

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The **Word and Work**



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

APRIL, 2004

Eternal Wisdom
for
Current
Controversies

The 57th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship

August 2nd - 5th, 2004

Theme: GOD'S WORD Deals With TODAY'S PROBLEMS

Monday Evening, August 2

7:30 The Impact of One Life Sonny Childs

Tuesday, August 3 - Encouragement From God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 Ambition: Vice or Virtue Billy Ray Lewter
10:20 Stress in Church Leadership Alex Wilson
11:20 Romans 9: God's Faithfulness & Israel's Unbelief
Don McGee
1:15 The Ground of Hope Jim Gillaspie
7:30 Caught Between Two Worlds Billy Ray Lewter

Wednesday, August 4 - Equipped By God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 Walking in the Spirit Dale Offutt
10:20 Bearing the Cross Amid Stumbling Blocks Dennis Roysse
11:20 Romans 10: Wrong Righteousness and God's Remedy
Don McGee
1:15 Dressed for Battle John McNerney
7:30 Presenting Ourselves to God Buford Smith

Thursday, August 5 - Edified By God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 The Church in Crisis Darren Johnson
10:20 God in Relationship with the Church Cecil Garrett
11:20 Romans 11: God is Not Through with Israel Don McGee
1:15 A Better Church Begins with Me Jason Duncan
7:30 Preaching Christ to a Changing World Julius Hovan

Daily Lunch: 12:00

Nightly Youth Activities after the regular meeting.
There will be a Missionary Offering Wednesday Night.

Dinners at Sellersburg: Tues. (SBS), Thur. (Goin' Fishing) plus
Goin' Fishing Breakfast & Missions Conference Friday 8:30 - Noon.

For Housing: Bud Ridgeway (502) 477-8255;
Clint Dorman (812) 246-2600

**DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212**

**NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172**

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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“SAME-SEX” Relationships:

***What the Bible says about this,
and what some men say about that***

Levit. 18:20-23a, Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her. 21 Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. 22 Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. 23 Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it....

[We include the verses before and after v. 22 to show the gross perversions mentioned right along with homosexual activity.]

Levit. 20:13, If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

Rom 1:20-27, [People] are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.... 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.... 26 [He] gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

[We omit *1 Cor. 6:9-11* here since it is dealt with elsewhere in this issue.]

1 Tim 1:9-10, ...Law is made not for the righteous but for law-breakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 for adulterers and perverts [other versions say homosexuals or sodomites], for slave traders and liars and perjurers - and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine....

Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion [or: indulged in unnatural lust, RSV]. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Some People Pervert Sex, Some People Pervert Scripture

Some unbelieving scholars try to re-interpret all those passages, claiming they have been misunderstood. Their revised approach says that what the Old Testament forbade was only homosexual practice used as a part of the worship of false gods. That is, homosexual practice was okay in itself; it became corrupted only when made a part of heathen religious rituals.

And they claim that what Paul prohibited was only homosexual acts *by persons who were naturally heterosexual!* [I suppose such critics would therefore condemn homosexuals for having any heterosexual relationships. If so, they are actually being judgmental toward bi-sexuals. How terribly intolerant of them! How dare they be so unpolitically correct!]

Humbug! Note the contexts of those verses. There are no hints whatever of all the extra ideas those “enlightened” scholars import into them. God’s Word clearly and repeatedly condemns homosexual practice in and of itself.

BUT, let’s keep our balance, and not go off the deep end on either side. Scripture clearly condemns lots of other things too. Let’s examine Ezek. 16:49-50 (which refers back to Gen. 19:4-9). “This was the sin of... Sodom: [They] were *arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things* before me. Therefore I did away with them.”

Did you notice that? When we think of Sodom’s pollutions we think of its homosexual practice—yuck! And indeed we’ve seen that it was loathsome to the Lord. But through Ezekiel He denounced a lot of Sodom’s “respectable sins” too. And some of them might be sins *we* practice! And he lists those little(?) sins before he gets around to their sexual perversions (“detestable things”). In other words, just as the Lord finds man’s twisted sexual lifestyle very repugnant, so He finds our uncontrolled eating habits and unconcerned neglect of the poor repugnant. After all, “it is a great sin to love little sins.” So first and foremost let’s judge ourselves, as well as seeking to purify our nation’s values and laws. And let’s seek to bring healing to gays and lesbians by leading them to Jesus the healer, forgiver and leader.

Making the Beautiful Ugly

Alex V. Wilson

This fall Kentuckians and citizens of several other states will vote on whether to amend our state constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman, and to say that same-sex partners cannot receive the benefits which till now have been reserved for married couples. How should people vote on this issue? Extremely different views and reasons are flooding the media.

Let's hear an important word from the Lord, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NIV: "Do you not know [you should] that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes [sexual perverts - RSV], nor homosexual offenders [sodomites - NKJV] nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were [not Are, but Were, formerly]. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Did you notice verse 11? There is *Hope* for homosexuals!

Yet the hope is for those who are willing to change the verb tense from "*are*" to "*were*." Before, it could be said of those who engaged in homosexual lifestyle at Corinth, "They *are* sexual perverts." Yet now it was accurate to say, "They put their trust in Jesus and became His disciples. Though they *were* practicing homosexuals before, Christ has now freed them! They are not that way any more!"

But now, in 2004, the growing acceptance of homosexual practice will cancel that hope—for if it's o-k to do it, why stop it? If it ain't broke, why fix it?

God says it IS broke. But He also says He can FIX it for those who seek Him. And there's a lot of evidence for that, though those who don't want to be fixed deny it is possible or desirable. A book, *Portraits of Freedom*, tells of fourteen people who came out of homosexual lifestyle. CrossOver Ministries in Lexington, Kentucky is a team of disciples eager to share their testimonies of transformation through Christ. To maintain balance, let me mention an article in *Christianity Today* (March 11, 2002), entitled "*No EASY Victory: An anonymous plea from a devoted Christian husband and father who, day by day, has to resist his homosexual desires.*" We're not saying

it's easy to quit, only that it's possible and good -- though hard for many. That is what this writer tells us very poignantly.

It is nearly impossible for those who try to change on their own. But those who are cleansed by Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit and who find fellowship with loving disciples can experience transformation -- though it's not usually a quick fix.

Who are the really cruel folks?

Currently we're being told more and more that homosexuality is normal and good, and that those who oppose giving homosexuals the same privileges of marriage that heterosexuals enjoy are mean and cruel.

A woman wrote a letter to the *Courier-Journal*, speaking of the proposed amendment to Kentucky's Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. "I was feeling beaten down by hateful measures to limit my freedom to marry or to have a civil union.... This measure may constitutionalize (sic) bigotry and would be a victory for discrimination against gay citizens." All due to "a movement to oppress and villainize (sic) the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community."

A *Courier-Journal* editorial mentioned with disapproval "those who portray [same-sex marriage] as a dire threat to social cohesion and to the institution of marriage" -- such as this article does. It added: "Fair-minded Americans realize their own families are not jeopardized by gay couples coming together into families of their own...." [We will return there later.]

A pastor observed: "Five decades ago, changes in marital law to allow intermarriage between whites and blacks were denounced as the 'end of the American family and the sanctity of marriage.' It didn't happen." That's a standard liberal accusation against conservatives (especially Christians) of always crying "*Wolf, wolf*" when there's no wolf there. They claim we imagine that all sorts of disasters will occur -- but they won't.

They also accuse us of many errors and evils in the past, and ask "When will you ever learn, and change?" On that latter point (note: *that* point) they have some truth on their side. A number of Christians *did* defend slavery, and opposed women's suffrage, integrated schools, marriage between whites and blacks, etc. I personally believe those Christians were wrong. But in each case there were also Bible-believing Christians who took the opposite views, and worked and sacrificed to promote them. Many Christians *led* such reforms.

And it's interesting that 62% of African-Americans and 63% of Hispanics in the U.S. support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining marriage as between a man and a woman, according to *Christianity Today* (May '04). They rightly reject the pro-gay argument that to fight for marital rights for gays is today's moral equivalent to the civil-rights-for-blacks movement of the 1960s and '70s. Not so!

"We only want Equal Rights"

As mentioned above, we're now being told more and more that homosexuality is normal and good, and that those who practice it have as much right to do their thing as heterosexuals do.

Here's just one of many samples of this thinking: Columnist Ellen Goodman told of attending a Ceremony of Commitment for two gays last year. They pledged their loyalty to each other (which is certainly better – if they keep their pledge – than the promiscuity widely practiced among gays). Ms. Goodman's question to us is, "How on earth could their commitment -- or marriage [if ever that is allowed] -- be a 'fatal blow' to my own marriage?"

Though I knew God's answer to that inquiry is found in His word, I still wrestled with how I'd answer such questioners face to face – especially those who don't accept the Bible as God's word. Then I found a helpful rebuttal by Gene Edward Veith in *World* magazine. How does same-sex pairing up endanger my marriage and yours?

Veith replies, "In debates regarding the causes of homosexuality, one factor is usually omitted." (1) The cause most commonly mentioned by gays is *heredity* – "We're programmed that way from birth." There is very little, if any, hard evidence for that view. But even if it were true, it would provide no excuse. (Some people inherit a very hot temper with a short fuse, but that shouldn't justify them for killing someone in a fit of rage.) (2) Most scientific research related to the cause of homosexuality points to the influence of family attitudes and experiences in a child's formative years: tensions, bad role models, sexual abuse, example, etc.

While Veith agrees there is validity in that second theory, he believes another important factor has been overlooked: (3) "*The Culture.... A culture that not only accepts but values and encourages homosexuality will produce more of it.*" He then gives contemporary instances.

"Metrosexuals are straight men who act like they are gay [because gay-ness is now the "in thing" – very Cool]. Gays are now

openly shaping pop culture to their image...[For instance, the popular t-v show "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," starring five gays.] Teens are experimenting with a whole range of sexual behaviors, identifying themselves as bi-sexual...."

At this point some "modern" person may say, "Well, what's really so bad about all that? I object to your approach. You're just presuming homosexual practice is wrong, because of the Bible. But I don't accept that ancient and outworn book's authority. Give me better reasons than that!"

Be Good to Yourself!

If thus challenged, I would start with this reason. Gays are a small percentage of our population. Careful research indicates *only 1-3% could be considered exclusively homosexual*, though they claim 10% or more. (And it's probable there are far more than 3% now who are *experimenting* with this practice, since gayness is considered so "in.")

But though exclusively homosexual persons are only a small minority, they have about *50% of Syphilis cases* and *60% of AIDS cases* in the U.S., and gay men *get Hepatitis-B twenty times more* than straight men!

There's more. The average gay's *life expectancy* is 42 years, contrasted with 74 for straight men. The average lesbian lives 45 years, while the average straight woman lives to 79. *Hey—hear that? On average those who practice homosexuality die over 30 years sooner than straights!*

Those are not just cold statistics, but people. People God made and loves, people Jesus died for, people we should love – for our Lord forbids us to hate them, though we should hate the attitudes and ways of those who stridently flaunt and promote evil.

Let's proclaim this: **We hate homosexual *practice* because we love homosexual *people*.**

Some Needed Clarifications

Some folks reply: Well, traditional marriage isn't doing well either, with so many divorces. So how can you be so critical of same-gender marriage without giving it a chance?

A Focus on the Family pamphlet answers, "It's true, marriage isn't working well, so what should we do? Erase the marriage laws? Look at it this way. We have laws against murder, but people still

commit murder, so what should we do? Erase the murder laws? Of course not.”

Another question commonly raised is, “Well, isn’t it better for a child to grow up with two *loving* same-sex parents than to live in an *abusive* home with a mom and dad?”

But that’s a loaded question. They are comparing the worst of one situation (abusive heterosexual parenting) with the best of another (loving same-sex parenting). That’s apples & oranges. Actually, “research reveals that though child-abuse is a deplorable problem today, there is *less* of it when children live with both biological parents and *more* of it when children live with at least one non-biological parent or care-giver. But same-sex parenting makes it *impossible* for a child to live with both biological parents, thus increasing the risk of abuse.”

And Here’s Maybe the Most Important Point:

If it is “right” for gay- or lesbian-marriage to be established, “then on what basis can marriage be denied to any coupling or group?” Once the floodgates are opened, anything goes! Researcher and writer Stanley Kurtz explains that “polygamy is getting more widespread endorsement than ever before, with friendly commentary in several major newspapers recently.” He predicts the ACLU will soon rise as its foremost defender.

“And it won’t stop there. Kurtz reports further on the coming popularity of something called polyamory...group marriage.” It’s already “promoted by professors at some of our nation’s leading universities.... This ‘group marriage’ movement is marching down the same trail blazed by the same-sex proponents.” [Aug.’03 *Weekly Standard*, quoted in *Is Marriage in Jeopardy?*]

Polygamist Tom Green of Utah, who acknowledges he has 5 wives, claims he has a right to practice polygamy—that it should be legalized. So he is challenging current laws. Also this past January a Salt Lake City civil rights attorney filed a lawsuit on behalf of another couple wanting to engage in legal polygamy. (For decades Mormonism, centered in Utah, justified and practiced polygamy. Later the majority gave up the practice so Utah could gain statehood, but a splinter group has kept on practicing it secretly for over 100 years.)

“The ACLU of Utah has actually suggested that the state will ‘have to step up to prove that a polygamous relationship is detrimental to society’—as opposed to the polygamists having to prove that plural marriage is *not* harmful to the culture. Despite 5,000 years of

history, the burden now rests on you and me to prove that polygamy is unhealthy.... Given [today's] unstable legal climate, it is certain that some self-possessed judge, somewhere, will soon rule that 3 men and 1 woman can marry. Or 5 and 2, or 4 and 4. Who will be able to deny them that right? We will be told that the guarantee is implied by the Constitution. Those who disagree will continue to be seen as hate-mongers and bigots." [*Family News from Dr. James Dobson*, April 2004.]

So we are back to the days of the Israelite judges, when everyone did what was right in his own eyes, and violence and degradation bloomed like weeds after rain. Only God Most High can stop our country's downward plunge. But we can at least seek to slow it down. We should make every effort to get a defense-of-marriage-amendment passed in our states, or nationally if possible. The latter attempt is barely getting off the ground, but at least we can pray and work and stir up others to do the same. What is needed most of all is a great, God-given spiritual awakening, which will deal with the basic causes rather than just the symptoms. But as we cry out to the Lord for mercy, and call on men to repent, we can also promote legal and moral reforms to put the brakes on the terrifying deterioration of our culture.

What May RESULT from All This?

Here are a number of possibilities, several of them mentioned by Dr. Dobson:

1. The Effects on CHILDREN. They will become even more confused and bewildered about matters of vital importance: Husband and wife relationships – What are God's purposes for the roles and responsibilities in marriage? Parents and children's relationships – What are God's plans, duties and blessings in family living? The Who of sexual relationships – What are its proper purposes, privileges, duties and boundaries? The What of sexual relationships – What is fitting and proper sexual activity and what is perverted?

Even now with monogamous homes, the humongous rate of divorce results in incredible instability for children. So many live in single-parent homes, at least some of the time. Other times they live with first dad, then mom, then dad plus his 2nd or maybe 3rd partner, then mom with her 2nd or maybe 3rd. Then there's the matter of repeatedly getting or losing siblings as a result of all this. But same-gender marriage will almost surely make things worse, not better. And if polygamy is legalized and added to the mix, it's hard to imagine the chaos and instability that will result.

2. If homosexual marriage is legalized by the federal courts and imposed nationwide, **all public schools in the U.S.** will be forced to teach that homosexuality is every bit as good as heterosexuality, and that same-sex marriage is just as normal and good as traditional marriage. **Textbooks** throughout the U.S. "will have to depict man/man & woman/woman relationships, and stories written for children as young as elementary school will have to give equal space to homosexuals."

3. "From that point forward, courts will not be able to favor a traditional family involving one man-one woman over a homosexual couple in matters of **adoption.**" Yet statistics show that there are great advantages to have both a male and female role-model in the home.

4. "**Foster-care parents** will be required to undergo 'sensitivity training' to rid themselves of bias in favor of traditional marriage, and will have to affirm homosexuality in children and teens."

5. Another matter to consider is **Economics.** As homosexuality grows in popularity and practice, the incidence of syphilis, AIDS, hepatitis-B and other such diseases will probably increase a great deal. This will put greater pressures on our health-care and health-insurance systems, which are already strained.

Also as partners in same-sex marriage, or even same-sex "civil unions," become eligible for medical-insurance coverage and Social Security survivor benefits, those already over-burdened systems also may become stretched to the breaking point.

6. There are current **trends of increasing hostility toward Bible-believing churches and also less freedom to teach all of God's Word.** More and more the media portray conservatives as mean-spirited, hateful bigots. Earlier this year, by a vote of 59 to 11, Canada's senate added "sexual orientation" to its wide-ranging "anti-hate-propaganda" law. That means that anyone who criticizes homosexuals publicly is subject to two years in jail. *World* magazine says, "The bill does state that a person won't be prosecuted for anti-gay speech 'if, in good faith, he expressed an opinion based on a belief in a religious text.' But at least one court has already held that certain Bible passages expose homosexuals to hatred."

And even before the recent bill was passed, "London, Ontario officials slapped a Christian mayor with a \$10,000 fine for refusing to proclaim 'Gay Pride Day.' A Christian businessman in Toronto was fined \$5,000 for refusing to print materials for a gay-rights group." (*World*, May 8, 2004.) Thus the culture wars continue.

FYI - for your information:

“Exodus” is the largest Christian referral and information ministry dealing with homosexual issues in our world today. Their web site is: <http://www.exodus-international.org>

Here are some of the major points from one of their helpful website articles:

Homosexuality and Gender

Exposing the Myths and Facts About Homosexuality

- MYTH #1: 10% of the Population is Homosexual
- MYTH #2: Homosexuals are Born Gay
- MYTH #4: AIDS is as Much of a Risk for Heterosexuals as it is for Homosexuals
- MYTH #7: Lesbian Relationships are Healthier than Gay Male Relationships
- MYTH #8: Homosexuality is Unchangeable

* * *

Also from Exodus' website:

“A study on the sexual profiles of 2,583 older homosexuals, published in the *Journal of Sex Research*, found that only 2.7 percent claimed to have had sex with one partner only. Research has also found that few homosexual relationships last longer than two years, with many men reporting hundreds of lifetime partners.

“Check out these findings: 24% of [sexually active] gay men had over 100 partners. 43% of [sexually active] gay men had over 500 partners.

“Solid, irrefutable evidence proves that there are lethal consequences to engaging in the defining features of male homosexuality—that is, promiscuity. Active homosexuals are vulnerable to dozens of sexually transmitted diseases. According to one report, the risk of anal cancer rises by an astounding 4,000 percent for those engaging in homosexual intercourse and doubles again for those who are HIV positive.

“AIDS remains the fifth leading cause of death among those aged 26 to 44, and 60 percent of new cases are contracted by men who have sex with men. Despite the 20-year ‘safe-sex’ campaign, the incidence of unsafe sexual practices resulting in various diseases is on the rise. An estimated 30% of all 20-year-old homosexual men will be HIV positive or dead by the age of 30.”

* * *

“Today’s gay activists in Scandinavia, having gotten everything they wanted, now admit that their case for homosexual marriage—particularly that *allowing gays to marry will encourage a monogamous lifestyle*—was only a tactical argument. The goal, says Mr. Kurtz, citing two prominent gay thinkers, ‘was not marriage but social approval for homosexuality.’” --Gene Veith in *World* magazine, 3/6/04

* * *

Point #5 of the "Platform for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation" recommends this strategy: "Portray gays as victims of circumstance and oppression, not as aggressive challengers. In any campaign to win over the public, gays must be portrayed as victims in need of protection so that straights will ... adopt the role of protector.... We must forego the temptation to strut our gay pride publicly to such an extent that we will undermine our victim image." [From the Gay Rights Platform, which also demands federal funding for homosexual sex-ed courses in public schools, and the repeal of all laws restricting the age of sexual consent.]

* * *

Lessons to Learn from History, #1

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1986 that our Constitution does not provide a right for homosexual practice. Justice Burger pointed out, "To hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to **cast aside millennia of moral teaching.**"

* * *

Lessons to Learn from History, #2

It is instructive to notice that even the philosopher Plato, himself a homosexual, wrote against the practice. The late Professor William Barclay of Scotland wrote: "In Greece, homosexuality might be universal but it was regarded as abnormal, and it was never legal....Just about the last book that Plato wrote was the *Laws*, and in it he banished homosexuality from his ideal state. More than once in that work he attacks homosexuality. [Barclay then quotes Plato:] 'The intercourse of men with men, or of women with women is contrary to nature....' 'How can we take precautions against the unnatural loves of either sex, from which **innumerable evils have come upon individuals and cities?**' 'Who would ever think of establishing such a practice by law? Certainly no one who had in his mind the true image of law.' [Barclay then concludes:] It is one of the most significant facts in this whole matter that the most homosexual soci-

ety in history regarded it as the act of a madman to legalize homosexuality.” [From *The Ten Commandments for Today*, published by Eerdmans, 1973.]

* * *

Well, duh!! Why didn't I think of that?

“Without multiple sexual partners the global AIDS pandemic would not exist, yet reducing the number of partners has been largely neglected in most HIV prevention programs, say researchers in the *British Medical Journal*. The authors believe efforts to change sexual behavior must include and evaluate messages about mutual fidelity and partner reduction.” – Quoted in *Christian Standard*, May 16, 2004

* * *

Frightening Facts

“Sociologists, historians and pundits warn against both the catalogued and unforeseen consequences of America's newest family experiment, the same-sex-parented household. For example, the chief predictor of crime in a neighborhood is the percentage of homes without fathers. According to national health statistics, **children from homes without fathers are 5 times more likely to live in poverty, 3 times more likely to fail in school, 2-3 times more likely to develop emotional and behavioral problems, and 3 times more likely to commit suicide.** The same-sex-marriage movement [has not] answered questions such research logically raises, like: Do 2 moms equal 1 dad? Can 2 dads replace a mother's love?” – Lynn Vincent in *World* magazine

* * *

Who's being Harassed?

Albert Buonanno had worked at AT&T in Denver for two years. In 2001 the company required its employees to sign a “certificate of understanding.” That document said employees must “fully recognize, respect, and value the differences among all of us,” including “sexual orientation.”

Buonanno, a Baptist, told his supervisor in a letter that he would not discriminate against or harass homosexuals, but also that he couldn't sign the document because it contradicted the Bible. He was fired the next day.

“The culture war over homosexuality has moved to a new front—the workplace. Millions of employees are being commanded not just to tolerate homosexual behavior but also respect and even promote it.” –Reported in *Christianity Today*, Jan. 2004

What About Same-Gender CIVIL UNIONS?

What about changing the law to allow same-gender folks to have, **not marriage, but Civil Unions?** They “stop short of marriage: you don’t have to get a divorce to get out of them. But they are a way of allowing homosexual couples to share insurance coverage, hospital visitation rights, etc., without going so far as allowing them to get married.

“Civil Unions would become a sort of MARRIAGE LITE. You could take advantage of the legal benefits but then leave them whenever you wanted. No messy divorces. No marital property laws. No alimony or child support payments. All the *benefits* of marriage without any of the *hassle*” (Veith, *World*, 2/28/04). Civil Unions are allowed in much of Europe, in Canada and also Vermont.

This seems to be a helpful compromise, doesn’t it? It shows compassion, not cruelty, to folks who aren’t going to change anyway. Maybe the gays will quiet down and quit insisting on more rights!

Thus, for a short while, civil unions for gays sort of appealed to me. I was tired of our being smeared by all the accusations of the pro-gays: “You callous unsympathetic Christians, you hard-hearted deprivers of the rights and privileges of others just because they differ from you.” I felt, “Maybe it’d be good. It’s certainly a more popular view.” But then I studied and thought some more.

It raises the Question, “If you can get a civil union, **Why get married at all? Hetero-sexual couples in Europe and Canada are already acting on this logic.** They are registering for civil unions as a replacement for marriage. They live together, have kids and raise them, just like any traditional family. But **whenever they want to leave they can go their separate ways easily.** Once the children are grown, the parents typically go their separate ways. Marriage Lite drives out real marriage.”

“Sweden was the first country to legalize homosexual unions. Today a *majority* of children [there] are born out of wedlock. Though some older couples are getting married if they have more than one child, **younger couples are dispensing with marriage altogether.** In Sweden the few young couples who do get married often *do not like to admit it*, since what they have done is so far out of the norm that they feel *embarrassed.*” (Veith, 3/6/04)

“What role has gay marriage played in the disappearance of marriage in Scandinavia? Gay marriage there has driven home the message that marriage itself is outdated, and that virtually any family form, including out-of-wedlock parenthood, is acceptable.” (Veith/ Kurtz).

So – contrary to many in the media – even allowing gay Civil Unions, not marriage, creates great threats to society. It weakens family life and creates wrecked lives.

Evangelicals in Britain Set Forth Excellent Conclusions

“Faith, Hope & Homosexuality” is a thorough report put out by the Evangelical Alliance of Britain. It was researched and written by its Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals. Here are its conclusions. We retain the British spelling.

Conclusion: Affirmations and Recommendations

We are conscious that different evangelicals might apply certain of these points in different ways, but we believe that taken together, they reflect an authentic, mainstream evangelical response to homosexuality in general and sexually active homosexual partnerships in particular:

1. We recognise that all of us are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people - whether homosexual or heterosexual - is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterise evangelical responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in the future.

2. We affirm that monogamous heterosexual marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for full sexual relations today.

3. We affirm God’s love and concern for all humanity, including homosexual people, but believe homoerotic sexual practice to be incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture.

4 We repudiate homophobia insofar as it denotes an irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals. We do not accept, however, that to reject homoerotic sexual practice on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.

5. We deeply regret the hurt caused to lesbians and gay men by the Church's past and present hatred and rejection of them.

6. We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active homosexual partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.

7. We oppose moves within certain churches towards permitting the ordination of sexually active lesbians and gay men to ministry. We stand prayerfully with those in such denominations who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.

8. We commend and encourage those homosexual Christian people who have committed themselves to chastity and celibacy. We believe that such people should be eligible for ordination and leadership within the church. Where they are members of denominations which are considering an endorsement of sexually active homosexual partnerships, we are concerned that they may feel seriously undermined.

9. We call upon evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active homosexual people [that is, to attend meetings, classes, etc. See point #11 -avw], but to do so in the expectation that they will come in due course to see the need to change their lifestyle in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness and patience in this process, and ongoing care even after a homosexual person renounces same-sex sexual relations.

10. We commend the work of those organisations which seek to help homosexual Christians live a celibate life, and also commend those groups which responsibly assist homosexuals who wish to re-orient to a heterosexual lifestyle.

11. We believe habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance to be inconsistent with faithful church membership. Where someone is publicly *promoting* homoerotic sexual practice within a congregation, there may be a case for more stringent disciplinary action.

12. We would resist church services of blessing for gay partnerships as unbiblical.

[You may find this entire document, with a great deal of research and Biblical application, on the web: <http://www.eauk.org>
E-mail address is acute@eauk.org]

Another contemporary controversy--

Cracks in Da Vinci Code

Hans Rollmann

The story is captivating and the characters engaging, so much so that its leading ideas are often taken for gospel truth, or at least considered possible, by millions of readers. I refer to the American best-seller by Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*.

Whether seasoned Sunday school teachers in Texas or medical professionals in Newfoundland, many people these days talk about the story of Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene and of their alleged descendants, a bloodline supposedly protected by secret organizations throughout history.

The story continues into our own day with the enemies of the Holy Grail — a metaphor for the sacred line and Mary Magdalene's womb — hard on the heels of an all-knowing Harvard professor, Robert Langdon, and a female French detective, Sophie Neveu.

Sophie, the granddaughter of the Louvre curator who also turns out to be one of the four guardians of the Holy Grail — and who was mysteriously murdered but passed on his secret in a well-hidden code, is intricately and congenitally linked to the central ideology.

A flagellating albino monk, who turns out to be a duped member of the conservative Roman Catholic organization Opus Dei, pursues our dynamic duo of professor and detective, as well as an eccentric British peer, through France to England.

Eventually, the grail hunters wind up in Scotland, where the final secret is revealed in all of its banality.

Driven by the same successful literary formula of other mystery novels, identifiable characters and a slowly unraveling mystery, the book also pretends to divulge deeper cultural and religious secrets and plays to fascination with conspiracy theories.

Who would not fall for a leading Harvard expert in "symbology," even if in real life he would never have been granted tenure for his far-fetched mythological associations and symbolic and architectural speculations?

The book's religious underpinnings establish ambiguous connections to New Age beliefs and feminist spirituality, but do neither any service.

On the fly, Brown rewrites Christian history as a sinister plot designed to exclude from the canon of scripture secret gospels that once espoused the sacred feminine.

He also casts the Emperor Constantine and Roman Catholic Church fathers into the role of misogynous patriarchs who obliterated goddess spirituality, which they supposedly replaced with an all-male divine Christ.

Tipping the truth

Aside from the contemporary feminist appeal, there are indeed half-truths in the story that invite serious consideration by the reader: apocryphal gospels written by Gnostics, who represented a formidable challenge to early Catholicism; the incomplete and filtered record of female participation in early Christianity; the long, ongoing process of theological thinking about who Christ is and how he relates to the Father and the Spirit.

Yet where historical theologians form careful judgments only by weighing and sifting the best available evidence, Professor Langdon in *The Da Vinci Code* establishes fanciful connections that have little basis in fact.

Mary Magdalene, whom Brown portrays as Jesus' sexual partner and the intended leader of the Church, whom Peter upstages and whose reputation church leaders subsequently besmirch, flees into what is now France, where eventually members of the "Priory of Sion" providentially protect her secret and her offspring.

Little of her enhanced role is historically likely, and most of what the author offers as gospel truth is derivative, drawn from equally implausible sources or literature.

All we can say historically from the New Testament narratives is that the woman from Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was once exorcized, possibly by Jesus, and traveled with a group of Galilean women who may have supported Jesus and his apostles.

Eventually, she became a witness to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The Gospel of John pictures her as the first witness to the resurrection by announcing the news of the empty tomb to Peter, although the apostle Paul does not name her among the primary witnesses of the resurrection.

Prominent role

It is indeed true that Mary Magdalene appears more prominently in some later Gnostic writings, none of which, however, offer independent, historically truthful information about her, although they remain excellent sources for the Gnostic understanding of Christianity and for the struggle between orthodoxy and heresy in second- and third-century Christianity.

That her sex plays a more ambivalent role among the Gnostics than Brown ever admits can be illustrated by the Gospel of Thomas, where Jesus enhances Mary Magdalene's value by promising Peter that he himself shall lead her in order to make her male, since every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9, argues for his right to take a wife by mentioning Peter and other apostles as married men. He would surely have cited Jesus' marriage had it been known to him and his contemporaries.

Although Brown has produced a successful, page-turner of a novel, the ideology that underlies his fiction should be mistaken neither for historical truth nor for theological insight.

[Dr. Hans Rollmann is a religious studies professor at Memorial University. This article was published originally on May 2, 2004 in the St. John's, Newfoundland TELEGRAM, for which he writes a monthly column. He has also written several times for W&W.]

Another sometimes-controversial topic:

Reflections on My Citizenship

Rubel Shelly

I am an American citizen, and I cherish the tarnished history of my country. Yes, I said "tarnished." This is not a perfect country. At various times in our history, we have tolerated slavery, bullied nations with our "big stick," and been overly selfish with resources we must share. There are other flaws in my nation's history - as in my family's history. Just as I love my family in spite of its flaws, so do I love my country.

It is easy for me to pray for this country's leaders, institutions, and citizens. We are a nation of freedom, noble principles, and decent people. Our principles and people work incessantly to right our society's wrongs. Racism, arrogance, greed are still with us. So are

the constant reforms we seek via social justice projects, the checks-and-balances of a political system that seeks broad citizen participation, and national and personal generosity far surpassing that of any other nation.

The majority of the world envies America and would love to be here - even those who burn our flag, protest our policies, or call us "the Great Satan." They know full well that they and their children would have opportunities here they can never have in their places of poverty, oppression, and meager hope.

I am a world citizen, and I owe it to the people of Iraq, North Korea, and every other country to see them as my neighbors. Their lives are as valuable as ours. Their rights are as precious. Their autonomy as worthy of respect.

We have an obligation to one another. We must share Planet Earth and its limited resources. We must not be blind to one another in crisis times. We owe it to one another to respect our differences. And on occasion we are obliged to protect and liberate persons who are vulnerable to tyrants such as Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Osama bin Laden, or Saddam Hussein. For the lack of unanimous sentiment on how to oppose certain evils, we are not entitled to avert our eyes, pretend not to see what is staring us in the face, and leave oppressed people to suffer. That would not only be cowardice but a vile failure to love our neighbors.

I am a kingdom citizen, and my ultimate loyalty is to the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God alone has answers to our imponderables. He alone sees the end from the beginning. He alone can bring righteousness out of chaos and make the desert of the human heart bloom with fruits of peace and joy and love.

In this time of crisis for America and the world, let us pray for the establishment of a just peace. Let us obey the biblical mandate to pray not only for ourselves and our country's leaders but for our enemies as well. And may our essential and controlling sentiment be that of King David: "Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7, NRSV).

Reprinted from Rubel Shelly's "FAX of Life." To see back issues of the FAX, surf: www.RubelShelly.com

Contain Yourself!

By Rick Gamble

It was a radical, risky idea but Henry Brown knew that, to win his freedom, he'd have to think outside the box — and inside the box. Born into slavery, Henry was separated from his family as a teenager and sent to Richmond, Virginia where he worked in a tobacco factory. He met and married a woman named Nancy, but not before asking his owner to promise he'd never separate them. Though the slavemaster agreed, he later changed his mind. One day, Henry watched helplessly as his wife and three children were led away with ropes around their necks. That bitter experience made him more determined than ever to be free.

So Henry Brown asked a white friend, a carpenter, to build him a wooden crate three feet long, two and a half feet deep and two feet wide. On the outside, the carpenter painted, "This Side Up, With Care", and addressed the crate to a Philadelphia friend who worked with the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. On March 23, 1849, Henry crammed his five-foot-eight, 200-pound body into the box.

Inside, the slave had a leather bag of water and some biscuits. Three small holes let in a bit of light and air, but baggage handlers didn't always respect the instructions on the box. At the railway station, they turned the crate upside down, leaving Henry on his head. The box rolled rightside up when it was tossed on the train, but a transfer to a steamboat put Henry upside down again. "I found to my dismay that my eyes were almost swollen out of their sockets and the veins in my temple seemed ready to burst," he wrote later. "I made no noise, determining to obtain 'victory over death'... sustained under the whole by thoughts of sweet liberty."

Twenty-seven hours and 350 miles after he started out, Henry arrived in Philadelphia. But the abolitionists who took the box to a house were afraid to open it. Finally, someone knocked and asked, "Is all right within?" Henry answered, "All right." Overjoyed, they pried open the box and helped out the newly-freed man. From that day on, he was known as Henry "Box" Brown.

For a year, the former slave toured the north with his crate and a picture show depicting slavery. Then Congress passed a law allowing authorities to arrest fugitive slaves and return them to their masters. "Box" Brown fled to England where he lived in freedom and told his story in words and music for the rest of his life.

That story is a wonderful illustration of how a Carpenter arranges freedom for each one of us, too. When we ask, He readies us for a journey from the slavery of sin to the liberty of love and forgiveness found in him alone. That journey begins with a recognition that Satan lies and deceives; that sin separates families, shackles the heart and kills the soul. The only antidote is the blood of Jesus shed on the cross where He suffered the punishment for our sins. In return, He asks only that we accept his free gift by accepting him as the new Master of our life, pledging to turn from our sins, and being baptized for the forgiveness of those wrongs, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in the process (Rom. 10: 8-10, Acts 2:38; 22:16). Baptism doesn't save us. Only the blood of Jesus can do that.

Baptism is just the box. In it -- as Paul explains in Romans 6:1-6 -- we're symbolically buried alive, just like Henry Brown. When our old self goes under the water, our very lives are turned upside down. The Me-centered vision and values we once embraced are stood on their head as we rely on the mystery of God's holiness to save us and send us to his Kingdom. When we arrive, all is right within. Once we're delivered by the work and direction of the Carpenter, we're welcomed by others intent on abolishing the oppression of sin. Then, with the rest of the church, it's up to us to live like we're free, and to share our story with anyone who'll listen, ever mindful there are many who will do their best to return us to our former life.

“Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. Thank God! Once you were slaves to sin but now ... you're free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.” (Rom. 6:16,17,22).

When Jesus sends us on our way to heaven, He doesn't include a return address.

-This copyrighted article was originally published in *Grace Centered Magazine* (www.gcmagazine.net), a daily, online publication, dedicated to stimulating personal and public thought, prayer, and discussion about living the Christian life."

VOICES from the FIELDS

James & Karen Ashley April 13, 2004 Dallas, TX
On furlough. Hoping to return to Solomon Islands in June

Prayer Requests:

1. Jonathan is our co-translator in the Solomons. Praise the Lord for answering our prayers concerning the arrangements and expenses for his travel here to help as we prepare the final draft of the Sa'a N.T. Pray for his trip home to go smoothly.

2. Pray for the typesetting, as the work is taking somewhat longer than expected.

3. Pray for all the decisions and work involved in packing and leaving. We absolutely hate this part of the job, and thus tend to procrastinate and be totally stressed out and exhausted by the end. Pray for some very real help from God, that this time it won't be so awful.

4. Pray that some miscommunication regarding Susan's credits for home school will be resolved, and that we will be able to complete her assignments in time.

5. Pray for the Solomons translation-group conference as we fellowship together and strategize, and set priorities for the next two years.

6. Pray for our kids as separation approaches. By the end of July our kids will be in three different countries, with us in a fourth. (Our oldest son Kent is taking on a youth and music pastor position in the Bahamas, Philip will be here at Harding University but working at Jet Propulsion Labs for the summer, and Susan will be starting her junior year at boarding school in Papua New Guinea.)

Dave Moldez Manila, Philippines May 2, 2004

We just finished two Vacation Bible Schools in two ministry areas here at Novaliches and Caloocan. More than 300 children and young people came to study. There are also good numbers of parents who attended. We will have another VBS at Fairview, Quezon City, another area ministry where a house church is located.

Central Bible College finished the school year last March 20, 2004. We have 19 graduates this time from the 3 programs.

One of the graduates this year is Josephine Glinofria. Right after the graduation, her 83 year old mother died. She is thankful that she was able to share the gospel to her mother before the Lord took her. She is assured that her mother received salvation in Christ. Her province is in Quezon, miles away from Manila. With no pastor and Christians around, she took the opportunity to share with her relatives and friends the way of salvation through repentance and faith in Christ during the time of burial. She testified that many believed the message. Funeral services here in the Philippines became a good opportunity not only to pay tribute to the loved one but also evangelize the lost. She mentioned to me when she arrived at CBC that she was able to share the gospel because of the Lord and because of the knowledge she learned from studying at CBC. This is an encouragement to us.

Last March 26, 2004, there was a reunion of former CBC dorm-residents and students. Many testified how they came to know the Lord and how they grew in their faith as they stayed in the dorm and studied at CBC.

I continue to visit local churches especially during Saturdays and Sundays. I recently had the opportunity to visit the church where brother Vir Torrefiel ministers. They are very thankful as they slowly construct their building there as funds are available. They are now able to use the place for worship and a Christian pre-school.

Earl Mullins Sr. March 2004 Trip to Kineshma, Russia, with Paul Kitzmiller

If there was anything that proved to be the outstanding aspect of this trip, it was that the timing was of the Lord. I was reminded of another time in Russia when the passage from Proverbs 16:9 was printed across the bottom of one of the summer months I was there. "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs His steps."

The primary question was whether the trip should take place in the spring or fall. For several reasons Paul and I had originally thought it should take place in the fall. But it turned out there were several developments in which the Lord indicated the spring trip was His will and the timing was critical.

As long ago as April, 2003, Paul and I hoped that after two trips to Kineshma in the spring time, we could move it to the fall of the year. The Russian school system has a fall break for a week in November. The weather is better and the ground less messy than the springtime. More importantly, the teachers and students are more

available for meetings during the day, and evenings. As late as the early fall of 2003, we were still leaning toward that time of the year.

However, sometime around November, the Lord began to impress on me that someone needed to go in the Spring. One reason was the primary purpose for the 2004 trip. During the 2003 Spring trip, we met a man (Sasha) from a town in the Ivanovo region which we had never visited. He was a believer who traveled at his own expense to Ivanovo, the capital of the region. This was in response to invitations we had sent to listeners of the radio Bible program with which Graham McKay and the late Wesley Jones have been associated. It seemed to us that he was not associated with any church or mission group. He invited us to visit him with the opportunity of speaking to a group of believers in another town with whom he met weekly. He also offered us a flat (apartment) which we could use. It belonged to his wife's mother who was no longer living.

To wait for a year and half before following up on this offer seemed just too long, so someone needed to go in the Spring of 2004. Little did we know what the Lord had in view in directing our "steps" toward a Spring trip.

There were many individuals involved in making this one of the most important trips I have ever made to Russia. However, there were four individuals who figured prominently in making it a very valuable trip from the viewpoint of "seeing" that toward which all the previous trips were being used of the Lord. Without explaining the specifics at this time, the four were (1) A lady who presently serves as the director of the Jewish center of Kineshma. Most every American member of the summer education teams to Kineshma will remember her. (2) An English teacher of twenty years in the Kineshma school system, who is planning to retire from teaching in the fall. (3) An English speaking school administrator who visited Louisville as the interpreter for the first team from Kineshma. (4) A brilliant young man who also visited the Louisville area. At the time of that visit he was President of the English club in the academically elite Lyceum he attended in Moscow.

Each of these were instruments in the hand of the Lord, who were used to help us begin to see "buds-on-the-trees" or "blades-of-wheat-breaking-thru-the-soil" from seeds sown in Kineshma over the past 10 years. It became evident that none of these would be in the same situation in November (should the Lord tarry till then) as they were while we were there in April. Each one's part is a story in itself yet together they became a single unified message from the Lord as far as His will related to this region of Russia and our involvement in it.

Soldier On!

OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Leroy Garrett

[Several years ago brother Leroy Garrett decided to close down *Restoration Review*, the influential monthly magazine he had edited for decades. But for some time he kept on sending out a 4-page "occasional newsletter" titled *Once More with Love*. Last year he decided to conclude that periodical as well.

But to the joy of many, he still writes email essays under the general title *Soldier On with Leroy Garrett*. For a free "subscription" go to leroy.ouida@worldnet.att.net. What follows is one of those essays. By the way, he has now finished his autobiography too. Even if you don't agree 100% with him, you would benefit from *A LOVER'S QUARREL: My Pilgrimage of Freedom in Churches of Christ*. Order from the author at 1300 Woodlake Dr., Denton, TX 76210, sending a check to him for \$14.95, which includes postage. -avw]

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Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience of the faith among all the nations for His name. – Romans 1:5

While the term is rarely used in Scripture, it goes far in defining the nature of faith. It infers that obedience is inherent in faith – that faith and obedience are necessarily related. It says that the faith that pleases God – the faith that saves or justifies – is the faith that obeys. Does it not also say that faith that does not obey is not faith at all?

This is not only the obedience that is expected of one who is a Christian, but obedience in reference to *becoming* a Christian. That is in fact how Paul uses the term, not once but twice in Romans. The passage above indicates that Paul had been made an apostle to the nations "for the obedience of the faith" – that is in evangelizing the nations. They became Christians by obeying or responding to the gospel (faith) that Paul preached as an apostle. In Romans 16:26 he relates "obedience of the faith" to the preaching of the gospel (v. 25).

This is contrary to much Protestant preaching today, which doesn't have obedience on the table at all when it comes to becoming a Christian. Preachers talk about "saved by faith only," by which they mean there is nothing that one is to do to be saved beyond "accepting Christ as your Savior." Obedience is completely left out – as

if it were some work, and we know we are saved by grace and not by works.

True, we are not saved by works. Works and grace are incompatible, but obedience and grace aren't incompatible. Paul is our witness. He told the Romans twice that faith by its very nature produces obedience. To become a Christian one is to believe, and then obey what that faith commands – which is not works but an obedient response to the gospel. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys!

An informative example of this is in Acts 6:7: "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." Notice the contrast in John 12:42: "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."

This is a good example of the Bible interpreting itself. We see in this contrast the meaning of "obedient to the faith." The first passage shows us that many of the priests believed in Christ and obediently responded to that faith, which must mean they repented and were baptized – the pattern we see all through Acts. The other passage reveals that many Jewish leaders believed, but refused to act upon their faith. Would that be "faith only"? One group believed and obeyed; the other group believed but did not obey.

This was demonstrated on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the birthday of the church. The apostle Peter preached the gospel. When those who had murdered Christ heard the gospel, they were "cut to their hearts." The gospel elicited faith. They asked what they were to do (v. 37). They were now believers. Peter did not tell them there was nothing for them to do, but charged them to, "Repent and be baptized" – that is to obey the faith. Verse 41 says that those who "gladly received his word" were baptized. They were obedient to the faith.

This might shed light on the presumed conflict between Paul's "saved by faith" and James' "saved by works." When James says, "A man is justified by works, and not by faith only," could he not have been referring to obedience – "the obedience of faith"? The reason I say this is because of the argument James makes about Abraham. He says the patriarch was "justified by works" when he offered Isaac on the altar (v. 21), but the Bible otherwise described what Abraham did as obedience, not works. Hebrews 11:8 says that Abraham "obeyed" as well as believed, and Genesis 12, where Abraham's story is first told, makes it clear that the patriarch not only

believed, but he obediently did "as the Lord had spoken to him" (v. 4).

We might say with Paul that Abraham was justified by faith (only), and not by works, if we mean that his faith was obedient – the obedience of faith. And we might say with James that Abraham was justified by works and not by faith only if we mean that his "works" was an obedient response to his faith – the obedience of faith.

But perhaps Paul himself harmonizes it even better in Gal. 5:6 when he refers to "faith working through love." There you have it – Paul and James together – faith works! That means that biblical faith obeys – "the obedience of faith." It is the way our Lord put it in the Sermon on the Mount, "He that hears these words of mine and does them . . ." (Matt. 7:24).

The pioneers of our Stone-Campbell heritage had a simple way of summarizing the gospel: there are three facts to be believed (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ), three commands to be obeyed (believe, repent, and be baptized), and three promises to be enjoyed (remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit, and everlasting life). Is this not consistent with Paul's "obedience of the faith"?

It would be a blessing if preachers today would quit telling sinners that there is nothing for them to *do* to be saved. There is something for them to do -- believe and obey the gospel.

More Thought-Provokers about the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts

Piccolo or Tuba?

"The Christian Church is *not* a trumpet corps—but an *orchestra*. We are not all *supposed* to sound alike because *each of us is a different shaped instrument*. God has given us our own individual sounds, our own lives. For years I have been a piccolo trying to play in the tuba section, because some men I admire greatly play the spiritual 'deep notes.'

"Can you imagine anything more pitiful than a piccolo trying to play in the tuba section? Yet this is the story of much of my life, and I had never felt free and natural in my Christian living because I had always tried to be something I was not, so that I could be like the other [Christians around me. Later I discovered] it was *all right* for me to be a piccolo. I did not have to pretend that I was a tuba. What

a relief! I could just be me. As a matter of fact, that is the only way I can play my true part in the orchestra.” –Keith Miller in *A Second Touch*

* * *

Bus or Anthill?

“The church is not to be like a bus, where passengers sit quietly and let someone else do the driving, but like an anthill, where everybody is at work. Not everyone who thus ministers will be a church officer, nor will the service they render always be appreciated. But just as every bit of that fabulous complex, the human body, has a job to do, so it is with each of us who believe.

“Among the variety of God’s gifts, some are natural abilities and character qualities sanctified, while others correspond to nothing that was previously seen in the person’s life. That the gift is from the Holy Spirit is more evident in the latter case than in the former, but the reality is that all our capacities for expressing Christ are spiritual gifts. By means of them, Christ from his throne uses us as his hands, feet, and mouth, even his smile, and speaks, meets, loves, saves, and sustains.

“As the test of whether you are a leader or teacher is that others follow you or learn from you, so the test of whether you are exercising a spiritual gift is that people in the church [and the world –avw] feel the influence of Christ through what you say and do.” --James I. Packer in *Christianity Today*, 8/03

* * *

The Holy Spirit and His Work – Important, and Many Faceted

Don Carlos Janes was a leader among the so-called premil congregations during the first half of the 20th century, and also was the prime booster of foreign mission work in those days. He frequently contributed to *Word and Work* magazine. Recently I re-discovered his 20-page booklet, *An Outline Study of The Holy Spirit*. No date is given. Here are a number of his section headings: The Holy Spirit is a Person. Persons Filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit on Persons. The Holy Spirit in Persons. Gifts Bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Speaking with Tongues. Relation of the Flesh and the Spirit. The Fruit of the Spirit. Holy Spirit Baptism. The Sin Against the Holy Spirit.

In his introductory remarks he says, “‘If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his’ (Rom. 8:9). An auto without gas; an electric lamp without a filament; a motor without current; a body without a spirit; a branch without fruit – all alike are useless (John 15:2; Gal. 5:22-24). The Holy Spirit is the object of the unpardon-

able, eternal sin (Matt. 12:31-33; Mk. 3:28-30). Therefore this is a subject of great importance!"

For most of the booklet Brother Janes lists all the texts which fit into those categories, giving excerpts. For instance, under "The Personal Indwelling of the Holy Spirit" he lists these (among others): He shall be in you (John 14:17). God gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:22). If the Spirit of God dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:9). God sent forth the Spirit...into our hearts (Gal. 4:6). The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us (2 Tim. 1:14). The Spirit of God dwelleth in you (1 Cor. 3:16). Etc.

Also he included some quotations from Stone-Campbell movement leaders. Here is one from Robert Richardson in *Millennial Harbinger* 1859: "It is quite sufficient for Christians to know that 'the Spirit of God dwells in them,' 'that God has given the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts'; that they have been made 'partakers of the Holy Spirit.' If any choose to explain away these truths, by trying to show that the Holy Spirit, in reference to whom the *personal pronoun* is so often used; of whom it is said, 'the Spirit *himself* beareth witness together with our spirits,' and who appeared in a distinct and visible form at the baptism of Jesus, is, nevertheless, not a 'person,' but a mere 'emanation,' 'influence,' 'idea,' or 'result of ideas,' we may well leave them to their own vain imaginings, remembering that we have been baptized not only 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son,' but also into that of 'the Holy Spirit,' and that it is this self-same Spirit, which 'dwells,' or, as Bro. Campbell is fond of expressing it, becomes a 'guest' in the heart of every true, obedient believer, who becomes, by this indwelling Spirit 'a habitation for God.'"

Brother Janes was not afraid nor adverse to quoting "evangelical" writers outside the Stone-Campbell movement as well. Edward Bickersteth thus explains the term "the Sealing of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 1:21,22; Eph. 1:13,14 & 4:30): "The allusion of the seal as a pledge of purchase would be peculiarly intelligible to the Ephesians, for Ephesus was a maritime city and an extensive trade in timber was carried on there by the shipmasters of the neighboring ports. The method of purchase was this: The merchant, after selecting his timber, stamped it with his own signet [or seal], which was an acknowledged sign of ownership. He often did not carry off his possession at the time; it was left in the harbor with other floats of timber; but it was chosen, bought and stamped, and in due time the merchant sent a trusty agent with the signet, who finding that timber which bore a corresponding impress, claimed and brought it away for the master's use."

Janes also includes these quotes: "The infilling of the Spirit compels an outflowing of testimony" (A. T. Pierson). "If you have much of the Spirit of God, you must make up your mind to have

much opposition, both in the church and in the world. Very likely the leading men in the church will oppose you" (Charles G. Finney).

* * *

Power, Love and Spiritual Gifts

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber writes concerning a relative who has "discovered the amazing power of the Spirit," and is now eager to share this miracle-and-wonder power with everyone else. The subscriber admits that she would like to have more direct displays of supernatural power in her own life, but she thinks that this relative is stressing power to the neglect of love. She asks if I have any advice.

* * *

Like you, I want and need all the power God sees fit to channel through me -- both for my own character development ("fruit of the Spirit") and for my ministry to others ("gifts of the Spirit"). God is still at work in his world, and he does whatever he pleases (Ps. 115:3). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). We certainly do not want to be in the category of those who hold to "a form of godliness although they have denied its power" (2 Tim. 3:5). "The kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Scripture encourages us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts and not to forbid them or to despise them (1 Cor. 14:1, 39; 1 Thes. 5:19-20).

At the same time, Scripture teaches us to test the prophets, the spirits and all things purporting to come from God (2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1; 1 Thes. 5:21). God's final enemy, whom Paul calls "the lawless one" and whose presence is actually satanic, will come "with all power and signs and false wonders" (2 Thes. 2:8-9). God's power is often seen best in the midst of weakness and his victory often shines brightest against the backdrop of apparent defeat (2 Cor. 12:9-10). The Savior died abandoned and tortured on a Cross -- but God raised him from the dead. Our trust is not in ourselves but in God (2 Cor. 1:9).

The first century church which most excelled in power and phenomenal gifts was the one at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:7; 12). In what we call his second letter to that church, Paul teaches them not to boast in visible symbols of success and power but to trust in the God who works life in the midst of death and who is glorified in human weakness (2 Cor. 1, 10-13). It was to that same Corinthian church, you remember, that Paul pointed to "a more excellent way," the way of LOVE -- without which all the miracles, gifts and powers finally amount to no more than a little child banging on a tin can (1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1, 11).

NEWS & NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Amite, Louisiana. John Fulda is now serving in the capacity of "full-time" minister with the Amite Church of Christ. Paul Cutrer has assumed the role of Music Minister. The congregation has been busy and has become actively involved in a worthwhile mission called "Crossroads." This is a youth ranch about 10 miles from Amite for teenage boys between the ages of 13-17 who need better direction in their lives. The church at Amite visits at least once a month to feed and spend time with the boys and to give the staff a chance to hold meetings and spend time together as a group. Keep us in your prayers. (Ramona Cutrer)

Westminster Witness, Maryland (Gary Pearson) "Come Home to Cane Ridge," a 200th Anniversary Celebration of the signing of the Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery, an extremely important event in the history of our movement in 1804, will be held at the Cane Ridge Church near Paris, Kentucky June 26-28, 2004

Boston, Massachusetts became the first state for same-sex couples on May 17th. Elated and in some cases incredulous at making history, gays and lesbians by the dozens exchanged vows and were pronounced "partners for life." Naturally, performing most of the weddings was the Unitarian Universalist Church. President Bush renewed his call for Congress to pass a constitutional amendment banning gay marriages nationwide.

Athens Greece (Emie Galanis Paschou) It has been two months since my father left us to go to be with the Lord. We are beginning to get used to his absence.

My mother's (Sophia) health has many ups and downs but lately has been stable. I want to thank each of you who have continued your financial support for my mother.

Start Making Plans to attend this year's Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship the first week in August (Aug. 2-5). See the complete program in this issue.

We were Glad to hear from David Johnson that John Thornhill was ordained at the Alexandria, La. Church of Christ in April. May the Lord keep raising up those called to the ministry of His word.

Longtime Missionary to Alaska Irene Allen, now living in Iowa with son Norman & his family, was hospitalized for almost 3 weeks with pneumonia. For several days her survival was uncertain, and even a month later her breathing is somewhat difficult. 2 weeks after release from the hospital she sprained an ankle and broke the fibula near her knee. Norman also has health problems. They live at 401 11th Ave. W, West Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577.

Longtime Subscriber Forrest McCann has a hymnal collection containing most of the 300 books Brother E. L. Jorgenson used to compile *Great Songs of the Church*. He plans to give them later to the

Center for Restoration Studies at Abilene Christian University. Altogether he has some 1300 hymnals or hymnic materials.

The March W&W goofed. The article, "A Historic Call for Christian Unity," by Rick Atchley, said he is editor of *One Body*. No, the editor of that fine magazine is Victor Knowles. Brother Atchley gave the historic call. Brother Knowles reprinted it in *One Body*, & we copied it from there.

Friend Victor takes issue with Philip Yancey's article (March) which said that Jesus' prayer for unity has not been answered. "I believe it was answered within 60 days of the prayer (at Pentecost) and that it has been answered every day since - when people respond to the gospel and are baptized into one body.... I do not believe Jesus prayed a prayer in John 17 that is not being answered."

Reply by aww: I agree with you and brother Yancey both! As you

say, There is a spiritual unity that exists between all the born-again members of the one family of the heavenly Father. Eph. 4:4-6 shows 7 different unities we share. That's true even for those who are family members but neither realize it nor act like it. But that leads to the 2nd fact. Sadly, lots of family members refuse to acknowledge some or many of their brothers and sisters. Instead they isolate themselves from them, mistreat them and engage in ugly fights which cause unbelievers to say, "See how those Christians hate one another!" (Thank God for the many Christians who wonderfully demonstrate the love of Jesus; but we can't deny the sad facts just mentioned.) The belligerent believers are disunited and often cause division after division. They need to heed Eph. 4:3, "Make every effort to keep the unity" we have. Brother Knowles is a longtime leader in thus promoting unity among Christians. But he would not need to do so if there were no truth at all in what Yancey wrote.

Bumper Sticker Theology

(from *Christianity Today*)

Backsliders jump from the lifeboat into the Titanic.

* * *

My Karma ran over your Dogma.

* * *

"I don't question your existence." -God

* * *

Midwives help people out.

* * *

**Lord, walk beside me with your arm on my shoulder
and your hand over my mouth.**

Z: 1 (Qty: 1)
James R. Satterfield
114 Brandywynne Lane

New Albany, IN 47150

11/2004

“Love, Christ’s Cross, and Christian Assurance”

Bill Love, preacher at the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas from 1974-1996, died on April 30, 2004. Edward Fudge writes of him:

His profound sermons regularly focused on the cross of Christ and the foundational spiritual certainties that it signifies for believers. Irenic in spirit and gentle in manner, Bill conscientiously avoided unnecessary controversy in pursuit of peace and edification. The following excerpt from his writing provides a clear window into his soul and reflects the heart of his message and ministry:

“Nothing is so liberating as the sure knowledge that we are right with God, that we are secure in his love for eternity. Our faith, like our works and our knowledge, is always imperfect. The love of God at Golgotha is strong, steady and forever sufficient. While our faith, hope and love wax and wane, the cross is eternal, solid and forever. There will never be a time when Jesus has not died for you and me. . . . How desperately we need to believe that we are truly justified in the cross of Christ! An elderly Christian woman on her deathbed was terrified and said, ‘I just don’t know, I don’t know if I’ve done enough!’ [Indeed] she had not done enough. Could she have done enough Jesus need never have come. But Jesus had done more than enough and she had already accepted his gift. Despite her fears she was justified in the blood of Christ and safe with God for eternity.”