Christ receiving his kingdom when

# What If . . .

Brian Anderson

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Have you ever wondered “What if?” I’ve seen shows based on different events in history that asked the question, “What if?” For instance, “What if . . . JFK had not been assassinated?” “What if his brother Bobby had not been killed? Would there have been a Nixon Presidency? Watergate?” “What if Adolf Hitler had developed the Atomic bomb first?” One of my favorite movies is called *It’s a Wonderful Life* where Jimmy Stewart’s character faces the answer to the question, “What if I had never been born?” Have you ever asked that question from a spiritual standpoint? It’s a pretty good question to ask ourselves to see whether we’re the type of Christian we ought to be. Consider, What if . . .

## God Gave Like You Gave

Would we have verses like John 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 5:11? We’re all commanded to give (1 Cor. 16:1-2) and how we are to give (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Did you know that the Bible tells us that it is a privilege to give to God? Paul calls it a “grace” (2 Cor. 8:7). An unmerited favor bestowed upon us. I’m told that it makes one more happy to give than to receive, “. . . for it is more blessed to give than receive” (Acts 20:35). The wise man also tells me that God will prosper me according to my giving, “so shall your barns be filled with plenty” (Prov. 3:9-10). What if the rest of the members gave like you? Would we be able

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he came *up to* the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14), not when he came down *from* him. That accords with Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, and with Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is now reigning and will continue to reign until his coming; at that time he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father (vv. 23-28).

Premillennialism has it just backwards: Jesus’ coming will mark the *end*, not the *beginning*, of his reign. Anyone who knows the difference between *up to* and *down from* should be able to see that.

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to open the doors?

## God Forgave Like You Forgive

Many folks are holding old grudges. Paul commands that we forgive one another, “forgiving one another as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). Jesus says that we won’t be forgiven unless we forgive (Matt. 6:14-15). God seeks to forgive, many grudgingly forgive. What if God forgave like you forgive? Would any of us have a chance to escape the fires of hell?

## What if God Loved Like You Love

Would there be passages like, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16)? Would Romans 5:8 or 1 John 4:8 have been able to be written? We are commanded to love one another (Heb. 13:1; 1 John 4:7, 20; Rom. 12:10; John 13:34-35). Love is action not an emotion. John said, “Little children let us not love any longer in word and tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18). We all need to stop saying that we love the brethren and start showing it! What if God showed his love toward you like you show your love toward others?

## We All Studied Like You Study

God lamented in Hosea’s day “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). God has always expected his people to know him and his will. While declaring the old law God said, “Hear O Israel the words and statutes that I give you this day that you might learn them and keep them” (Deut. 5:1). Jesus has invited us to come, but also to learn of him, “. . . and come learn of Me” (Matt. 11:28-29). Learning requires study (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; Rev. 1:3). What if everyone studied their Bible like you? Would the church be stronger spiritually or weaker?

## We all Murmured and Complained Like You Do

I preach a sermon sometimes called “Who are you?” Are you the murmurer and complainer where you worship? There’s one in every crowd it seems. The Bible condemns murmuring and disputing as sin (1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14). If everyone murmured and complained like you, would we be able to have services for the racket or would the murmuring stop?

# Reading the Bible From Cover to Cover

Abraham Smith

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We should read the Bible from cover to cover. We should want to know what the Lord said. Many of us, while acknowledging that the Bible is the word of God, have not read it in its entirety. We have been hindered from reading the Bible completely for several reasons. It is my hope and prayer that we would all be rid of all obstacles to the hearing and reading of God's word.

We must realize that the Lord expects us to read all the Bible. The Lord said on one occasion, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Not "live by some words," but by "every word" of God. Thus we need to read "every word" of God. We need to be like the Bereans who "received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).



These Scriptures should dispel the idea that we need only read some of the Scriptures. This notion would cause us to be judges of what in the Bible is important. But "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5).

Then, we may make ourselves a promise to read all the Bible, but it does not get done. But other things are getting done. Television shows are watched, other books and magazines are read, and our time is spent on other things. If this happens, then we simply have not made the precious words of our Creator a priority. Whatever is most important should be done first.

But isn't understanding the Bible important? But can you understand what you have not read? Paul, commenting on what he wrote, said, "By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mys-

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## We All Prayed Like You Prayed

Many use prayer like a fire escape, only in an emergency. David and Daniel included prayer in their daily routine, "Evening, in the morning and at noon will I pray" (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10). Paul, our Lord, and Peter all taught the necessity of prayer being a part of everything in our life (1 Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1; Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:7). By the way, when was the last time you prayed? If we all prayed like you, would God recognize our voice?

## We All Worshiped Like You Worship

Worship means to adore, to praise to show forth our obeisance. God seeks our worship, ". . . for such the Father seeketh to worship Him" (John 4:23-34). We are commanded to worship, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:10). If we all worshiped like you, would the singing be louder and more enthusiastic? Would the Lord

be honored? Would more respect be shown to his word?

## We All Obeyed God Like You Obey God

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God and Keep His commandments" (Eccl. 12:13). John said, "Blessed are they that do His commandments for they shall have right to the tree of life" (Rev. 22:14). If we all obeyed like you obeyed, would any of us have a chance to partake of the tree of life? In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus said that those who hear his words and doeth them is like a wise man. Those that do it not are like unto a fool. If we all did as you did, would the Lord count us wise or foolish? Brethren, What if?

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tery of Christ” (Eph. 3:3-4). If we are not careful, we may get the idea that our understanding comes from something or someone else apart from our reading God’s word, which would be contrary to what the Bible says. In order to enter the house of understanding, we must go through the door of reading or hearing the word for ourselves. Thus, Timothy was told to “give attention to reading” (1 Tim. 4:13).

When Jesus was confronted with a question, he showed where we should seek answers for spiritual inquiry. “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (Luke 10:25-26).

Let us also notice that Jesus did not refer the questioner to his own dreams for an answer (see Jer. 23:28). Jesus did not suggest the man’s own opinions as a source for the answer to his question. Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches us to trust the Lord, which is to trust what he says in his word. In this way our steps are guided as we follow God’s word. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:104).

To this question, Jesus did not appeal to other non-biblical religious writings. Let other books be read, but do not use them as a substitute for the reading of the Bible. And never believe that the reading of the Bible is incomplete without these other books.

There may be many of us who agree that all the Bible should be regularly read. We might say, “I read the Bible every day, but I simply have not read it all.” If I believe that I can seriously read the Bible for several years and not complete it, I have one or both of two problems. Either I am

reading the same passages of Scriptures, thus not adding to my “faith virtue, to virtue knowledge” (2 Pet. 1:5) or I am not reading as much as I think I am!

There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. If I read four chapters of the Bible every day starting January 1, I would have read the entire Bible by October 26. If I can read the whole Bible in as short a time as a year by reading as few Scriptures as four chapters a day, it should become clear that within ten or fifteen years I ought to have read all of the Bible, God’s holy Word.

Any of us who go a lifetime without reading all of the Bible while believing we are working toward that goal are not spending as much time in God’s word as we have made ourselves believe.

I am not contending that we read the whole Bible only one time. Rather, we must make the reading of the whole Bible a regular part of our lives. If we do not read the entire Bible for ourselves, then we have only the opinions of others and they are doing our thinking for us.

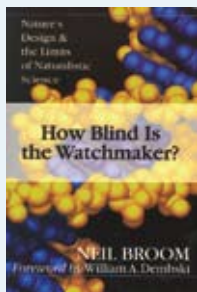
Let’s make our attitude be that of David writing in Psalm 119. “Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold!” (v. 127). “How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (v. 103). “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (v. 97). If we truly are “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6), then we will read the Bible from cover to cover! “Blessed is he who reads” (Rev. 1:3).

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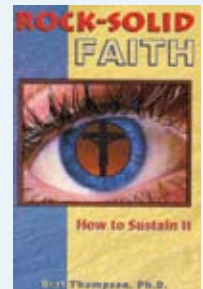
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# The Consecrated Life

Bobby Witherington

I beseech you therefore, brethren,

**“Brethren” denotes brotherly relations — people who constitute a part of that great “brotherhood” of believers (1 Pet. 2:17), members of the same spiritual family; namely the church which is “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15).**

**by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).**

Romans 12 contains only twenty-one verses, but if every person in the world were to mentally absorb the principles set forth in this chapter and then make the proper personal applications thereof, it would completely change the world! If you doubt this conclusion, then please take time out, read and meditate on the contents of this chapter, and you will surely agree — this chapter, learned and applied, could change the world! And the opening verse sets the tone for what follows. In this article, entitled “The Consecrated Life,” with the view in mind of our living “the consecrated life,” we shall seek to ferret out some of the great truths contained in this thought-provoking text.

**Therefore.** Paul began by saying, “I beseech you therefore. . . .” “Therefore” is a word which stands between what has been said, and the admonition which follows. Throughout the first eleven chapters of Romans the apostle dealt with some very fundamental issues — issues arising from its basic theme that “the gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). He concluded those lofty thoughts by referring to “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” and then exclaimed, saying, “How un-

searchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33). “Therefore,” in view of what a God of such infinite wisdom and knowledge has in store for us, the apostle herein beseeches his brethren to present their “bodies a living sacrifice.”

**I beseech you.** Paul was an apostle (2 Cor. 9:1). The things he wrote were “the commandments of God” (1 Cor. 14:37). He could have ordered his brethren to so act, but he chose the form of a tender appeal — an appeal calculated to obtain a loving response instead of a spiteful reaction.

**Brethren.** This apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Gal. 2:8) said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren.” As used here, “brethren” denoted brotherly relations — people who constituted a part of that great “brotherhood” of believers (1 Pet. 2:17), members of the same spiritual family; namely the church which is “the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). “Brethren” in the spiritual sense are able to present their bodies “a living sacrifice . . . to God” (Rom. 12:1) because they are “dead to sin . . . but alive to God” (Rom. 6:11).

**By the mercies of God.** In this great epistle the apostle mentioned “the wrath of God” (Rom. 1:18), the “severity of God” (Rom. 11:22), and other attributes of God which he possesses in the infinite degree. But in Romans 12:1, as he stressed the manner of life which must characterize the Christian, Paul prefaced his appeal by alluding to “the mercies of God.”

No doubt he fully concurred with that “sweet singer of Israel” (David) who exclaimed, saying, “Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord!” (Ps. 119:156). We, too, can be thankful that “God . . . is rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4), for, apart from His “tender mercies,” not one of us could possibly be saved!

**That you present your bodies.** “Present,” according to Vincent, “is the technical term for presenting the Levitical victims and offerings.” It is used in this text to denote the presenting of one’s body as a “living sacrifice.” That which is to be offered in a priestly fashion as a sacrifice to God is one’s own body. And this should be expected — especially in view of the fact that no command of God can be fully discharged without the use of the body. With this in mind, referring to the “members” of the body, Paul had earlier admonished his brethren to “present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13). Most people think their bodies belong to themselves, and that they can do with their bodies as they please. But they are wrong! The body of a Christian belongs to God! With this in mind, to the saints at Corinth, Paul asked: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (2 Cor. 6:19). And he then concluded, saying, “You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). The eyes, tongue, ears, mind, feet, hands, etc., of a Christian must be hallowed and used to the glory of God.

**A Living Sacrifice.** Under the Law of Moses the victims for sacrifice were taken from the flock and, by others, were laid on the altar of the Lord. The animal was alive when selected, and as a sacrifice it reached its highest point at its death. Under the Gospel one offers his own body to God as “a living sacrifice.” In the process

of becoming a Christian one dies “to sin,” is buried in baptism, and is raised from the waters of baptism to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:2-4). Yes, “he died to sin,” and became “alive to God,” and “the life he lives, he lives to God” (Rom. 8:10, 11). It is a “living sacrifice” because the person is now “alive to God.” It is a “sacrifice” because one is now continually and completely at God’s disposal. He lives — not to do his own thing — but to serve and glorify God!

**Holy.** Among the Greeks, “holy” (from *hagios*) signified being “dedicated to the gods.” In the New Testament, it signifies “separated from sins and therefore consecrated to God, saved” (W.E. Vine). As Christians, we are a part of a “holy” temple (1 Cor. 3:17), a “holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5), a “holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9).

**Acceptable to God.** The underlying question for all conduct must be, “Is this acceptable to God?” When all is said and done, God’s approval is the only approval that really counts. He is privy to every thought that enters our mind, every word we utter, and everything we do (Eccl. 12:14; Heb. 4:13), and to him “each of us shall give account” (Rom. 14:11).

**Which is your reasonable service.** This “service” is “reasonable” in that it involves the mind deliberately submitting to the will of God. But it is not service based on human reason; instead it is based on divine revelation by which the mind of God is made known to the mind of man. In the NIV it is translated “spiritual acts of worship.” “Service,” as used here is from *latreia* (Greek), and is defined by W.E. Vine as “intelligent service of believers in presenting their bodies to God, a living sacrifice.”

### **The Consequences of Living “The Consecrated Life”**

They are briefly summed up in the next verse, Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your

mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” From this verse, it is evident that the consequences of “the consecrated life” are at least three-fold.

**1. It involves a non-conforming to the world.** Paul plainly said “do not be conformed to the world.” The plain truth is this: Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). That being the case, we simply must “not be conformed to the world!” The speech, dress, thoughts, and actions of a Christian must reflect the fact that he is “marching to the beat of a different drummer.”

**2. It results in a transformation of character, as one is “transformed by the renewing” of the mind.** “Transformed” is translated from *metamorphoo* (Greek), from which we get “metamorphosis,” which denotes “a change of form, structure, or substance” (*World Book Dictionary*). Metamorphosis is what happens when a crawling caterpillar is changed into a beautiful butterfly which longs for sunshine and fresh air, and is drawn to beautiful flowers. And transformation is what happens when a worldly minded, dead-in-sin child of the devil submits in obedience to the gospel, becomes a child of God, and begins living “the consecrated life.”

**3. At this point, one is then able to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”** “Prove” is from a word which means to try or to test. The consequences of such conduct is that the individual learns by experience what he ought to have known by faith — namely this, God’s way is best. It is “good,” it is “acceptable,” it is “perfect” — it makes for happiness, both here and hereafter! Try it; you will like it!

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506 Triple Crown Ct., Seffner, Florida  
33584

# Mrs. Jairus Stayed Home

Larry Ray Hafley

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**And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of**

**the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him (Mark 5:22-24).**

(Before this article begins, let each reader note that he did not have to ask to whom Jairus came. The first sentence simply says that Jairus “saw him” and fell at his feet. Then, there follows the request that this unnamed gentleman come and heal his dying daughter. No one has to ask, “Who is this unidentified one?” “Who is this ‘*him*’ to whom Jairus made his appeal?” Both the believer and the unbeliever who read this story know it was Jesus. Reader, is that not of some significance? Does it not say something of the honor and esteem which you automatically and instinctively give to Jesus?)

The story of the healing of Jairus’ daughter is instructive and interesting in a number of ways.

1. Obviously, the impact and import of the miracle is to manifest his glory and power, to show that he was indeed, as Nicodemus said, “a teacher come from God” (cf. John 2:11; 3:2; 10:25, 37, 38; 20:30, 31; See also Matt. 9:6).

2. Complete confidence and the assurance of faith are an essential element of study which may be lifted from this curious flow of events.

3. The interruption of the Jairus narrative to tend to an outcast woman (for so would her issue of blood have ostracized her) is one of singular incidence. Her private and personal, yet public healing, was not, as it may have appeared, an impediment to Jairus’ aid, but, rather, it both restored and bolstered the waning hope he lost when news of his daughter’s death came to him. Just how that is so is a point for another column.

4. The crowds, the throngs of throbbing desire to see him,

are another item. See this same picture in Luke’s account of that chief, little, rich, sinner, Zacchaeus (Luke 19:3, 4). That Mark presents an active, public figure, a Jesus who was a man of action and of public interest, is a thought for further and future reflection.

5. That they “laughed him to scorn,” mocking his ignorance, as they saw it, when he said she “is not dead but sleepeth,” is another aspect with eternal consequences. Men so treated him prior to and during the events of the cross. They still do today. But God had the last laugh (Ps. 2:4; cf. Divine wisdom always has the last laugh; Prov. 1:26).

Other items perk our minds. Each Bible story contains an endless source of meditation. However, in the raising of the precious “little daughter,” we wish to focus on the fact that her “mother” stayed home. She is mentioned but briefly. She did not come with her husband looking for Jesus and seeking his help. No, she stayed where any good mother would stay; that is, at her daughter’s bedside, tending to her. It is no reflection against Jairus that he left his little girl’s side to seek Jesus, but it is a tribute to the mother that she did not.

No nurse or nurturer can supplant the tender heart and tending hand of a loving mother. How rich is the family that has her at its core, its center, pulsing and beating as the heart of the home. It appears that Jairus and his dear, dying, darling daughter had such a guide and stay.

We should like to know more about her. We know who Jairus was, “one of the rulers of the synagogue,” but of his wife we know nothing. However, if we were given her name, if we were told of her life, it is likely that, in the final analysis, we would have nothing more than what we have here; namely, the sweet and simple story of a godly wife and mother who did her best to serve her family, to mend their clothes and their broken hearts, and to be there when they needed her (Prov. 31:10-31).

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*4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521*



# They Continued Steadfastly In Prayer

by Harry Osborne

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The New Testament church engaged in prayer to worship God. Jesus taught the disciples that prayer was an act of worship and reverence to God (Matt. 6:5-13). Our Lord's example in public and private prayer is instructive to us as well (Matt. 11:25f; Luke 3:21; John 11:41f; 17:1f; Luke 5:16; 9:18; 22:41f). In Colossians 4:2-4, the church is commanded to pray. The Bible says the early church prayed together in worship (Acts 2:42; 4:24-31). Churches following the approved example as a pattern in their worship will give attention to do as they did. But what do we know about first century churches and prayer?

**1. They “continued” in prayer (Acts 2:42).** This suggests that prayer was not an occasional act with them, but a continual practice. Jesus taught his disciples that “they ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). By inspiration, Paul instructed the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). If Christian men must be “lifting up holy hands in every place,” they must do so in the assembly of the saints (1 Tim. 2:8). The remainder of Acts as well as the epistles show clearly that Christians assembling to worship God in places other than Jerusalem and long after the first Pentecost following the resurrection also engaged in the practice of prayer as they gathered.

**2. They were steadfast in prayer (Col. 4:2; Rom. 12:12).** Steadfastness not only implies continuation of a practice, but also an unwavering effort that abides regardless of the situation, surroundings or opposition faced. This characterized all work commanded of Christians (1 Cor. 15:58). It was done “at all seasons” and with “all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). Even when civil powers were persecuting saints, the inspired writer said it was “good and acceptable” to keep on praying for them and all men (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

**3. Their prayers addressed the deep needs of the time (Eph. 6:18-19).** They prayed for the furtherance of the gospel and for the boldness of those who preached it (Col. 4:3). In sending men to preach that gospel, they prayed (Acts 13:3). By prayer, they were “helping together” with

those who preached the word (2 Cor. 1:11). They gathered expressly to pray for Peter when he was imprisoned for preaching the truth (Acts 12:5, 12). In appointing both elders and deacons, they prayed (Acts 14:23; 6:6). Elders prayed and wept when the beloved apostle left them saying he would see them no more (Acts 20:36-38). In all needs and blessings, they prayed (Phil 4:6).

**4. They prayed for the forgiveness of sins on behalf of their brethren (Jas. 5:16).** Notice the instruction to “confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another” is followed by a promise: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Prayer by the church on behalf of brethren guilty of sin was both authorized and effective in New Testament times.

**5. They prayed in faith (Jas. 1:5-8).** Since faith comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17), their prayers were in harmony with truth. Faith also dispels doubt which makes any act of worship, prayer included, unacceptable to God.

When first century saints prayed acceptably to God, their prayers went up as sweet incense to his throne (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). We have the same opportunity today if we pray acceptably as they did. Let us never look lightly upon approaching God in prayer as we assemble together. We come before the Almighty when we do so. Let us address him in reverence and praise, casting our needs and petitions before the heavenly Father knowing that he cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7).

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# Homosexuality: What Does the Bible Say?

David McPherson

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It seems the topic of homosexuality is rapidly becoming a more talked about subject. It used to be that the very mention of the word, “homosexuality” was equivalent to saying, “sin.” Sadly, such is no longer the case.

As a matter of fact, many in society have embraced this sin, condone its practice in others, and now speak of it as an “alternative lifestyle.” Currently there are pushes being made and accepted by some to honor “same-sex marriages.” As we see and hear so much regarding this issue, I think it wise for us to stop and ask, “what does the Bible say?”

First of all, the Bible nowhere approves of same-sex marriages. In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus went back to the beginning of mankind and marriage to show that the will of God has always been (and will always be) one man, for one woman, for life. In the beginning it was Adam and Eve, not Adam and “Steve.” God did not go to Adam with a man and a woman and say, “Here’s Eve and Royce, take your choice” (see Gen. 2:18-22). Same-sex unions are an abomination. They are to be condemned. They are clearly something other than the blessed marriage relationship designed by our Creator.

The fact is homosexuality is a very grievous sin. Nearly everyone has heard of the wickedness in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The men there desired to “know” Lot’s guests. They wanted to lie with them, commit homosexual acts with them (Gen. 19:1-7). Due to their immoral behavior, the Lord said of them, “their sin is very grave” (Gen. 18:20). Even earlier in 13:13 we read, “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.” Why such strong language in describing their behavior? Because such is an abomination in the sight of God (Lev. 18:22). Under the Old Law, those guilty of homosexuality were to be put to death (Lev. 20:13). Ultimately, Sodom and Gomorrah’s “gay pride” brought the raining of brimstone and fire from the Lord (Gen. 19:24-25).

Yes it was wrong in the beginning, it was wrong under

the Law of Moses, and it is still wrong today! Make no mistake about it, homosexuality is condemned in the New Testament. In Romans the first chapter, Paul writes of the corruption of man which had reached its depths in Rome, particularly the sexual practices. He spoke of how “. . . the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful” (Rom. 1:27). In 1 Corinthians, Paul specifies some who “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Included are homosexuals and sodomites (v. 9). From verse 11, we learn that homosexuals do not have to continue as homosexuals. Like thieves, drunkards, idolaters, etc. — homosexuals can repent, be washed, sanctified, and justified.

Homosexuality is a disgusting, learned behavior of choice that is strongly forbidden in the word of God. It is not an “alternative lifestyle,” but an alternative “death style.” It is sin and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). It is sexual immorality and the “. . . sexually immoral . . . shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

What needs to be done? Well, as Asa did long ago (1 Kings 15:12), a stand must be taken. While we must not physically harm or cast them out of our lands, we must warn them of their sin and abstain from behavior that implies acceptance or endorsement of their filthy ungodliness. We cannot remain neutral on this issue. Though homosexual sex may have some defenders, it has absolutely no defense!

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4399 Tattersall Dr., Plainfield, Indiana 46168 [dmsmrm@msn.com](mailto:dmsmrm@msn.com)

**Renew Promptly!**

# Things More Important than Life

Steve Wallace

Paul's farewell speech to the elders at Ephesus is recorded in Acts 20:17-38.

As the account of it draws to a close we are told, "They all wept sore" (v. 37). Because of Paul's relationship with these brethren, parting would have provoked sorrow under the best of conditions. However, there is added pain in light of revelations about Paul's future, that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him (vv. 22-23). Paul had already suffered considerably for the cause of Christ at this time (2 Cor. 11:23-28), and many men in his shoes might have decided that they had done and suffered enough. It would have been much easier for Paul to have stayed in Ephesus among these loving brethren. He may have had a *good life* if he had stayed there. However, verse 24 shows us that he was motivated by higher things.

But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul had already labored and suffered, and there was to be more of it in his future. However, as our title states, there were things that were more important to Paul than his life. These things help us to understand what motivated him.

One thing he mentions in the above verse that was important to him is "the ministry" (cp. 1 Tim. 1:12). Just looking at the context of verse 24 we get the following description of what Paul meant by "the ministry":

- "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 21).
- "The gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24).
- "Preaching the kingdom" (v. 25).
- "The whole counsel of God" (v. 27).
- "The word of his grace" (v. 32).

What did Paul's ministry involve? In answering this question we find a number of things that

answer to the title of this article.

**1. The souls of the lost.** What was the message of the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24)? It was that even the chiefest of sinners could be forgiven through the grace of God revealed in the gospel (1 Tim. 1:12-15; Acts 2:38; 22:16). John 3:16 may not have been written by Paul but he saw how important lost souls were to God. After his conversion we see him preaching in Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch of Syria, and other places before embarking on three separate missionary journeys (Acts 9-19). An uninformed person might wonder why Paul did not stop his work of evangelism since his life was in danger. The reason he did not stop was that the souls of the lost were more important to Paul than his life. By contrast, there is a danger that Christians might look at the lost in a manner quite different from Paul. They might seek the friendship of a lost person, want to be held in high esteem by such a one, like to shop at his store, read his book, or see his movie.



To use common slang, there is a danger that Christians get the idea that the lost are “cool” just the way they are! Other Christians might simply have “too much to do” and look at life as being too short to be spent trying to reach the lost. Yet, brethren like those we mention above will sit in Bible class and discuss the life of Paul and marvel at why he was the way he was. One thing that explains Paul’s makeup is that he valued the souls of others more than his own life.

**2. The souls of his brethren.** In the context of Acts 20 we read of the care that Paul showed for his brethren at the church in Ephesus (vv. 20, 26-32). Whether a church was erring or faithful, Paul took time to rebuke or encourage according to their need (cp. Gal. 1:6-7 with Phil. 2:12). He was concerned with both the erring and the faithful. Paul not only sought to bring people into a saved relationship with God, *he also worked to keep them in that relationship.* One sees a sad contrast in many churches today, where preachers seem to be more concerned about being good friends with their brethren than they are with their spiritual state. Many will fail to preach on attendance, social drinking, modesty, fellowshiping error, marriage, divorce and remarriage, etc., or they will not preach on these subjects in any depth. According to Paul, we have blood on our hands if we “shrink” from preaching “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). Paul could not preach in a lot churches today where studies of his writings and accounts of his life take place *because he cared too much for his brethren!*

**3. His own soul.** Paul was concerned with finishing his “course” (Acts 20:24). This word is an allusion to the athletic contests of his day. Paul saw his life as a race course that he had to follow. Final salvation in heaven was at the end of that course (2 Tim. 4:6-8). What does this course demand? The Bible has the answer to this question.

**Finishing My Course Demands:**

- Direction (Gal. 5:7)
- Examination (Gal. 2:2)
- Energy (1 Cor. 9:24)

- Discipline (1 Cor. 9:25-27)
- Patience (Heb. 12)

Paul’s soul was more important than his physical life. Therefore, it was worth it him to meet the demands necessary to finish his course. Paul was not the only one to have a course to run. The Galatian and Hebrew Christians also had a course to run (Gal. 5:7; Heb. 12:1). If they did, so do we (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27). Let us all remember that, the reason Paul would later be able to say, “I have finished my course” (2 Tim. 4:6) was because of his willingness to run it (Acts 20:24).

**Conclusion**

The importance of these things to Paul caused him to persevere come what may. For example, we see that he was not moved by physical afflictions at the hands of the heathen or by mistreatment at the hands of brethren (Acts 20:22-23; 2 Cor. 10:10; 2 Tim. 4:16). The fact that some might grow weary and pursue sin did not deter him from following his course (Gal. 2:11-13; 2 Tim. 4:10). He also would not let the attractions of this world or the bitter tears of his brethren keep him from doing that which he saw as his duty before God (Acts 20:33, 37). He understood sacrifice. Paul saw that there were things more important than life and therefore his life was governed by purpose. We see all around us today the tragedy of people wasting their lives because they see nothing more important than life itself. May we all see the danger of such influence and, like Paul, turn our attention to things of real importance.

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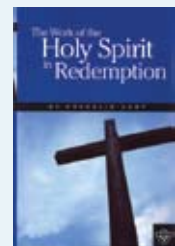


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# Why I Left Catholicism

Aaron Erhardt

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I was raised in the Roman Catholic church for almost seventeen years. During the majority of that time I attended parochial schools, believing wholeheartedly in the teachings of Catholicism. However, I am now a preacher in the Lord's church, having determined that Catholicism is in error. This article will explain why I left the Catholic church.

For the record . . . Before examining the errors of Roman Catholicism, I want to plainly state that I have no animosity whatsoever against Catholics. I believe that most Catholics are splendid people who think they are doing right. This article is not intended to insult, but inform.

## **Catholicism Teaches That Mary Was a Perpetual Virgin**

Catholicism claims that Mary remained a virgin after the miraculous

birth of Jesus Christ. That is why they often refer to her as “the virgin Mary.” However, the Bible teaches that she had other children. For instance, Matthew wrote, “And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things” (Matt. 13:54-56). Obviously Mary had other children after the miraculous birth of Christ! Also note Psalm 69:8; John 7:5; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19. Jewish historians also refer to Mary having other children.

## **Catholicism Teaches That Peter Was the First Pope**

Catholicism claims that Peter was the first pope and that later popes are his successors. However, there are several reasons why such could not have been the case:

**1. Peter was an elder (1 Pet. 5:1).** According to the qualifications for an elder, a candidate must be married and have children (1 Tim. 3:1-5; Tit. 1:5-6). Hence, Peter was not celibate! Also note Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5.

**2. Peter refused the praise of men.** When Cornelius fell down at his feet to worship him, Peter said, “Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26). Compare that to the

pope. He not only accepts the praise of men, he demands it!

**3. Paul publicly rebuked Peter.** At Antioch, Paul “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11-14). Did Paul rebuke the pope? Imagine a cardinal or bishop rebuking a pope that way! Obviously Paul did not regard Peter as infallible in faith or morals, or recognize any supremacy on his part.

**4. There is no evidence in the New Testament or historically to indicate that Peter ever went to Rome.** The Catholics have to put their trust in legends.

**5. The office of pope is not found in Scripture!** How could Peter have held the office of something that did not exist?

## **Catholicism Teaches That Infants Need to Be Baptized**

Catholicism claims that babies are born with original sin. Therefore, they practice infant baptism. However, the Bible teaches that babies are born sinless (Ezek. 18:20). Jesus declared, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3) and “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). Would Jesus say that if children were born in sin? Of course not! Also note that when David’s infant son died, he knew that they could be reunited in heaven (2 Sam. 12:23).



The Bible says that baptism follows belief and repentance (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Can an infant believe and repent? Of course not!

Notice the two following quotes by authoritative Catholic books: “There is no express mention of the baptism of infants in the New Testament” (*Catholic Question Box* 48) and “It is difficult to give strict proof from scripture in favor of infant baptism” (*Catholic Dictionary* 61).

### Catholicism Sprinkles for Baptism

Catholicism claims that sprinkling is an acceptable form of baptism. However, the Bible teaches that baptism is to be an immersion in water. Paul pictured baptism as a burial (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). Imagine a casket with a handful of dirt sprinkled on it. Is it buried? Of course not! Also note Acts 8:38-39. Even authoritative Catholic books declare that early baptism was an immersion: “Baptism took place by immersion in ancient times” (*New Inter. of Mass* 120).

### Catholicism Disregards Plain Bible Teachings

Catholics claim to have given us the Bible, yet they repeatedly contradict what it says! Notice the following chart:

### Catholicism Considers Tradition Equal to Scripture

Catholicism considers tradition and Scripture to be equal in author-


ity. This view became official when the Council of Trent declared that the word of God is contained in both Scripture and in tradition. However, the Bible condemns human tradition (Mark 7:6-13; Col. 2:8). The only tradition acceptable to God is found in the Bible (2 Thess. 2:15).

### Catholicism Teaches Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and fruit of the vine miraculously becomes the literal body and blood of Christ at communion. This would mean that Christ is offered at each partaking. However, the Bible teaches that Christ was once offered (Heb. 9:28). Communion is to be a “memorial” to the sacrifice of Christ (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

Catholics argue that the Lord taught the doctrine of transubstantiation in John 6 when he said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). However, to take this saying literally is to make the same mistake the Jews made! In fact, Jesus clarified the comment by saying “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). He was speaking figuratively!

### Catholicism Forbids Marriage/Meats

Catholicism forbids those in the clergy to marry. They are required by church law to remain celibate. This is an unscriptural burden. Catholicism also commands members to abstain from meats, namely during Lent. However, the Bible condemns both prohibitions as the “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

### Vatican II

Have you ever heard of Vatican II? It was an event that many Catholics would like to forget. Vatican II occurred over

several years (1962-65) and resulted in many doctrinal changes. For instance, before Vatican II it was a mortal sin to miss Sunday morning mass. Now it is different! Before Vatican II it was also a mortal sin to eat, drink, or even take medicine after midnight on Saturday evening. This was considered a time of fasting until communion. Again, now it is different! My question is, what about those Catholics who died with these sins against them before the “changes” occurred?

The fact that Catholicism has changed and reformed itself proves that it is not of God. Notice what early Catholics said about changes in the book *Faith of our Fathers*: “If only one instance could be given in which the church ceased to teach a doctrine that was previously held, that single instance would be a deathblow of her claim to infallibility. . . . The Catholic church cannot be reformed. The doctrine is perfect and hence, cannot be reformed” (61). The deathblow has been delivered!

### Conclusion

I left the Roman Catholic church because it is in error! This is a serious charge, knowing that those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ “hath not God” (2 John 9). I hope and pray that my family and friends who read this article will receive it with the proper spirit and attitude. May God bless us in our search for truth!

5300 Skylight Drive, Louisville, Kentucky 40258 chadaaron01@msn.com

Character is easier kept

# “Verily, We Are Guilty”

Olen Holderby

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Someone said, “seeing is believing;” I add, “Keen observation can be very educational.” If these be true, and they appear to be, there are some things which need to be said concerning our worship services. Things which I mention in this article may not be true in all places, but my observations, from coast to coast and border to border, tell me that they are sufficiently wide-spread so as to merit serious attention. I shall focus attention on each act of worship, on things which, it seems to me, need some modifications or general overhauling.

First, I call attention to a few passages of Scripture which have to do with our worship and please notice the words which I have emphasized: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him *must* worship him *in spirit* and *in truth*” (John 4:24). “Let all things be done *decently and in order*” (1 Cor. 14:40). “But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). The first of these three Scriptures show the requirements of acceptable worship; if they are not followed, our worship is vain. The second regulates *how* we perform each of our acts of worship. The third shows the priority which we are to give to the things of our Lord. So, let us begin.

## Attendance

Generally, this has always been a problem, and many sermons have been preached to improve this situation. However, in this article, I am not so much concerned with the act of attendance as I am with our lack of punctuality. Many have formed the ungodly habit of always being late; this shows little in the way of orderliness and in respect for the things of the Lord and for the other worshipers. We see people just smile and, perhaps, shrug their shoulders, and continue to be late, but this does not change the fact that such practice is dead wrong. Brethren, can’t we change this?

## Attire

This has degenerated from decency, to casualness, to gaudiness, to indecency. Why? When we watch people dress quite well for funerals, weddings, and other social events, but make little or no effort at appropriate attire in

coming to worship God, it makes one wonder just how they rate the worship of God as compared with these other events. Such indifference speaks loud and clear concerning our sense of priority; and, I speak concerning those who can, but will not, do better.

## Announcements

Making brief, and to the point, announcements which concern members of any group may well be in order at any public gathering, but brethren, do we have to give all details of someone and their ailments? Do we have to tell the “funny” things that happened at grandma’s bedside? Is it possible that we are trying to entertain, though we would deny it? And, cannot these announcements be made before any act of worship has begun? I believe we can do better here, brethren!

## Singing

Now, we are ready for the worship to begin! Really! Permit me to tell some things which I have observed. (1) New or inexperienced song leaders selecting songs very difficult to sing and, perhaps even unknown to the congregation. (2) Pausing in the middle of a song to announce what verses will be sung or using poor selection of songs. (3) Expecting the song leader to call on some one for prayer, especially when he does not know who is to be called upon. In addition, for some reason, he is not able to say, “Will the one appointed now lead us in prayer,” or some such statement. The congregation is often left in limbo here, not knowing what to do. Then, we wish to give new leaders experience, so we ask them to lead for portions of a gospel meeting. It does not seem to make any difference that a gospel meeting is a special effort that should demand the best we have to offer. Yes, we give experience, but at what cost! Good song leading can make a gospel lesson far more meaningful while bad song leading can destroy such message. Have we forgotten the fact of training classes designed to give experience and know-how? Somehow, brethren, I just think we can do a much better job here!

## Prayer

Some brethren must pray in “tongues,” at least I cannot

understand them. So many seem to think that they are to whisper in prayer to God, forgetting that they cannot lead others in prayer if those others cannot understand what is being said. Some brethren have not yet learned the difference in prayers — some word a closing prayer and it sounds as if they are wording a prayer for the beginning of service. Again, a training class could serve a good purpose here. We should think seriously on the request of the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.” I have heard many public prayers, using “I”, “I”, and “I” over and over, ignoring the fact that it is “we.” Why does this have to be this way? Then, we hear a brother lead a closing prayer, and he says, “forgive us our sins.” What has he been doing during the service?

### The Lord’s Supper

First we observe brethren walking up to the table and begin by saying, “Let us pray.” No explanation of what the supper is all about, thus the visitor is left in total darkness. The example of Jesus himself says that he “gave thanks,” while some pray for about everything but to offer thanks. Did Jesus call on someone else (perhaps from his audience) to offer thanks or did he do it himself? Again, are we just giving someone experience instead of making sure the supper is well-arranged (orderly)? Do these things matter to you?

### Giving

Where do brethren get the practice of praying before taking the collection? If not from the denominations, then where? They do not get it from the Book of the Lord! Then, why do some fail to keep the congregation informed as to the amount of the collection and for what it is spent? Are we ashamed of what we do? Is this the way the Lord’s business is to be done? Those in charge of the contribution may have the best intentions possible; but that does not make their decisions the best. Here we may be missing one very good motive for giving — sacrificing more in order to meet a greater need. How can they constructively do this unless they are informed in these matters? Could

we do better here?

### Preaching

I hesitate here, but, yes, improvement can be made here also. Jesus, our supreme example, is the only perfect preacher who ever lived. He never preached a false doctrine. He left nothing unsaid which needed to be said, and he never said or did anything that would hinder a sinner’s salvation. Following his example, the preacher must faithfully proclaim the word so as to please God and not man (Gal. 1:10). He must preach fully what God has said on any subject under consideration, both milk and meat must be offered (Heb. 5:11-14). Since salvation is personal, he must make his preaching personal, seeking to bring change in the lives in his audience. He must preach fervently. He must be urgent in his preaching (2 Tim. 4:2). As I heard brother Cecil Willis say a long time ago, “There is no excuse for one to preach the good news of salvation as if he was reading a Sears-Roebuck catalog.” Finally, the preacher must preach fearlessly; for the fearful shall have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Then, there is the preacher who knows how and does tell his fellow Christians what they should do, but he does not practice what he preaches — such preacher is unworthy of the support of God’s people.

### Conclusion

Brethren, when we practice the ills mentioned above, what kind of attitude are we instilling in God’s people? Further, where will such attitudes lead? I am personally persuaded that this is where much apostasy begins — with the attitudes formed by indifference or ignoring these simple, yet of great importance, things. Can’t we so organize our local congregations in such a way as to preclude these fallacies? If not, why not? Yes, we are guilty! Don’t you agree?

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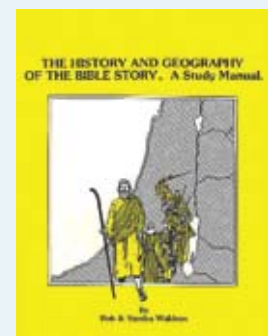
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# Restoring the Kingdom to Israel

Marc W. Gibson

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Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus gathered with his apostles and commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). The apostles then asked this question of Jesus: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v. 6). This question has often been quoted as evidence that the apostles were still expecting Jesus to establish an earthly, physical kingdom. Is this a valid and fair interpretation of their question? Does the question really reflect their ongoing misunderstanding of the mission of the Messiah and the nature of his kingdom? Or is it possible that our interpretation of their question is in error? Could it be that the apostles asked a perfectly legitimate question concerning the approaching spiritual kingdom of God?

## Apostles Taught by Jesus After His Resurrection

It is true that the apostles were not privy at this time to the full revelation concerning the kingdom of God, for the Holy Spirit had not yet guided them into all truth (John 16:13). However, let us not overlook the fact that they had spent a good deal of time in the presence of the Master Teacher who “presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). It would seem unlikely, after being instructed by Jesus himself in “things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” that the apostles would still be as ignorant about the nature of the kingdom of God as they always had been. We can be reasonably confident that he “opened their understanding” to comprehend the Scriptures and the eternal purpose of God concerning the kingdom (cf. Luke 24:44-45). Would not Jesus have told them what he had told Pilate: “My kingdom is *not* of this world” (John 18:36)?

It is also interesting that Jesus did not answer their question with the rebuke that some are so quick to bring. Jesus simply answers, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in his own authority” (v. 7). This answered their question, which was about timing (“will

you *at this time* restore”). He did not rebuke them about a misunderstanding that the kingdom would be earthly and physical. It is an assumption to conclude that the apostles had a restoration of a physical kingdom in mind.

## Language of Old Testament Prophecy

Clearly, it is the phrase “restore the kingdom to Israel” that causes some to assume that the apostles were referring to an earthly, physical kingdom. This is *not* a necessary conclusion. In fact, the language of the apostles reflects the language of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messianic kingdom. A “restoration” is exactly what God prophesied through Amos: “On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in days of old” (Amos 9:11; cf. Micah 4:6-8; Isa. 49:6). This passage is quoted in Acts 15:16-17 as being fulfilled in the church. When the tabernacle of David was raised up and rebuilt in Christ, it was restored with a spiritual nature under a new covenant with Jesus as King and High Priest in heaven (cf. Heb. 8:1-6).

Was the kingdom restored to Israel? Absolutely, for the gospel is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, *for the Jew first and also for the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). The keys of the kingdom were given to Peter and the rest of the apostles (Matt. 16:19; 18:18), and they preached in Jerusalem on Pentecost to Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). God’s kingdom (rule) was manifested under a better covenant in a kingdom restored and rebuilt spiritually in Christ. All men, Jew and Gentile, who obey Jesus will now be “translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13). Christ will reign in his kingdom until all enemies are defeated (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

## Conclusion

The apostles’ question is consistent with the prophetic anticipation that God would restore the kingdom to Israel — and to all men — in Christ. There is no reason to believe

# Brotherly Love

Donald Willis

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Let brotherly love continue (Heb. 13:1)! The church of the Lord is comprised of those who have fellowship with Christ; and if in fellowship with Christ, we must be in fellowship with one another. Too many do not esteem others with the appreciation, dependence, and association that is needed.

Philadelphia is not “brotherly love,” but “brother-love;” i.e., the love one has for brothers and sisters. One can denote this as “love of the brethren.” Note: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned *love of the brethren*, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). “. . . Love as brethren” (1 Pet. 3:8). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Rom. 12:10). “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9). “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb 13:1).

Over and over, the Scriptures teach us of the great spiritual family relationship that we sustain to one another. Jesus said that all disciples are “brethren” (Matt. 23:8); we are the seed of God. In Matthew 6:9, Jesus addressed the prayer to God with “Our Father.” We all understand the depth of family love. Love reaches beyond acceptance of what one has done, but who we are!

Our spiritual family relation might be clearly seen: “As ye have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,

especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10); and “. . . ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

Our spiritual family, the family of God, recognizes the fatherhood of Jehovah, and the brotherhood of those who are his children; Christ the “firstborn,” and we as “fellow-citizens.” Note: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:14-17).

Jesus required his followers to love one another, making this the mark of discipleship. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:12-14).

John (often called the Apostle of love) wrote, “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old

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that their question reflected the popular misconception that it would be an earthly, physical kingdom. Through Jesus’ teaching they could have understood that the rule of God was going to be manifested perfectly through the reign of the Messiah in his spiritual kingdom. The apostles simply wanted to know *when* this would take place. Jesus told them it was not for them to know, but they were to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:7-8). Later, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, the apostles revealed all truth concerning the spiritual kingdom of God. Jesus, the

Son of David and the Son of God, is now our great King and High Priest sitting at the right hand of the Father, and his blood redeems us to be a holy nation and royal priesthood, a kingdom for his own possession (Rom. 1:1-4; Heb. 8:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:9).

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6708 O’Doniel Loop W., Lakeland, Florida 33809



commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:7-11).

“This is the message that he heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” (2 John 5).

The body to which this love belongs is called “the brotherhood” (2 Pet. 2:17; 5:9). Look at the manner in which we are to treat one another: “. . . As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” “And above all these things put on charity (love, ASV), which is the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). 1 Corinthians 13 is written about how Christians are to treat one another in love. Paul speaks of the differing functions within the body — *we need one another* (1 Cor. 12). We cannot function without one another. All are not feet, hands, etc. There is a distinct function for each person and must be fulfilled only by that person. We may not be the tongue to speak, but we might be the feet that carry us to where another can speak. The Scriptures condemn envy, unkindness, schism.

Too often, we feel that we do not need one another; we do not depend upon each other, we might even look down our nose at another who is (in our opinion) “less able” than are we. We get to thinking too highly of ourselves. We lose all godly perspective. We alienate brother against brother. We lose influence within the local church, the city, and with Heaven itself. *No man stands alone!* Let us accept one another, let us assist one another to grow, let each of us grow more ourselves, do not think too highly of ourselves. The church is the body of Christ, and we need the functionality of each individual member.

May God be glorified by our work in his kingdom. God, be merciful to we sinners!

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441 Cypress Dr., Conroe, Texas 77304

## “It’s About Time” continued from front page

Humanity, having been created in God’s image, and with a sense of deity indelibly written on its heart, is inescapably religious. However, since the fall, our tendency is to attempt to create God in our own image and thus worship ourselves rather than the one in whose image we were made.

Instead of coming to church to admit our transgressions and seek forgiveness, we come to church to be told that we are really pretty nice people who do not need forgiveness. We are such busy people, in fact, that God should actually be pleased that we have taken time out of our busy schedule to come to church at all.

The approach of denominational worship has shifted from honoring and praising God, to satisfying man. What man thinks, feels, and enjoys takes precedence over what God has appointed for worship. We see this in almost every discussion of the errors of denominational worship. People say, “I think” . . . “I feel” . . . “It seems to me” . . . “My heart is uplifted” in explaining their corrupted worship practices. Man is the focus of such activity, not God!

When I read the article under review about changing the errors of denominational worship, my first thought was: It’s about time! My second thought was: If you are going to go back, go all the way back to the beginning of the church, and implement the worship of the New Testament in its entirety! If we are going to go back to God’s way, let us not stop in the nineteenth, eighteenth, or sixteenth centuries. Let’s go all the way back to the first century when the church was under the direct supervision of Christ’s hand-chosen apostles and build the modern church after the pattern found in Scripture.

Go all the way back to Acts 2 when the church was established and learn how they worshiped; only that worship will please God! He gave the commandments respecting worship in the Scriptures and the approved apostolic examples will show modern man how to worship as God requires.

### God-Appointed Worship

The New Testament identifies what the church is to do in its worship which will assure that God is honored and praised (Eph. 3:21). Following is a list of scriptural worship activities:

- Prayer is offered (Acts 2:42; John 9:31).
- Preaching is done (Acts 20:7; Matt. 28:20).
- Lord’s supper is observed only on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- Giving is done only on Sunday (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7).
- Vocal Music is rendered to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Any other actions than these constitute an addition to

scriptural worship, making those actions sinful. Any of these prescribed acts of worship which are omitted, renders worship vain (Matt. 15:9). Read that passage in Matthew; there *is* such a thing as *vain* worship!

There has to be some reason why God is so explicit in describing and defining worship in the New Testament. He intended that men should honor him by submitting the acts of worship which he appointed. Only this worship is acceptable to him. If man is going to worship him at all, why not do it right?

Man's track record respecting God and the church is not at all commendable. Men have corrupted not only the worship of the church, but also its organization, its work, and the plan of salvation that places saved people in the church.

Yes, it is about time for man to look at his sinful deeds respecting these matters. Yes, it is time for some changes to be made, to bring us into compliance with the Divine will. May God speed us to the time when we will all stand together *in truth!* Worship of our holy God is too important to be corrupted, polluted, perverted, and trivialized! May modern men return to God's word and worship him as he has decreed. The angel said, "Worship God" (Rev. 22:9).

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491 E. Woodsdale, Akron, Ohio 44301

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### **“Unity-in-Diversity”** continued from page 2

“I think if we're honest, we know that we're not going to sit down after another decade of dialogue and come to a mutually acceptable understanding,” James V. Heidinger, president and publisher of *Good News*, told CT. “They know where we are coming from. We know where they are coming from. There is not agreement” (50).

Hinson continued to say, “Our whole perspectives are different. From them, keeping pace with the culture is very important. They say the church is behind the culture,” he said. “We don't give a fig about keeping up with culture. Many times we're over against the culture. Our concern is being faithful to the biblical message. So, we don't even speak the same language” (50).

Because of the impasse over homosexuality, some United Methodists have reached the conclusion that conservative and liberal Methodists should reach agreement to go their separate ways. Because they are not even speaking the same language anymore, it is impossible for the two sides to work together.

In concluding the editorial on “No-Fault Division?”, the writer said,

We too quickly forget that Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17 is accompanied by this prayer, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Genuine church unity, according to Jesus, is grounded in truth. All that remains in the mainline is a sentimental unity. It may be best to face that reality and move on. It is, in the tradition of the mainline, at least an idea worth dialogue and study (23).

Evangelical leaders are cautiously suggesting that the denominations divide because the mainline denominations have forsaken loyalty to the Scriptures. This raises several questions, such as the following:

- What makes homosexuality different from other departures from God's word? If Methodists could have “unity-in-diversity” on other subjects, why could they not agree to disagree on homosexuality? What makes it different from compromises on abortion, the role of women, divorce and remarriage, changes in worship, and other such issues?

- What defines the limits to which unity-in-diversity are applied? If there are no limits, then unity-in-diversity leads to doctrinal universalism. We can have unity on any subject with anybody — including atheists, Buddhists, radical terrorists groups in Islam, etc. If there are limits, what defines those limits? The same reasons that can be offered for having unity-in-diversity on abortion will justify unity-in-diversity on homosexuality. On the other hand, the same reasons that prevent unity-in-diversity on homosexuality will prohibit unity-in-diversity on abortion, women preachers, the use of sprinkling or pouring as substitutes for immersion, and departures from revealed worship. Any basis for unity is also a basis for division.

### **Conclusion**

While the denominations are reaching the limits to which unity-in-diversity should be applied, some of our brethren are just beginning to apply unity-in-diversity to issues among us such as divorce and remarriage, the days of creation, and a few other topics. When this door is opened, there will be no easy way to close it. Brethren should look at what unity-in-diversity has done for the Episcopalians and United Methodists before deciding to follow them down the unity-in-diversity path.

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6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123 [mikewillis1@attglobal.net](mailto:mikewillis1@attglobal.net)

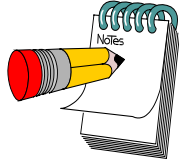
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## Preachers Needed

**New Smyrna Beach, Florida:** The Central church, New Smyrna Beach Florida is seeking a preacher to locate and work with them. If interested, please call (386) 316-5662, e-mail: alca-netti31@hotmail.com or wrenchand@ucnsb.net. Outside support will be needed. Submitted by Fred Shewmaker, fas12331@mac.com.

**Fort Wayne, Indiana:** The North church of Christ in Fort Wayne is seeking a full-time evangelist. The congregation has elders, deacons, full support, and a new building. They have about 140 in attendance on Sunday morning. Their former preacher, Ron Roberts, has decided to move to Knoxville after fifteen years. Please send a resume and sermon tape to Dave Hewitt, 7846 St. Joe Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46835 if you would like to be considered.

## Quips & Quotes



### Vatican Urges Catholics Not to Marry Muslims

"Rome — In an official church document released Friday, Vatican officials discouraged marriage between Catholics and Muslims — especially Catholic women and Muslim men.

"When 'a Catholic woman and a Muslim wish to marry,' the document says, 'bitter experience teaches us that a particularly careful and in-depth preparation is called for.'

"It also says 'profound cultural and religious differences' exist between the two faiths, particularly concerning the rights of women, who are referred to as 'the least protected member of the Muslim family'" (The Indianapolis Star [May 15, 2004], A4).

### Massachusetts Gays Will Start Tying Knot

"Associated Press — For better or for worse, depending on which side of the ideological aisle one chooses, America will cross a historic threshold Monday, when state-approved marriages of same-sex couples will occur for the first time" (The Indianapolis Star [May 16, 2004], A3).

### Vermont Episcopalians Design a Service for Same-Sex Unions

"Burlington, Vt. — Vermont's Episcopal Diocese has become the first in the country to develop a liturgy — a script for a religious service — in response to a state law making same-sex unions legal.

"We have been living with the legal reality for same-sex unions for over three years.' Bishop Thomas Ely said in a statement made public Friday. 'It is appropriate and timely for the diocese of Vermont to prepare and use these services for members of our congregations.'

"In 2000, Vermont became the first state to offer legal recognition to same-sex unions. The state did not legalize same-sex marriage but established a parallel system of civil unions to offer gay and lesbian couples most of the same benefits and responsibilities that married couples have.

"Some Episcopal dioceses have already sanctioned same-sex unions. But Vermont's is the first to do so in a jurisdiction that offers legal recognition to them" (The Indianapolis Star [June 19, 2004], A13).

### Hate Speech Quandary

"Canada — After years of contentious debate, the Canadian government has made it a crime to spread hate propaganda against sexual orientation. While united in opposing hate speech against any group, Canadian Christians are divided over the import of the amendment.

"On April 28, senators voted 59-11 to pass Bill C-250, which adds sexual orientation to a law that makes it illegal to incite hatred against identifiable groups based on color, race, religion, and ethnicity. Bill C-250 amends subsections 318 and 319 of Canada's Criminal Code. They prohibit (1) 'advocating genocide'; (2) 'public incitement of hatred'; and (3) 'willful promotion of hatred.' Those found guilty face maximum two-year jail terms. The same subsections also make it illegal to promote hatred against anyone expressing 'an opinion on a religious subject or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text.'

"Some Christians wonder whether they will now be able to speak freely about homosexuality. 'We are deeply concerned about the chilling effect this legislation may have,' Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) president Bruce Clemenger said in a statement, 'We as a religious community want to ensure that the purpose of prohibiting hate speech does not criminalize the legitimate expression of religious belief, the resulting views of morality, nor religious texts' (Christianity Today [July 2004], 18).

### Another Small Step For Life

"Momentum in defending human life in the womb may be shifting. On April 1 President Bush signed into law the Unborn Victims of Violence Acts (H.R. 1997). The administration is also vigorously defending in federal courts the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.

"H.R. 1997 represents the first time the U.S. government has recognized a human embryo or fetus as an individual. The law makes it a federal offense to injure or kill an unborn child during the commission of a federal crime.

"It's very significant,' said Wendy Wright, senior policy director at concerned Women for America. 'For the last 30 years, the law has been silent on the issue of forced abortion by a third party'" (Christianity Today [June 2004], 17).

### A Slow Exodus

“The consecration of openly gay bishop Gene Robinson isn’t just creating controversy. It’s also creating new ministries.

“In recent months, groups of orthodox Episcopalians in Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Missouri, and Washington state have left the 2.3-million-member mainline denomination. At least a dozen orthodox Anglican congregations have formed in the wake of the Robinson controversy.

“The churches remain tied to the large Anglican communion in some tentative form. The Georgia churches are aligned with the Anglican diocese of Bolivia.

“In Versailles, Kentucky, St. John’s Episcopal Church split after the diocese’s pro-Robinson bishop refused to allow the congregation to hire David Brannen, A Robinson opponent” (Christianity Today [July 2004], 21).

### Congregation Splits in Battle Over Bishop

“Rochester, N.H. — Hymns were raised to the heavens from two parts of town Sunday after a church split apart over the election of the first open gay bishop to head an Episcopal diocese.

“Bishop V. Gene Robinson assumed leadership of the Diocese of New Hampshire last year, shocking many conservative Episcopalians and Anglicans world-wide.

“Since then, many members of the Church of the Redeemer threatened to leave the congregation unless Robinson relinquished authority over the church in Rochester, about 30 miles east of Concord. Thirty-six members voted this week to leave. Just three voted to stay.

“In response, nearby Grace Baptist Church invited Episcopalians fleeing from Redeemer to attend a joint service” (The Indianapolis Star [June 28, 2004], A3).

### AME Has 1<sup>st</sup> Female Leader

“Church bishops urge generations to bridge divide — For the first time in the 217-year history of the African Methodist Episcopal church, a woman has become president of its Council of Bishops.

“Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie accepted her historic role Wednesday during the opening worship service of the church’s worldwide conference in Indianapolis” (The Indianapolis Star [July 1, 2004], A3).

### Interfaith Prayer Focus of Elections

“St. Louis — The Rev. David Benke caused a stir within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by praying at a Yankee Stadium interfaith service days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

“Nearly three years later, that brief prayer will be a central issue in the denomination’s elections scheduled for today.

“The Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, a first-term president of the conservative Missouri Synod, had approved Benke’s participation in the New York event. Some pastors objected, saying the service improperly mixed different religious beliefs, and they blamed Kieschnick for allowing Benke to join in.

“The bad feeling lingers as about 1,200 church delegates prepare to vote in St. Louis on whether Kieschnick or one of four other candidates should lead the 2.6 million-member denomination from now on.

“I think it’s 50-50 as to whether he is re-elected or not. Conservatives are very intent on his defeat,” said the Rev. Russell Saltzman, editor of Forum Letter, a publication about Lutheranism.

“Benke, president of the synod’s Atlantic District based in Bronxville, N.Y., uttered a prayer of fewer than 300 words at the Sept. 23, 2001, service, asking God to provide strength and consolation. Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu clergy were among the participants, as were celebrities and politicians, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

“The objecting pastors said Benke’s actions violated denominational rules against syncretism — the mingling of Christian and non-Christian beliefs — and unionism — when people of different faiths worship together. The pastors filed formal charges against Benke and he was suspended for several months until a church review cleared him” (The Indianapolis Star [July 11, 2004], A3).

### President Promotes Definition of Marriage

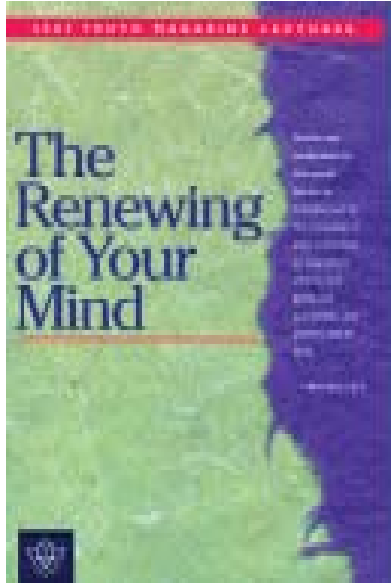
“Washington — President Bush says legalizing gay marriage would redefine the most fundamental institution of civilization and that a constitutional amendment is needed to protect marriage.

“A few activist judges and local officials have taken it on themselves to change the meaning of marriage, Bush said Saturday in his weekly radio address.

“Leading the chorus of support for an amendment, Bush said, ‘If courts create their own arbitrary definition of marriage as a mere legal contract, and cut marriage off from its cultural, religious and natural roots, then the meaning of marriage is lost’” (The Indianapolis Star [July 11, 2004], A5).



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