

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

TRUTH



From A Preacher's Notebook

Dick Blackford

It's been a while since I've done this. Mostly, it consists of unrelated tidbits that may never become a sermon or a full-fledged article. It may or may not be beneficial to the reader, but there is only one way to find out.

What A Day!

I recently saw a greeting card with a picture of a grand-fatherly figure wearing a white, long-flowing beard and representing God. He's having a conversation with the angel, Gabriel. God: "Whew!! . . . I just created a 24-hour period of alternating lightness and darkness on earth . . ."

Gabriel: "What are you going to do now?" God: "Call it a day . . ."

I bought the card.

“Separate and apart from the Lord's Supper . . .”

I have a friend whose pet peeve is brethren uttering these lines after the communion and before the contribution. He says that, no matter where you go, you hear these traditional words. He

believes we're inconsistent for we don't say "Separate and apart from the singing, we will now pray." Or, "Separate and apart from the praying we will now preach," and that no one would confuse the communion with the contribution. He may have a point, but with the rapid rush of new religions into the country and the increase of biblical ignorance among Americans it may become necessary to make some kind of clarification. Perhaps sooner than we think.

Humming in Public Worship

“Let all things be done unto *edification*,” said the Holy Spirit, through Paul (1 Cor. 14:26). It takes communication to be edified. Words are the vehicle of thought. Why try to edify somebody by humming when you could use words?

We also *teach*, *admonish*, and *praise* through singing (Eph. 5:19). How much teaching, admonishing, and praising is done by humming? It is possible to experiment and find out by trying this test. Here it is:

see “Notebook” on p. 695

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A Trend Toward Instrumental Music in Worship?

Mike Willis

The October 2003 issue of *The Christian Chronicle* featured as its lead article, "Instrumental worship: isolated or key trend?" written by Lindy Adams. The article reported that at least five institutional churches have already begun to use mechanical instruments of music in worship.



Among those churches introducing mechanical instruments of music in worship is the Oak Hills church in San Antonio, Texas. This is the congregation where nationally known author Max Lucado preaches. Their decision to use instruments was reported in the September 6 issue of *San Antonio Express-News*. The Oaks Hills church has a 3,800 membership and is advertised as the second largest church among institutional churches. The other four churches involved are: Northwest church in Seattle, Washington; Body of Christ at Amarillo South, Texas; Farmer's Branch, Texas, and Southlake Boulevard in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas. The *Chronicle* reports an overall increase in attendance at each of these churches as a result of their decision, although some churches experience an immediate drop in attendance.

Adams' article quotes Flavil Yeakley as stating that this is not the beginning of a trend; rather he calls this "five isolated tragedies." John Ellas, Director of the Center for Church Growth, sees the instrumental music issue as a "small trend" tied to "a larger reality." He explained, "A much larger trend is the willingness to reevaluate previous theological positions, and a growing number of members are coming to very different conclusions about numerous church practices."

Mac Lynn was quoted as saying, "Many churches are less concerned with historic markers that distinguished Churches of Christ. A half century ago, those indicators of true Christian practice included a capella music, baptism for remission of sins, weekly communion, church organization and men in leadership. Today, the distinctives are eroding, as the culture impacts the churches. Most of the markers are still in place, but the attitude toward their essentiality has changed."

see "Instrumental Music" on p. 697

The Christian's Hope

Connie W. Adams

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. 8:24-25).

In this statement, the essential elements of hope are presented. What we hope for, we do not yet see. Hope looks to the future. Yet there is within us an earnest longing (desire) for that coupled with the expectation of realizing this future aspiration. Thayer defines hope as "Expectation of good; joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation." Webster defines the verb form as "to long for with expectation of obtainment, to expect with desire: trust, expect."

It is possible to desire what we do not expect. As a boy, I found it enthralling to look in the Sears and Roebuck catalog at the pictures of shiny new bicycles. But those were lean years and I never expected to have one. On the other hand, it is possible to expect what we do not desire. Discipline was a fact of life in our home. When I was caught doing what I should not have done, I fully expected to receive my "just recompense of reward," but let me tell you, I did not earnestly desire it! But the Christian's hope combines a longing look to the future with fervent expectation. Hope is faith pointed to the future.

Hope distinguishes the Christian from the unbeliever. Paul wrote the Thessalonians that they should not sorrow as others "which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). Near the end of his life, the renowned infidel Voltaire is reported to have said this:

Strike out a few sages, and the crowd of human beings is nothing but a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals, and the globe contains nothing but corpses. I tremble to have to complain once more of the Being of beings, in casting an attentive eye over this horrible picture. I wish I had never been born. . . . The box of Pandora is the most beautiful fable of antiquity. Hope was at the bottom.

Contrast that to the radiant joy expressed by Paul even when he was chained to a Roman guard under house arrest in Rome. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Hear him near the end of his life facing martyrdom for the cause of Christ. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Where would you rather cast your lot: with the despair of a

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Voltaire, or the radiant, confident hope of a Paul?

The Basis of Hope

Is the Christian an idle dreamer with nothing to undergird his expectation? I submit to you that hope is *reasonable*. The farmer plows and plants in hope of harvest. Even the forest sheds its leaves and bares its branches to the cold breath of winter in hope of the renewal of spring. It is even more reasonable that the Christian hope for that which he does not yet see. Peter wrote of the “reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).

1. The Christian hopes because God cannot lie. Our hope is as certain as the very character of God himself. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). “It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). God’s performance in the past is the guarantee of his promises to the Christian. He said “Let there be light” and it was so. He said of man, in the days of Noah, “his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” Then came the flood, for God had spoken. Through the prophets God foretold many things concerning the Messiah, all of which came to pass. Even the word he spoke by angels was steadfast. It is therefore reasonable to expect God to keep his promises to the Christian, for God cannot lie.

2. The Christian hopes because Christ was raised from the dead. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:19-20). “Firstfruits” implies later fruit. In his own victory over death, he secured the keys of Hades and death (Rev. 1:18). Thus he “delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). The sign of all signs was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That was the crowning victory which forever settled his claim to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). It is therefore reasonable to put our trust in the promises of him who has “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).

3. The Christian hopes because of the gospel assurances offered by witnesses of the resurrection. After his resurrection he was “seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:5-8). These witnesses repeatedly spoke of “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5).

The Results of Hope

1. Hope protects us. We wear “for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). Helmets are worn to protect

heads. The head is the source of direction for the body. It is our intellectual center. Rob man of his hope and you have deprived him of his noblest aspirations.

2. Hope purifies us. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John. 3:3). A constant awareness of the hope set before is a deterrent to sin. One of the greatest avenues of escape from temptation is the remembrance of the “home over there.” The brilliance of our hope outshines the cheap glitter of momentary pleasure.

3. Hope stabilizes us. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19-20). Anchors fasten ships to unseen foundations. Even so, “we have an anchor” in an unseen world which keeps us from being “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” and which gives us confidence amid the turbulence of life. We all have storms to weather, moments of despair, the ache of disappointment, the wrenching moment of uncertainty when we cry out “What am I going to do now?” But brethren, we have an anchor cast “above the bright blue” and it is this blessed assurance which gives us endurance. Indeed, “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience; and experience hope: And hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:3-5). It is for this reason that we are able to “gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13).

The Objects of Hope

1. We hope for eternal life. Life here is short, uncertain and its thread is often fragile. Death is the common lot of all. The ominous certainty that we shall die makes us sigh for a better existence where the “second death hath no power.” It is difficult for finite minds to grasp the sublimity of a vast expanse of unending bliss in the presence of the Lord.

2. We hope for glory. We sing about it often. “Oh that will be glory for me.” “Just over in the gloryland.” We long for the splendor and beatific happiness of heaven. Peter wrote of our “living hope” assured by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, in terms of “an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Here, the new decays and becomes old. Wood rots. Metal rusts. Paint dims, cracks, and peels. We are subject to corruption. But in heaven nothing will ever rot or rust, fade or wear out, or grow old. We look for an inheritance *incorruptible*. Here, the cleansed becomes unclean. The spotless becomes stained and soiled. But in heaven there will be nothing unclean to defile. We look for an inheritance *undefiled*. Here, the most beautiful corsage withers and dies. We also fade. The glow of youthful cheeks succumbs to the relentless passage of time and is replaced by the pallor of old age. Youthful vigor is supplanted by the aches and uncertain

September 11 and Islam

William V. Beasley

On September 11, 2001, the United States received a “wake-up call.” This “day of infamy” has rightly been compared to the attack by Imperial Japan upon Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The perpetrators of this dastardly deed failed miserably in what they intended to accomplish. In fact, our national resolve (so eloquently voiced by our president), patriotism, and even the recognition of our dependence upon God have not been at a higher level in decades. What is true of our nation (collectively) ought also to be true of each of us individually.

It would be amiss to assign the events of September 11 directly to the Almighty. But he did permit it to happen, and we (both collectively and individually) would do well

steps of the aged. But there, nothing fades. We sing of “the land of fadeless day.” We sigh for an inheritance that *fadeth not away*.

3. We hope to see Jesus. We do not know what form he will have nor what we shall be like, but John assures us that “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Paul wrote “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). What a glorious expectation to see the Word of life, the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah, the Bright and Morning Star, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the head of the church, the Alpha and Omega! What rapture to be in the presence of him who has been our High Priest, our Advocate, and our Mediator! What inexpressible bliss to be able to thank him forever for his grace, mercy, and love!

“But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:25). “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

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to view what happened as a “wake-up call” to our shortcomings and our failures. As a member of the New Testament church, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), I did not run out and purchase a Bible or Bibles. Statistics show that this was the response, a good response, of numerous Americans. Nor did I begin to read my Bibles (I own several) more. Admittedly, my prayer life has changed. I do not believe I pray much more, but the fervency and the content of my prayers has changed. I pray more for our president, vice-president, other national leaders, the United States, and particularly one other country. My primary prayer for the president and vice-president is that they might be truly converted to Jesus Christ and work and worship with a faithful congregation of the Lord’s people. I pray that they might become spiritual leaders (by example) as well as political leaders of this country.

Another perceived benefit of what happened on September 11 is an awakening of interest in knowing more about Islam. Since the ones who planned and executed the cowardly attack of September 11 were members of the Islamic faith, others have begun to question the tenets and attitudes of this world religion. We would do well to include members of the Islamic faith in our prayers. Praying that they might be converted to Jesus Christ. Praying also that our Heavenly Father would providentially provide the Islamic leaders, both spiritual and political, with numerous advisers like Hushai the Arkite (2 Sam. 17:5-14) “to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon (Islam)” (2 Sam. 17:14).

The purveyors of political correctness have been busy since September 11. They would have us believe, as Muhammad Ali asserts, that “Islam is a religion of peace.” And that, “The people who carried out this attack are not Muslim — they’re racist fanatics” (*Reader’s Digest*, December 2001). To believe such one must ignore both the founding and the long history of Islam. More historically accurate would be to speak of the “bloody borders of Islam.” The historical norm is that where the Islamic religion borders a country where the majority of the citizens are of another faith, there is bloodshed. Historically, when Islam is the majority religion it often becomes, to the non-Muslims, the choice of convert to Islam or die. This was true in the

Baptism: Who Needs It?

David Dann

Following his resurrection Jesus instructed the apostles saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Surely there are few Bible subjects as controversial as the baptism of which this passage of Scripture speaks. Nearly every religious group claiming to follow the Bible has in

common with all others the fact that all practice something referred to as “baptism.” However, this commonality with regard to baptism is usually limited to the common use of the term “baptism.” While the same term is used by all, the same practice is not. Some sprinkle or pour water on a person and call it baptism, while others fully immerse. Some baptize in order to cleanse a person of something called “original sin,” while other baptize in order to make a person a member of a particular denomination. Some baptize infants, while others refuse to do so. It seems there is no limit to the confusion surrounding the practice of

beginning of the Islamic religion and continues in some places today where Muslims have sufficient political clout. Even today in India, Christians (not denominationalists, but Christians) have, since the attack of September 11, been threatened and openly persecuted in predominantly Muslim areas. A faithful gospel preacher was forced to sell his house and move from a predominantly Muslim village. In England, Muslim youths have been permitted to harass non-Muslims and to vent their anti-Christian hostility upon churches (i.e., meeting houses). I say “permitted” since the politically correct politicians of England refuse to see that what is happening is religiously motivated and is given approval by some Muslim leaders.

Muslims, knowing something of the history of Christendom, point out that Roman Catholics have historically done the same thing, that is, offer people the choice to convert or be put to the sword. Of course, the Muslims would not say “Roman Catholics” but would attribute such to “Christians.” Suffice it to say that Christians have never done such. Perversions of Christianity (and Roman Catholicism is a perversion) have admittedly been guilty of such atrocities. As a Christian, I abhor such actions on the part of Roman Catholics just as much as I do when perpetrated by Muslims.

The Islamic faith is weak! It does not fare well when

honest investigation is permitted. The sad thing is that the Islamic leaders, both political and religious, know that this is true. The undeniable proof of the weakness of Islam is the laws in Islamic countries (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc.) which forbid “Christians” (both real and denominational) to have free and open access to the citizens of the country for the purpose of teaching the good news of Jesus Christ. Each and every honest political or religious leader who encourages the passing of laws, or who actually passes the law, to prevent “Christians” from teaching the citizens of that country knows that the religion being protected is spiritually bankrupt. The only way one would not know such is for that one to be intellectually dishonest. This principle would apply equally to the Muslims of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the Hindus of India, and to the Roman Catholics of Spain.

America, beware! The liberal Muslims of America speak of peace and tolerance, but such is not the attitude of the Muslims in other parts of the world. When/if the Islamic religion is in the majority in the United States, we will, like “Christians” (denominationalists) in other countries be permitted to meet and worship God, but forbidden to teach others with a view toward converting them to the world’s only Savior, Jesus Christ (John 8:24; Acts 4:12).

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baptism. But why is there so much confusion surrounding baptism? Why does it even matter? If baptism is going to bring about such controversy and confusion, then why baptize at all? Who needs it? Well, according to the Bible, a great many people do need baptism. Among those who need to be baptized are:

1. Those who believe the gospel. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). It is not enough to simply believe in the gospel. Belief in the gospel of Christ is inseparably connected to baptism. When the apostle Paul preached the gospel to the people of Corinth, we read that “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Those who hear and believe the gospel message need to be baptized.

2. Those who need forgiveness of sins. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). The sins that we have committed will cause us to be lost for all eternity if we do not receive forgiveness. But how can one receive forgiveness? The apostle Peter answered that very question in response to those who believed the gospel message he preached on the Day of Pentecost, saying, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). God has no plan to forgive those who refuse baptism.

3. Those who want a personal relationship with Jesus. Many today speak of a desire to have a personal relationship with the Lord. But, how does one enter into such a relationship with Christ? Paul writes, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). A person may pray for hours at a time, but prayer without scriptural baptism will never bring him into a relationship with Christ. In fact, when Paul first believed the gospel, he spent three days praying (Acts 9:9-11). However, even after three days of prayer, Paul’s relationship with the Lord remained unchanged. This is made clear by the fact that after the three days of prayer, Ananias came to Paul and said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

4. Those who want to be saved. The apostle Paul writes, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). While salvation is a free gift, it is not an unconditional gift. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). One must meet the Lord’s conditions in order to receive the gift of eternal salvation. One of the conditions set by the Lord is baptism. On Pentecost we read that Peter exhorted those present to “be saved from this perverse generation. Then

those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:40-41). Also, read 1 Peter 3:21.

5. Those who want to follow Jesus. One cannot follow Jesus without obeying Jesus, and one cannot obey Jesus without obeying what Jesus said about baptism. Jesus made it clear that disciples are to be made by both preaching the gospel, and “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). As every case of conversion in the book of Acts will attest, it is impossible to become a Christian without first being baptized into Christ.

6. Those who have never been scripturally baptized. Paul tells us there is, “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). This one baptism is full immersion, for it is described as a burial (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-4). Sprinkling and pouring do not constitute scriptural baptism. Those who are incapable of belief in the gospel and repentance, such as infants, are not fit subjects for baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Those who have been “baptized” as infants have not been scripturally baptized at all. In addition to this, those who have been baptized for any other reason than being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins have not been scripturally baptized.

Conclusion

Many people today have been baptized in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. In Acts 19 we find that Paul gave a word of correction to those in Ephesus who had been improperly baptized. The text says, “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). Do you need baptism?

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The Spirit of Liberalism

by Frank Chesser

Forward by Dave Miller: “*The Spirit of Liberalism* is a plea for Christians to resist the temptation of developing an ‘I think’ or an ‘it feels good’ religion. Rather, it encourages adherence to the instruction of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the written word.” Paperback. #16950.

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The Serpent That *Was* There

Marty Pickup

In a recent article for the 2003 Florida College Lectures, I discussed Genesis 3 and the curse that God pronounced on the serpent in the garden of Eden. I apparently expressed myself very poorly, however, because some readers have drawn the conclusion that I thought the Genesis account did not record historical fact or that Genesis 3 is a myth. Nothing could be further from the truth. I greatly regret my choice of words seeing that those words have been read in such a wrong way. So let me now be very clear: *the Genesis account of Satan's temptation of Eve is completely historical in every way. The being identified in the Bible as the serpent was really in the garden and he really tempted Eve.* I never intended to suggest anything to the contrary.

The confusion has arisen because on one page of my article I raised the possibility that Moses' reference to Satan as "the serpent" may not have been intended by the inspired author as an indication of *the form* that the devil took when he appeared to Eve, but rather as a way of designating the devil himself by using the language that the people of Moses' day would use when speaking of the devil. In later biblical history this spiritual opponent of God is called by various names, e.g., the devil, Satan, Beelzebub, the tempter, the dragon, etc. But the earliest appellation may have been "the serpent," a term that, while metaphorical, appropriately designated this wicked being who, with great subtlety, brought the chaos of sin into the garden of Eden. The possibility that God had Moses use a metaphorical name to designate Satan is all that I was suggesting in my lecture. Using a metaphorical designation to refer to someone does not mean that he is not a real being. A figurative use of a word does not mean that its referent is unhistorical or unreal.

Harry Osborne and Marc Gibson have criticized me publicly for suggesting the above view. In a recent article entitled, "The Serpent That Was Not There," brother Osborne and brother Gibson charge me with rejecting what Scripture says about the existence of the serpent of Genesis 3. They assert that the only sound conclusion to draw from the text is that Satan used the form of a snake when he tempted Eve, particularly since Genesis 3:1 and

3:14 connect the serpent of the garden with "the beasts of the field." That is a reasonable way of reading the biblical text, and I believe that it may indeed be correct. But in my opinion, one needs to at least consider the possibility that "the serpent" terminology of Genesis may have been intended as a metaphorical designation of Satan himself. This understanding of the text has long been held by many Bible believers who see it as the meaning indicated by other statements of Scripture — particularly by God's promise to the serpent that the seed of woman "shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15). I only offered this view as a possibility to be considered by thoughtful Bible students. (I myself have drawn no definite conclusion about the matter.) It is not a view that springs from a modernist approach to Scripture. In fact, I have never known of a modernist to entertain it; only believers in the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture espouse it.

Still, these two brethren are critical of me for suggesting the view, and they categorically reject it as a possibility. That is their prerogative. Yet as far as I can see, the view is not in conflict with any of the express statements of Scripture. The inspired writers of the Bible say "the serpent deceived Eve" (2 Cor. 11:3), or "the devil . . . the father of lies" deceived her (John 8:44). They speak of "the serpent of old, who is called the devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9). But the biblical writers never state that Satan *took the form* of a serpent when he deceived Eve; that is simply *an interpretation* of what they say. Brother Osborne and brother Gibson believe that even to suggest another interpretation, namely, that God intended the words "the serpent" as a designation of Satan himself, will lead people to reject the historicity of Genesis and adopt modernism. As someone who has spent his academic life fighting modernists face-to-face, I can say with confidence that people adopt modernism for other reasons than this. Furthermore, brother Osborne and brother Gibson admit that elsewhere in Scripture the word "serpent" *is* used symbolically to designate Satan (viz., in Rev. 12:9 and 20:2), so I fail to see why they deem it sinful for someone to ask if the same might not also be true in Genesis 3. Seekers of truth should never be afraid to consider an interpretation of a passage that differs from the

The Serpent That *Still* Was Not There

Marc W. Gibson

On behalf of Harry Osborne and myself, I want to thank Marty Pickup for his response to our article entitled “The Serpent That Was Not There” (*Truth Magazine*, August 7, 2003). Careful and diligent study of any Bible topic or question of controversy will cause truth to shine and error to be exposed. Honorable discussion will encourage brethren to take these issues seriously in their search for truth.

Brother Pickup blames much of the problem on expressing himself “very poorly.” I really must disagree with his evaluation of his literary effort. I could not help but notice that his Florida College lecture manuscript was carefully written with lengthy and serious argumentation of key points (including the points reviewed in our article referred to above). His specific arguments clearly suggest the possibility that the “serpent” terminology of Genesis 3 may have been intended as a metaphorical designation of Satan, and not a precise identification of a literal, beast-of-the-field serpent. To be sure of my understanding, I contacted Marty by email and had a cordial exchange with him concerning what he had publicly advocated. This helped me to more precisely understand his approach to the text and historical details of Genesis 3. Furthermore, when I read his response

to our article, I understood him to once again suggest the possibility that the word “serpent” in Genesis 3 might not refer to a literal, beast-of-the-field serpent, but a use of accommodative, metaphorical (non-literal) language.

Brother Pickup states that “some readers have drawn the conclusion that I thought the Genesis account did not record historical fact or that Genesis 3 is a myth.” I don’t know who these readers are, but let it be clear that brother Osborne and I did not charge him with these conclusions. It was noted in our article that brother Pickup affirmed the historical nature of the Genesis 3 account, and that it was not myth. What we found shocking was the inconsistency of affirming such and then suggesting the possibility that one of the main characters in that historical account was not what the text described as being — a literal, beast-of-the-field serpent!

Our brother reasserts his major point when he writes,

The possibility that God had Moses use a metaphorical name to designate Satan is all that I was suggesting in my lecture. Using a metaphorical designation to refer

interpretation that they or others have previously thought. Truth can always withstand the closest scrutiny.

Every word of the sixty-six books of the Bible is the inspired word of God. Because I believe this so strongly, I have spent my entire life studying the Bible, proclaiming it publicly, and refuting modernists who impugn it. I acknowledge my human weaknesses and I recognize my personal limitations when it comes to reading the Scriptures and communicating my thoughts to others. Yet I take comfort in the fact that we serve a God who is willing to pardon our human frailty. Let me now state categorically that I believe whatever God’s word says about any subject. Genesis 3:1 says, “The serpent was more crafty than any

beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” I believe that! 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, “The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness.” I believe that! Revelation 20:2 speaks of “the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan.” I believe that! “The Serpent That Was Not There”?? Oh yes, he most certainly was there! And how wonderful it is that, in accordance with God’s promise, the serpent of the garden is crushed by the heel of Christ.

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to someone does not mean that he is not a real being. A figurative use of a word does not mean that its referent is unhistorical or unreal.

What we need is *proof* of this “possibility” from the text of Genesis 3! What the text says is that a “serpent,” a “beast of the field,” confronted, tempted, and deceived Eve (Gen. 3:1). The curse on the serpent was directed to a literal beast of the field: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life” (v. 14). Where is Satan? From other Scriptures we clearly understand that he is behind the scenes directing his evil temptation of Eve through the serpent. Let me be clear: We agree with brother Pickup that Satan was there, but we also believe that a *literal* serpent was there, as affirmed by the divine text. Brother Pickup has raised, and continues to advocate, the possibility that a literal serpent *was not there*. This “possibility” is not drawn from the biblical text, but from the conclusions of modern scholarship, and this raises serious issues of interpretation that not only affect the early chapters of Genesis, but also has repercussions on the interpretation of many other portions of Scripture. A metaphorical, figurative use of a word *does* render a word as non-literal, and this interpretation would eliminate the *literal serpent* from Genesis 3. What other literal facts and details of Scripture will be re-interpreted by this means?

Without a doubt, the Bible does later confirm a connection between Satan and the serpent (Rev. 12:9), but this does not prove that the “serpent” is a metaphorical designation for Satan in Genesis 3. (If it does, I could use the same “proof” and say that “Peter” was a metaphorical designation for Satan because Jesus linked them together [Matt. 16:23].) The serpent was a literal beast of the field that became a useful agent through which Satan could tempt and deceive Eve (just as evil men today are useful agents for Satan’s evil work), and this is why the curse on the serpent also had certain prophetic consequences for Satan himself (Gen. 3:14-15). This is what the text reveals. Why raise unrevealed “possibilities”? Thoughtful Bible students need only to consider the truth revealed in the oracles of

God — no more, no less.

Our brother concludes, “Oh yes, he (the serpent) most certainly was there!” But, as we have learned, Marty does not mean a *literal* serpent had to have been there. He has offered to us the possibility that a *literal* serpent *was not there*, that the word “serpent” may have only been a “metaphorical designation” for Satan. Dear brother and sister, do you not see this subtle change of interpretation, and does it not alarm you? Does it not bother you even a little that teachers in prominent positions are now encouraging brethren, young and old, to consider the possibility that literal historical details could be re-interpreted as metaphorical designations? Remember the alarm that Bert Thompson and Edward J. Young voiced as quoted in our initial article — if the approach advocated by brother Pickup is harmless, why did these men see a serious problem? Will brethren today just dismiss another serious issue as “much ado about nothing” or courageously point out the dangerous, ongoing drift that is taking place from the simple truth revealed in God’s word?

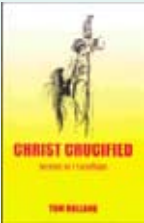
The dangers of such an interpretive approach should be apparent. There is *no* proof in the text of Genesis 3 to suggest that the “serpent” is a metaphorical designation. Other Scriptures about Satan and/or the serpent provide *no* proof of a metaphorical meaning for the “serpent” in Genesis 3. The Scriptures reveal to us that Satan *and* a literal serpent were there. If we still insist on raising the possibility of accommodative, metaphorical meanings for what is presented as literal, actual characters and events, where shall we stop? Will someone next raise the possibility that “Adam,” “Eve,” or the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” are not literal, but metaphorical designations? Why should we contend for a literal six-day creation, a universal flood, a great fish that swallowed Jonah, a virgin birth, or the bodily resurrection of Jesus? When we begin to appeal to the esteemed conclusions of human scholarship about borrowed imagery from the mythological culture of ancient days to suggest *possible* interpretations of the divine text that contradict the text itself, we have pointed “thoughtful Bible students” down a path that will *not* lead to greater faith in the revealed text of God’s word. Frankly, I fear where this type of teaching will lead brethren today and in the years to come. Is it not enough for us that the Spirit has written, “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made”? That serpent was no metaphor. That serpent was a *literal* serpent and that serpent was *literally* there — God said it and that settles it!

(Harry Osborne has also written a rejoinder which you can read in the October issue of *Watchman Magazine* — www.watchmanmag.com.)

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Christ Crucified

by Tom Holland



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“When Thou Doest Alms”

Jim McDonald

When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, That they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee (Matt 6:2-3).

Almsgiving is part of being a Christian. To love one’s neighbor as oneself requires almsgiving in certain circumstances. We are to be “rich in good works” and “as we have opportunity, do that which is good toward all men” (1 Tim. 6:18; Gal. 6:10). Jesus went about doing good and we are to follow his example (Acts 10:38).

Early Christians were known for their almsgiving. Dorcas is remembered as having gained the love and respect of those around her for she kept busy making garments and giving them to widows (Acts 9:39). She is described as being full of good works and alms deeds (Acts 9:36). She illustrated what it means to practice pure religion (Jas. 1:27). In the infancy of the church, early chapters in Acts tell how all who were possessors of houses or lands sold them and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet and distribution was made to all, according as any man had need (Acts 2:44f; 4:32-35). The New Testament records how disciples in Antioch, having been informed of a need among Judean churches, sent relief to them by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:30). During his third journey Paul not only was busy preaching, but also writing Gentile churches to make up a collection for poor saints in Jerusalem, a request which had been made to him by the brethren there (1 Cor. 16:1f; 2 Cor 8, 9; Gal. 2:10). When he concluded his journey, messengers from the various churches accompanied him to Jerusalem to deliver relief to saints there (Acts 24:17).

- Almsgiving is a necessary part of the Christian’s life. However, we must always make certain that our good deeds are done with the right motive. If alms are given that we might receive praise from men, they profit us nothing

with God. We are commanded that we sound not a trumpet before us. This is obviously a hyperbole for it is not likely that one would give gifts with the accompaniment of actual trumpets. Those who are boastful of things they do are said to “Trumpet” their deeds. East Texas language describes such a one as “tooting his own horn.” In alms deeds, we must avoid calling attention to our selves.

- Thus the Lord says, “When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” All know that the body is controlled by one’s mind. Yet, it is possible that the different parts of our body may function as they are designed to do without the body “being conscious” of what that part is doing. We must be so careful in our alms deeds, that it is almost an unconscious act with us. We know in some instances that doing good requires that others know it. And all must “so let their lights shine before men that others seeing their good works, may glorify their father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). But to give so that men might praise our deeds, brings the only reward we will get from such gifts, the praise of men. The praise we should covet and seek is the praise from God. We don’t have to trumpet anything before him!

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Unity Within the Local Congregation

Ron Daly

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said, “I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

A careful reading of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians demonstrates that the congregation was full of problems. One of the problems was divisions — separation from one another by being followers of men and teaching and believing doctrinal heresy (1 Cor. 3, 15). Paul did not write to them in order to say everyone has the right to believe and practice whatever he desires, but he wrote to rebuke them and to encourage them to correct their problems. He made a plea for unity! What things can be done to attain, maintain, and promote unity within the local congregation?

First of all, as Paul himself implied, people should be taught to respect the “name” or authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. If people do not accept the authority of the Lord, how on earth will they seek to be united on his will? They will not! “Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). People who respect the authority of Christ will seek to achieve whatever the Lord has prescribed as a goal, and unity is such a goal. When people are in a state of anarchy, each person is a law to himself and there will be no unity, only chaos (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

Second, love must reign and be the bond that ties each person together. Paul said in Colossians 3:14,15, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.” If the members of a local congregation do not love one another, there will be no unity, only jealousy, strife,

anger, resentment, gossip, slander, and everything else that pleases the devil. But, where genuine concern for the goodwill and spiritual well-being of people resides, there will be unity!

Third, there has to be the desire to have unity! Paul told the Ephesians to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Unity doesn’t just happen, one must work for it.

We must strive to keep unity. When a congregation recognizes just how pleasant unity is and how disheartening division is, each member will make every effort to seek and maintain unity! “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). God, through Paul, says that saints are to “watch out for people who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). God’s people are to strive for unity and they are to oppose those who create division!

Fourth, there must be strict adherence to Christ regardless of the consequences. Paul sharply rebuked the Corinthians because they were followers of men and not of Christ. The work of men should be appreciated, admired, and encouraged, but Christ is the all in all. Men (preachers, elders, college professors, magazine editors, etc.) are often wrong, therefore, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord” (Jer. 17:5). God gives the increase within the local congregation (1 Cor. 3:5-9). Strive for unity in the congregation.

From The Word of Truth, September 21, 2003



Court Room Decorum

Larry Ray Hafley

Thom Marshall, who writes a column for the *Houston Chronicle*, took a newspaper into a court room and prepared to read it while awaiting proceedings. Judge Ross, said, "Put the paper up, please, sir. Put the paper up" (A37, 12/1/00). The judge did not deem it proper to permit the reading of a newspaper while court was in session. (Well, imagine how it would look if several did so.) Marshall was impressed with the judge's manner and with his desire to keep the court room a place of dignified decorum.

Several years ago, a lady brought three or four of her children to services during a meeting. While I preached, the children lay in the floor with their school books and papers and did their homework. It would not have been allowed in that judge's court room. It should not have been tolerated in a church house, either. Children old enough to do homework with books, pencils, and notebooks are old enough to listen to preaching. Would a school teacher allow a student to do his Bible class lesson while she was speaking? (Even if she did, the *ACLU* would sue the parents for allowing their children to bring a Bible into a school room! It is alright, you understand, to distribute condoms and to bring pornographic literature into the class room, but not a Bible.)

But, I digress; back to the just judge's order in the court. Journalist Marshall observed Judge Ross's reaction to a defendant who was dressed very informally:

Not long after putting my paper up that morning, I had heard him instruct a casually attired fellow to return in thirty days with a progress report, and *to come dressed for court instead of a day at the beach. Appropriate grooming and garb are symbols of respect for the court* (Emphasis mine, LRH).

No, we are not going to establish a dress code for the church. We are very proud and thankful for some of our

hard working members who have rushed straight from work in their disheveled clothing in order to be at worship. Some of our youngsters have come from ball fields, having left a game in progress, to be at Bible study. Their attire at such times is a badge of belief, a gauge of godliness. We thank God for them!

However, the judge is to be commended for his view that "grooming and garb are symbols of respect for the court."

Sometimes the children of the world are wiser than the sons of God. Again, we are not advocating a style show. We need faith to be seen, not fashion to make a scene. "Modest apparel," should be just that, fitting, appropriate, not gaudy or ostentatious, but that which identifies one who professes to be spiritually minded (1 Tim. 2:9).

When Joseph was summoned out of prison to appear before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, "he shaved himself, and changed his (clothing), and came in unto Pharaoh" (Gen. 41:14). Judge Ross approves of such respect. Jesus, our Judge, does too.

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Episcopalians Permit What God Calls An Abomination

Tom O'Neal

According to the August 6, 2003 issue of *The Tampa Tribune*, the Episcopalian Denomination has voted to allow a bishop who is gay. In the days when I grew up he would be called a “queer.” V. Gene Robinson is the first gay bishop in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

Robinson is 56 years old, divorced, and since 1989 has lived with Mark Andrew who is age 50. Eight hundred delegates from across the nation voted to approve Robinson as bishop by a two to one vote. Senior bishops in New Hampshire voted 62 to 43 to approve.

In a way it should not surprise people with the Episcopal or Anglican Church approving a sodomite as a bishop. Church history tells of how this very church was started when Henry VIII pulled off from the Catholic Church and started the Anglican Church because he could not get permission from the then Pope of Rome, Pope Julius II, to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn, an English girl who was fresh from the French court.

Robinson may be approved by the Episcopalians but not by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to say a bishop must be the husband of one wife, which Robinson does not have (1 Tim. 3:1-2).

When the men of Sodom tried to have sexual relations with the men (angels) that came to the house of Lot, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah so completely off the face of the earth that it is not certain today where those cities were (Gen. 19).

God through Moses told Israel, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13).

During the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, in Ju-

dah, “there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel” (1 Kings 14:24). It was the good king, Asa, reigning over Judah “that took away the sodomites out of the land” (1 Kings 15:12). When Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, came to the throne, the “remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land” (1 Kings 22:46). Later, when the good king, Josiah, came to the throne of Judah, “he brake down the houses of the sodomites” (2 Kings 23:7).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said, “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom. 1:26-27). In verse 33 Paul said, “such things are worthy of death.”

In 1 Timothy 1:10, the Apostle Paul put “them that defile themselves with mankind” in a list of other sins that were “contrary to sound doctrine.”

In Jude 7, Jude tells the end of sodomites when he said, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Despite all that society says, men are not born homosexuals; they choose to be such. Much of what is being said today is not an effort to gain acceptance within society. It is a desire for political power. Politicians are afraid to go against them now; you know what it will be down the road.

Queers, homosexuals, sodomites (choose your term) were in ancient times just like they are today. It was a com-

Ordaining the Openly Bishop

Jay Horsley

The news coverage in every format (print, TV, radio, electronic) has been full of reports of the “openly gay bishop” that Episcopalians in Vermont elected and that the national conference confirmed in subsequent elections at their annual convention.

The story had everything that the media loves: first, and most importantly, a handsome, polite, pious, loving father, who is a homosexual. Aren’t all homosexuals handsome, polite, pious, loving fathers? (Or at least potential fathers if those evil fundamentalists would just drop their antiquated and uninformed objections to homosexual adoptions.) We know by experience that open homosexuals are seldom actually like this. Openly homosexual men are the most promiscuous and sexually depraved group that can be found. But having found this one who does not appear so is such a great treasure — a find that the opportunity to present him to the world as representative of the whole could not be passed by.

mon practice among the Gentile world. William Barclay tells us that of the first fifteen Caesars, only one was not a sodomite. Writing to Gentiles, the Apostle Paul said some of them had been “effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind” (1 Cor. 6:9) but that they had been “washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). This tells us (1) sodomites can change their life style, and (2) they can be washed in the blood of Christ upon their repentance and be saved from their sin. This is the hope that the gospel brings to them.

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This sorry story also has feckless “conservatives” who did not have the political power within the very liberal Episcopalian Church to stop the ordination of such a one as bishop. The media loves when conservatives lose fights. The coverage of Southern Baptist conservatives routing the “moderates” in theological fights over belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures does not receive sympathetic coverage like this.

We wonder just how “conservative” these folks are who have for so long have been an active part of a denomination so long devoid of Scripture or reason. Acceptance of depravity is not a new thing among them. Over ten years ago the “Right Reverend” Robert Shanahan, Episcopal Bishop of Arizona, said, “Episcopalians are not fundamentalists, we place more faith in our ability to think. Our sources of authority are scripture, tradition and reason, and sometimes the first two are the most difficult to reckon with” (Tom Turner, “Homosexuality and the Church: Gay acceptance, ordination, split nation’s faithful,” *The Arizona Daily Star*, Sunday, May 30, 1993). Notice that the “Right Reverend’s” troubles are with Scripture and tradition. These are rebukes and restraints to their current “reason”ings. That’s the problem right there for them.

Overshadowed by the fight over the bishop was other news about homosexuality at this same Episcopal conference. The Episcopal News Service reports that the “cognate Committee on Prayer Book, Liturgy and Music offered a compromise resolution [for] rites for possible inclusion in Enriching Our Worship by means of which support and blessing may be expressed for same-sex relationships with the permission of the ecclesiastical authority” (<http://gc2003.episcopalchurch.org/gcdaily>). In plain English this is writing an official church service for homosexual marriages — including blessings, prayers and vows.

Why would they do this? They would do so, the same story stated, because “previous conventions’ resolutions

affirming homosexuals' 'full and equal claim . . . upon the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church'" and saying that their monogamous, non-celibate unions are expected to be "characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God." The resolution also "recognizes that such relationships exist throughout the church" (gcdaily).

They admit that they have openly active homosexual unions among their members and that's just fine as far as their church is concerned. They are trying to draw up "wedding" ceremonies for them. Also, Episcopalians also already have openly homosexual priests in their church.

So by what logic can they exclude an openly homosexual bishop? A few try to say "The Scriptures." But whatever excuse gets around the Scriptures for homosexual unions and priests gets around the Scripture for the bishop. Their consistency in falsehood overcomes their devotion to the truth of Scripture.

Speaking of homosexual unions ten years ago, the "Right Reverend" Shanahan said, "I would have to say that's not appropriate for where we are in the church today, but it could happen in the future." And indeed it has. What else will become "appropriate" in the future?

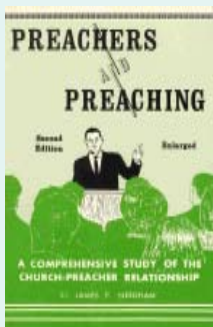
In Romans 1:27, 28 the apostle Paul described how the pagan world descended into homosexuality. Verses 29-31 catalogued the other sins that followed. If an openly homosexual can be a bishop, why not an open practitioner of any of the sins listed? Just fill in the blank:

Will we read in the near future, "Today, the _____ Church appointed an openly _____ bishop"? Won't it wonderful too?

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Preachers and Preaching

by James P. Needham



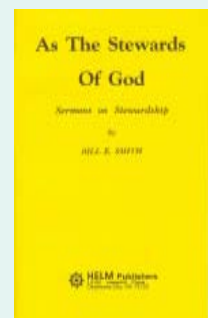
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“Do It My Way”

H. Osby Weaver

(Looking back at attitudes and arguments that brethren advanced years ago, in a vain effort to justify erroneous po-

sitions, should cause us to inquire as to whether we see ourselves today, following the same path? As an example; an article published in a church bulletin, entitled “Do It My Way” occurred approximately fifty years ago.)

Judging from what some write or publish today, they must believe that silliness is holiness and stupidity is piety. This article entitled, “Do It My Way,” appeared in the church bulletin and had for its opening remark, a quotation from a supposed, “outstanding preacher” who said, “We as a people have won so many arguments and lost so many souls.” That may sound, “catchy” and “cute” to the light hearted, and profound and deep to the shallow, but properly analyzed it is just a byline of Satan, equal to the old sectarian prattle about one church is just as good as another. The implication is that we have lost souls because we have won arguments, or we have lost souls because we were involved in arguments, and we might have won more souls if we had lost more arguments. If this is not what they are inferring, then we fail to see its meaning. Yet that attitude is in severe opposition to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, and contrary to every move that has preserved the purity of the church of God upon this earth today.

If it had not been for the willingness of the pioneer preachers of the restoration era to unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and carry the fight to the enemy, we very likely would have no church of the Lord today, in which to win argument or to save souls. Every inch of ground gained was done so by polemic war. They were well aware that the church of Christ and denominationalism were inveterate enemies of each other, and gospel preachers and the modern clergy of that day had little in common. They were keenly conscious of the fact that the very moment that the church ceases to fight, it just as well prepare to die for such will be its inglorious end. Hence, they took on all comers, asking no quarter and giving none, and the church grew as a result, as it had not done since the first half century of its existence.

Having been the happy recipients of the blessing emanating from such bitter conflicts and glorious victories,

preachers are not now sanctimoniously announcing that “we as a people have won so many arguments and lost so many souls.” Then from the spineless, half converts among us, more concerned with policy and good will than principal and divine approval, there arises a choral anthem in their behalf.

We wonder how many more souls Paul would have saved if he had the advantage of such sage advice? He knew no more than to be “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16). Perhaps more souls would have been saved in Athens if he had not disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day, with them that met him (Acts 17:17). What a pity that he did not know that he would have saved more souls if he had one less argument or refrained from disputes altogether. Jude should have said, “Contend not for the faith, once delivered to the saints, lest you win arguments and lose souls.”

After quoting this “outstanding preacher,” the author went on to say, “the Lord commanded *us* to go preach the gospel — doesn’t make any difference if we think this is the best way, or that is the best way. We had better do it the best way we believe possible, at the same time realize there may be other ways that are better for others to use.” *We* will have no defense when we stand before the Lord and say, “Lord, I just didn’t know which way I ought to do it and it took so much of my time to decide, that I didn’t have any time or money left.” This appeared in a bulletin published by a church of Christ, the famous author “adapted” was signed to it. We do not know who wrote it. It could have been written by a digressive in the Christian church attempting to justify the “United Christian Missionary Society” or it could have come from the pen of a digressive in the church of Christ trying to justify the “Sponsoring Church Missionary Society” or the “Herald of Truth Missionary Society.”

The writer says that if we stand before the Lord having done nothing, “we will have no defense.” We are agreed on that point, but what about the fellow who stands before the Lord having done the wrong thing? Does he have any

Does EVERY Christian Have to Speak in Tongues?

Paul K. Williams

Following is the reply I gave to an e-mail question.

26 May 2000

Dear Ariete,

You wrote:

My question is this Does EVERY Christian have to speak in tongues as evidence of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit or do the other gifts apply as evidence?

My Answer

There are four things which must be understood in order for this question to be answered. They are:

1. What speaking in tongues was.
2. Why this gift was given.
3. How it and all other gifts were given.
4. Why and when the gifts ceased.

Your question assumes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for Christians today. This will be shown to be untrue as I answer the other questions.

1. What speaking in tongues was. Speaking in tongues (or in a tongue) was speaking foreign languages by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues,

as the Spirit was giving them utterance." Verse 6 says, "And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language." 1 Corinthians 14:10: There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul instructs the one speaking in tongues to be quiet in the assembly unless there is someone who can interpret the foreign language into the language of the people. NOTE: In 1 Corinthians 13:1 Paul writes: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels . . ." He does not say that it is possible to speak with the tongues of angels, just as he does not say it is possible to have all knowledge and move mountains (v. 2). He is saying that *even if* he could do those things, they would be nothing without love.

I say confidently that no one is able to speak in tongues today by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What people are doing is making meaningless sounds.

2. Why this gift was given. The spiritual gifts were given for two purposes: (1) To reveal the word of God (gifts of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy). (2) To provide proof (signs) that the speaker was bringing the word of God (healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues). Speaking in tongues was a sign. "These signs will accom-

argument in his favor? What defense does he have?

It doesn't make any difference if we think this is the best way or that's the best way. We wonder if, "way" here, includes organizations? Does it make any difference which organization preaches the gospel? If not, what's wrong with a "Missionary Society"? If the organization does not matter, then by what reason does one insist upon the right of the church to build a "Benevolent Society" if it is wrong for it to build a "Missionary Society"? If the church is its own missionary society because it has been ordered to preach the gospel, why is it not its own benevolent society, seeing that

it has been ordered to practice certain benevolence? Those who insist upon the right of the church to build and maintain benevolent societies, such as the institutional orphan home, cannot do so without embracing the principle of the missionary society. They seek to avoid this consequence but the ghost of it haunts them and will continue to do so until they have either given up the benevolent society or embraced the missionary society. In the not too distant future, we predict that they will do the latter. They only

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pany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-19). It caused the people on Pentecost to say, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12). Peter referred to it as proof that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). It convinced the Jews with Peter that the Gentiles should be baptized (Acts 10:44-48).

This gift was not given to make men spiritual. Those with gifts at Corinth were not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1-11).

3. How it and all other gifts were given. (a) The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given first in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was promised by Jesus to the apostles (Acts 1:4-5), which they received a few days later (Acts 2:1-4). It was the outpouring of the overwhelming influence of the Holy Spirit, and it was immediately accompanied by signs. The only other occurrence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his friends in Acts 10:44-48. This was a sign that the Gentiles can receive the gospel just as the Jews could.

It is clear that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not given to others. When Peter described what happened at the house of Cornelius he said, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16). Peter saw that this was an unusual occurrence and could only be compared with what happened “at the beginning” of the church in Acts 2. Those who seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit seek something that is not promised to us and is not given to us. It was given first to the apostles, then to the first Gentiles to be converted. That is all.

(b) The rest of the disciples in the days of the apostles received various gifts of the Holy Spirit (the list is in 1 Cor. 12:8-10) when the apostles laid their hands on them. Acts 8:14-18 makes this very clear: “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money” (see also Acts 19:1-6). In both cases the disciples had to wait to receive the Holy Spirit. They did not receive this gift when they were baptized. They received it only when the apostles laid their hands on them.

4. Why and when the gifts ceased. The gifts stopped

because they were no longer necessary, and because there were no longer apostles to lay hands on disciples. The two purposes of gifts were to reveal and confirm (prove by signs) the word of God. Paul wrote: “For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:9-10). At the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the entire gospel (New Testament) had not been revealed.

Therefore those who were revealing the gospel “knew in part” and “prophesied in part.” There was coming a time, however, when the entire gospel would be revealed and finally confirmed. So Paul said that “when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.” That means that when the entire gospel was revealed and confirmed, no more prophecies would come, and the gifts to confirm the prophecies would not be needed any more. Therefore, “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:8).

The reason why God does not give miraculous gifts today, including speaking in tongues, is that the perfect has come. Jude wrote: “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). By the time Jude wrote, “the faith” had been completed and handed down to the saints by God. We have the whole thing. “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3). There is no need for prophecy or miraculous knowledge. We have everything in the New Testament. There is no need for signs to prove the revelation. That has been done. John wrote: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). The written revelation contains everything we need. There is no need for more revelation or for more signs.

I can certainly understand why you asked your question. The things people do today are strange and honest. Earnest people who seek those gifts are disappointed because they are not satisfied by the emotionally induced nonsense which passes for speaking in tongues. They do not receive the gift of speaking in tongues because God does not give it today.

Thank you for your question.

Yours in the Master’s service,

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Christ and the Church

John Isaac Edwards

Paul introduces the theme of our study when he said, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning *Christ and the church*” (Eph. 5:32). Every generation must be taught and re-taught concerning Christ and the church!

Relationship Between the Two

Failure to see the connection between Christ and the church has caused many to overlook the importance of the church.

1. Christ is the head and the church is the body.

Paul’s church letter portrays Christ as “the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). If you think you can separate Christ and the church without any problem, try separating your head from your body and see how you get along!

2. Christ is the King and the church is the kingdom.

Christ is “the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). The church is set forth as a kingdom as Jesus used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19. Implied in the term “kingdom” is a king, and you can’t have a king without a kingdom!

3. Christ is the Savior and the church is the saved.

Paul spoke concerning Christ, “and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). There is but one Savior as the Bible speaks of “a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). According to Acts 2:47, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Some seem to think there are people saved by Christ who are not members of the church of Christ. The only way one could be saved outside the Lord’s church is if one could be saved without a Savior!

4. Christ is the builder and the church is the building.

Christ and the church go together as a builder and a building. Jesus declared, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18), and the church is “God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). In Christ we “are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22).

5. Christ is the husband and the church is the bride.

As Paul discussed the husband-wife relationship, he said, “I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Paul told the church at Corinth, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). Just as a husband and wife are “joined together” (Matt. 19:6), Christ and the church are coupled together! As a bride takes on the name of her husband, the church wears the name of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Acts 11:26), “a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9).

6. Christ is the foundation and the church is the house.

It is written, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). The Holy Spirit revealed, “the house of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Peter penned, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5). You wouldn’t think about taking your house off its foundation would you? This is what you do when you say, “Give me Christ; not the church.”

Lessons To Be Learned

There are some crucial lessons everyone needs to learn from the fact that Christ and the church go together.

1. To do to one is to do to the other.

Saul was said to have “persecuted the church” in Galatians 1:13, yet when the Lord appeared unto Saul, he said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). Persecution against the church is persecution against Christ! In the judgment scene of Matthew 25, Jesus said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

2. To preach one is to preach the other.

Some say, “Just preach Christ. Don’t preach about the church of Christ.” This is an impossibility! Acts 8 finds Philip preaching Christ. Tell us, Philip, what were you preaching when you preached Christ? “. . . preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). You can’t preach Christ without saying something about the kingdom, the church!

Brethren who want a “new hermeneutic” are not to be outdone. The ACLU and similar groups want “a new hermeneutic” for the first amendment to the Constitution. For nearly 200 years leaders of our nation saw no conflict in giving honor to “Almighty God” in every state constitution, displaying the Ten Commandments, numberless references to God, the Bible, and Christianity. While they believed in separation of church and state (as does this writer), they did not believe in separation of God and country. They viewed God and the Bible as friends.

The new breed interprets the Constitution as *hostile* toward the Bible. An attorney who prosecuted against displaying the Ten Commandments in Alabama’s capitol building said, “Our concern . . . has been compliance with the Constitution.” That means for nearly 200 years nobody was in compliance till they enlightened us with their “new hermeneutic”! Their new interpretation of “complying with the Constitution” is a disguise with which to get their humanism in the door.

Some brethren have found the old hermeneutic too confining. They can’t find authority to fellowship the denominations or have their social gospel projects under it so they cry for a new hermeneutic. This new hermeneutic is the disguise with which they get the social gospel and fellowshiping the denominations through the door.

Creating Prejudice

The July, 2003 edition of *Yokefellow* (publication of Memphis School of Preaching) was mainly devoted to soliciting money from individuals and congregations for a church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee to build a building. The famine in Judea (when there would be a scarcity of food) was used to justify churches in sending donations for a building. Food is necessary for the life of each individual. A building is not necessary for the existence of a congregation and is hardly a benevolent need, though it is an authorized tool.

To help us see the urgent need in this town of only 13,000 which has six congregations, we are told that two are “anti-cooperation/orphan homes” and one is “anti-Bible study (Sunday School).”

First, I have spoken on two occasions for congregations that oppose separate Bible classes. It never occurred to me to call them “anti-Bible study” for one of them had an afternoon session in which they asked me to address the subject from the Bible. In their assemblies they study the Bible. They may oppose Sunday School but they are not “anti-Bible study.” This was merely an attempt to create prejudice and help convince brethren to send money.

Second, because some brethren believe in *one kind* of co-

operation (each congregation working concurrently toward a common goal, which was taught in the *Gospel Advocate* before brethren invented the “sponsoring church” concept), that doesn’t mean they are “anti-cooperation.” This would be parallel to referring to the co-editors of *Yokefellow* (Garland Elkins, Curtis Cates) as being “anti-music” because they believe in only *one kind* of music in worship (vocal). Or being “anti-church” because they believe in only *one church*. Or being “anti-baptism” because they believe in only *one baptism*. It doesn’t play as well to state accurately that some brethren believe in concurrent cooperation and hold the “sponsoring church” concept to be contrary to the Scriptures. It helps to create a “straw man” (a perceived enemy) when you are trying to raise money.

The same can be said for “anti-orphan home.” I do not know anyone who opposes homes for orphans. I do know brethren who conscientiously oppose congregational support for any man-made benevolent institution or of those institutions soliciting funds from churches. Because the editors of *Yokefellow* oppose churches of Christ contributing to a Catholic orphan home, does that make them “anti-orphan home”? If someone were to so accuse they would cry that to call them by this term is prejudicial, unfair, and a misrepresentation. Well, what is it when they do likewise and teach their students to do the same?

On the back page of *Yokefellow* was an article refuting a misrepresentation of the school, titled “Evil Surmisings?” Irony, there.

Duh!

Every generation of young people has its lingo of catchy terms that stand for a complete idea. When something is overwhelmingly obvious and someone is being dense (unable or unwilling to see the obvious), it is popular to give them a “Duhhhh!” And that says it all.

After Jesus healed the blind man (John 9) the Pharisees put him through an inquisition about his healing, asking numerous questions but refusing the obvious. The man said, “Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened my eyes . . . Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

If this man had been a young person of today, he would have given them the old “Duhhh!”

Halloween — Religious Significance?

There is disagreement among religious folks, both in and out of the church, over whether it’s okay to observe Halloween. An old timer told me that when he was young Halloween didn’t have any religious significance at all. He

“Instrumental Music” continued from page 2

Rubel Shelly is a good example of this change. He explained that the Woodmont church in Nashville, where he preaches, has no intention of adding instrumental music to its worship and that he would oppose its introduction where he is. However, he added, “I am an unabashed defender of our a capella legacy. But when someone wants me to go further and to condemn to hell someone who doesn’t agree with my view, or to criticize congregations that choose to use instruments because they believe it will assist their outreach in a community different from mine, I have no interest in pursuing the discussion.”

The bottom line from this article is evident: Many of those who still use a capella music in their worship no longer see it as a doctrinal issue. They are not willing to treat using instrumental music in worship like they would treat infant baptism, sprinkling for baptism, burning candles as an act of religious worship, and other unauthorized additions to worship. Rather, they want to treat instrumental music in worship as the personal choice of the churches of Christ for their worship. Brethren such as Shelly are unwilling to characterize as sinful those who worship with mechanical instruments. However, Jesus spoke of worship that is unauthorized saying, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9). The unwillingness to join hands with Jesus in condemning worship that has no greater authority than the commandments of men says something about one’s loyalty to Jesus.

John Ellas, director of the Center for Church Growth in Houston, Texas said, “When it comes to instrumental music, the vast majority who have changed their views still support using a cappella. Others who would like to blame evangelism, relevancy and meeting needs as the culprit for the introduction of instruments of music miss the real theological shift that has taken place.”

In the accompanying editorial on the subject, Bailey McBride described these churches introducing mechanical instruments in worship as possibly “a trend among urban churches to be more tolerant of instrumental music” (an understatement). He then explains the *Christian Chronicle*’s reporting of the news saying:

The *Chronicle*’s role as a newspaper leaves no real options.

said, “We just went out and turned over a few outhouses. Some folks got mad enough to *lose* their religion but nobody got *more* religious because of it.”

Ahhh, the good ol’ days.

We must report news of churches of Christ even when we lament the news or question a practice as divisive. We must report the events even when we know that some consider reporting as endorsing. We must report the truth about practices among us even though we know that our fellowship more often divides than enters into a serious dialogue to understand issues. And we cannot “write off” any congregation. Judgment is in the hands of God, not the pens of editors.

Although paying tribute to the position of a capella music in worship and pleading with brethren not to introduce instruments because they will be divisive, the editor concludes by saying, “We must love brothers and sisters so much we can disagree with them while we keep discussing an issue.”

If we could love each other without breaking fellowship over instrumental music in worship in 2003, why would that not work in the late nineteenth century? Why did we divide over instruments of music in worship and church support of missionary societies in the nineteenth century if we could agree to disagree without breaking fellowship?

The *Chronicle* editorial confirms that a trend is developing among institutional churches — a trend to put instruments of music in worship in a Romans 14 category, making it an issue which should not break the fellowship of the saints.

As I read this article in *Christian Chronicle*, I could not help asking, “Wonder where we are on these issues?” If a church introduced instruments in its worship, would the following occur:

- Have some say that this is not a salvation issue like baptism?
- Have some condemn those writers who called to our attention those churches who introduced mechanical instruments of music in their worship?
- Have some who would say that we could have an on-going fellowship in spite of our doctrinal disagreements just as they argued on divorce and remarriage?
- Have some who say this is just another paper fuss among us?
- Have some who would charge those who oppose instrumental music in worship with being “guardians of the orthodoxy,” “brotherhood watchdogs,” and “jingoists”?

I suspect that many of us have not preached our sermons on instrumental music in worship in some time. Remember that God’s people must constantly teach the fundamentals

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In Memory

Weldon Doolittle Thomas

September 13, 1926-August 30, 2003
J. Larry Stinson



Weldon Doolittle (Little Red) Thomas passed from this life on August 30, 2003.

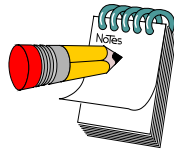
My wife, Pat, and I knew Weldon for approximately thirty-eight years. We first met Weldon when he was preaching at a small congregation in Barlow, Kentucky on the banks of the Mississippi River, when we attended a Sunday morning service with Frank and Marcella Melton, now of Florida. The service was followed by an afternoon picnic where the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers join. Weldon was a little man with a big heart. My few notes here reflect my sincere effort to relate my sense of pleasure, pride, confidence, and joy in having known, studied, and worshiped with him and my sincere loss in his departure.

For the record, Weldon was a past state commander for the Disabled American Veterans; a United State Navy Veteran of World War II; a “full time” and “part-time” minister; attended Freed Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee and Florida Christian (later Florida College) in Tampa, Florida. He received his Bachelors’ Degree from Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. We became acquainted with Weldon when he was approximately thirty-five to forty years old. He was a contemporary of the giants of the scriptures that we like to refer to such as James P. Miller and Irvan Lee, both of whom grew up in close proximity to Weldon’s hometown, Hazel, Kentucky/Tennessee. Weldon assisted in the establishment of many smaller congregations of the church in West Kentucky. In addition to Barlow, Kentucky, Weldon preached in Union City, Tennessee, Paris Landing, Tennessee, Murray and Mayfield, Kentucky and was instrumental in encouragement to these congregations. Weldon was quite an individual! — “in his day,” a very sharp, faithful, smart, and confident man — he could be considered even “odd” by the world’s standards. I am reminded, as I pin these words, that oftentimes, the Lord chooses “odd men” to do his work. I do firmly believe that Weldon was one of his chosen men — I certainly hope so.

Time passes so swiftly for all of us, it seems only yesterday we met Weldon and went on a picnic with the Meltons and now it was only yesterday we saw Weldon for the last time on this earth. As the old song goes, “Precious Memories” flood my soul as I close these thoughts regarding my friend and brother, now gone to his rest.

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Quips & Quotes



they jeopardize the national church's ability to remain within the Anglican family, says AAC president the Rev. David Anderson" (USA Today [October 7, 2003], 6D).

A Battle For a Church's Soul

"The Episcopal Church — the church of the Founding Fathers and 11 U.S. presidents, the one with a sanctuary standing tall on thousands of Main Streets — may be heading for a theological civil war.

"Today, a conservative wing of the denomination gathers in Dallas to repudiate the national leadership, Episcopal Church USA, and brand many of the clergy and lay leaders as apostates — people who have abandoned their faith.

"The dissenting group, the American Anglican Council (AAC), was outraged when two-thirds of the bishops and delegations to the church's tri-annual national meeting voted in August to affirm an openly gay bishop and to accept that some parishes may bless same-sex unions.

"If the AAC splits the church, it may be the most critical such schism since the Baptists divided North and South over slavery. It sounds an alarm to Lutherans, Methodists and other mainline denominations that are facing the same tense questions of sexuality and faith.

"The Episcopal Church is to liberal Protestantism what California is to the rest of the country: Things happen there that they know will happen in the rest of the churches,' says anthropologist Susan Harding, a professor at the University of California-Santa Cruz.

It could cost the Episcopal church USA the financial and evangelical might of hundreds of the wealthiest churches in the world and prompt bitter and costly battles pew by pew, property by property, pension by pension across the country.

"The Associated Press calculated that the denomination receives \$2.14 billion in annual offerings from 7,364 U.S. congregations. Its assets and properties are worth incalculable billions. Already, the AAC claims hundreds of parishes are holding back their national pledges.

"And it would have worldwide ramifications, shaking the soul of the 77-million-member global Anglican Communion. The Episcopal Church USA is the American branch of the Anglican Church.

"The Episcopal Church USA's actions are 'thoroughly unbiblical, unconstitutional and totally unacceptable,' and