

The Gospel Then – The Gospel Now

The unchangeable Gospel is being changed by men. God and Christ are being dethroned by those who claim to honor Them and who claim to be Their very own. But “the way of the transgressors is hard” and those who “preach any other gospel” stand to be “accursed.” Shall we be so ungrateful as to walk therein and by another “gospel” be condemned?

“The Gospel Then,” that is, in its beginning, was the distinctive message which revealed God’s scheme of redemption, serving as “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel Facts set forth by the apostle Paul are: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The Gospel also has commands to be obeyed. Paul said: “...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (2 Thess. 1:7-9). What was said by an inspired man THEN, is just as true NOW as it was THEN.

Even though it is clearly stated that the curse of God would rest upon those who would “pervert” or “preach any other gospel” (Gal. 1:7-9), a number of stern warnings of departure from God’s word are set forth in the New Testament. Therefore, though saddened by it, we should not be surprised at what we are seeing NOW. By this we mean a so-called or perverted Gospel, which is not the true Gospel which was given by God THEN. The saving Gospel has been perverted by men, while being set forth as the true Gospel of Christ. One cannot have the approval of the Father and the Son, by means of a gospel which is not according to “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

In the above we have noted a few things about the gospel as it was set forth to men in its beginning, in the first century. Now, for the purpose of comparison, we want to consider the Gospel many centuries this side of the first. While we will not be discussing the Gospel as it is in the minds of many today, we want to go back several years, but in the lifetime of many of us.

The Gospel THEN – 50 Years Ago

Early on, even in the First Century, men had begun to pervert the Gospel. John said, “...try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jno. 4:1). Our Lord warned of false prophets (Matt. 7:15). As centuries passed the Gospel was perverted more and more in the minds of men. Though the Gospel did not go out of existence, and never will, it was so often kept hidden from the minds of men.

With the beginning of The Protestant Reformation, there was an increase in interest in knowing God's will and the Gospel. Though there was great interest in reforming the Catholic Church, the quest for the whole truth stopped short of a return to the Gospel as it was THEN, in the beginning. The gospel in which men believed was a perverted one, which ceased to be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Any hope given was a false one.

In the early 1800s a number of men in England and in America began an earnest effort to return to the true Gospel. Here in America the interest soared as men began to shed the shackles of denominationalism and turn to the truth as they learned it. People referred to the great revival in spiritual interest as "The Restoration Movement." Great success was achieved as multiplied thousands rendered obedience to the commands of the Gospel as people did in New Testament times. With the passing of time error would rear its ugly head to confuse those who were working diligently to extricate themselves from the man-made churches and the doctrines which were taught.

Now, A Look At THEN — Fifty Years Ago

When I became a part of the body of Christ in August 1953, things were far different with regard to the Gospel, the Lord and His church, when compared with today.

There were false teachers then, to be sure, but they were so few in comparison with now. The major problem causing division then was the care of orphans and congregational cooperation. There was, however, unity in general with regard to most doctrinal matters. We shall give a few examples.

DENOMINATIONALISM. The acceptance of and fellowship with denominations was virtually unknown among brethren. Preachers, Bible teachers and the majority of members were unafraid to point out the errors of the man-made churches, and evidence of an affinity for the denominations was very seldom known. Much preaching and teaching was done on the distinctiveness of the one true church, as is so clearly taught in the New Testament. Many from the denominations were being converted by the true Gospel. People could see the difference between what God's word teaches and what men taught. People were urged to go back to the Book and walk in "the old paths" of Jeremiah 6:16, and many did so. The undiluted Gospel was showing its power to change the hearts of men, as it can today.

DIRECT OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Remember when most of our brethren took the position that the Holy Spirit influences man only through God's word, and never apart from it? It was the Pentecostal and Holiness Churches which were seen as claiming a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The Baptist were known for their belief that the Holy Spirit had to operate upon the heart of man before he could believe. Our brethren were generally known for looking to God's word as the basis of their belief and practice. They took the position that "Where the Bible speaks we speak and where the Bible is silent we are silent." Belief in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit implied that God's word was not all-sufficient.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. Divorce and remarriage among members of the church seldom occurred. Very few took the position that there was any other reason than that of Matthew 19:9 ("fornication") for divorce and remarriage. And the privilege or remarriage was granted only to the innocent party.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. The God-approved work of the church was limited to three areas: Evangelism, Edification, and Benevolence. There was no authority found in the New Testament for the church to engage in other works. Brethren in most cases looked for a

“Thus saith the Lord” before engaging in activities and practices.

SCRIPTURAL WORSHIP. It was commonly agreed that there were five acts of worship authorized in God’s word. These “Acts of reverence paid to God by man,” were: Singing, Praying, Giving, the Lord’s Supper, and the teaching and hearing of God’s word. The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship was seen among the denominations, and was considered as a: “Transgression of the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9). While worship was an exalted privilege for God’s people, and could be a joyful experience, it was not looked upon as a period of entertaining the people.

THE GOSPEL NOW — AS MANY SEE IT

The Gospel as many see it NOW, is as different when compared with the original as set forth in the New Testament, as night is from day. Even when compared with the Gospel fifty years ago, the difference is no less than humongous. It is hard to see how that any knowledgeable and honest person could deny this startling fact. The question should naturally arise: “To what can this change be attributed?” Can it be that God’s word, the Gospel, has changed? No! Surely, no member of the church would answer in the affirmative, even though some employ various tactics to lead people to think so. No! God’s word has not changed and never will (Matt. 24:35). Much of the error of today, outside the church, is based upon the erroneous claim of continued revelation.

If God’s word hasn’t changed, and it hasn’t, how, then, do we explain the great change which has taken place? To be sure, more than one factor is involved. With no effort to be exhaustive, we will suggest a few things which have contributed to the change. These, we believe, stand out in importance.

“The New Hermeneutics.” The word “hermeneutic “ means “The science of interpretation.” What is being called “New Hermeneutics” is not NEW at all. It is the same old devilish way that men have used over the years to try to “get around” what God clearly says in His word. The whole idea is that God doesn’t really mean what He says and we are at liberty to change it. Men may refuse to believe what God says, and many do, but His word will not change one whit.

Outright Indifference. The prevailing spirit of indifference which has engulfed our society has adversely affected the Lord’s church. Spiritual indifference is growing at a rapid rate. The evil change which has come about within the church in the past four or five decades is met with a “don’t care” attitude. Things which at one time would have caused brethren to be up in arms, often gets little attention now. The indifference with regard to what God’s word says, has grown by leaps and bounds among the denominations, especially in the past few decades. That indifference didn’t stop there, it swept into the ranks of our brethren, even among those who would claim to be sound in the faith.

The Following Of Men. In recent years we have heard much about religious cults. A cult is defined as a group of people following a person, an ideal, etc. with devotion.. There are many examples of this in religion. Some followers of men go so far as to commit suicide if their leader gives the order, as in the case of Jim Jones, the Heaven’s Gate group, and those in Waco. While most members of cults will not go that far, they will go so far in religion as to completely set aside God’s word and follow their leader. There are multiplied instances of this within the church.

When brethren become more loyal to a man, a school, or even a congregation, than to the Lord, they fit the pattern of a cult. This is now happening within our ranks. Related to this are those who put their finger in the air to see which way the wind is blowing before they choose the leader they are going to follow.

We shall now note some changes which have taken place in the areas we mentioned above. These changes are in no sense of the term minor. They are changes which strike at the very heart of the Lord and his church, and the provisions He made by which unworthy man could have salvation. In the areas under consideration, there was general agreement 50 years ago. Regretfully, that degree of unity which existed in those areas has been invaded by the forces of evil since that time. We begin with:

DENOMINATIONALISM. NOW, a rapidly increasing number of our brethren are drawing closer and closer to denominationalism. Their affinity for the man-made religion is clearly apparent. On a regular basis I'm hearing of brethren joining hands with the denominations in various ways. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that one may find salvation in these man-made churches. If this is not one of the most blatant affronts to God and Christ, I don't know of anything that could be.

In many congregations one would not today hear a sermon on the distinctiveness of the Lord's one true church. Someone might be offended! Never mind what the Lord thinks about it. That which makes it even more tragic is the fact that brethren by great numbers are following those who will not stand up and proclaim the whole counsel of God. It is not unusual for some members of the church to apologize to friends when the preacher does set forth the truth about the one true church.

Not only do a number of our brethren have a growing affinity for denominationalism, they are actually aiding and abetting it by participation in their activities in a growing number of areas. Just imagine what some of our older brethren, who have passed on, would think and how they would be saddened by what is now happening in the name of the Gospel. More importantly, what does our Lord think about it? What does the average member think? A personal question: "What do you think?"

To see the extent of the change which has occurred within the past fifty years, with regard to the denominations, let us consider a few examples. While this change is taking place all across our land, we don't have to go far off to find examples. We have them right here in the middle of the "Bible Belt."

A couple of years ago, the Glendale Road church of Christ engaged in fellowship with the local Catholic Church in their "**Jubilee 200 Revival!**" The Glendale preacher, John Dale, was one of the speakers in that **Revival**. Other speakers in that **Revival** were: A Catholic woman, a Missionary Baptist preacher, and a man and a woman from the Presbyterian Church. A number of members and elders from the Glendale congregation, and elders from the East Wood congregation in Paris were in attendance at the Catholic Church when John Dale spoke. Brother Richard Guill and I were present when John spoke and heard him express his joy for having been able to be present at the **Revival** when the Catholic woman spoke and the Baptist preacher spoke. If John said anything critical of the Catholic Church I missed it, though I have listened to the tape of his speech, as well as hearing it in person. If the above had happened thirty years ago at the Seventh and Poplar congregation, later to become Glendale, I sincerely believe a great many of the congregation would have gone elsewhere. But time has changed things!

Comparatively speaking, there was little opposition to this act of fellowshipping “the work[s] of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

According to Milton Sewell, the elders who heard John speak found nothing wrong with it. After this fellowship with the Catholic Church, John was appointed as a member of the Board of Freed Hardeman University. Brethren who cannot see this drift toward denominationalism must not be able to see spiritual things or simply don’t want to see.

Another example is a very recent happening involving the church at Benton, KY, just a few miles from us. The church at Benton has for some time been quite liberal. I have written the Benton elders about some of their activities, but have never even received a reply. The Benton preacher, Gene Gilliland, has in the past had fellowship with denominational preachers at “prayer breakfasts.”

Just recently, in the October 9th issue of *The Tribune-Courier*, Benton, KY, an article by Gene Gilliland, entitled: **“Together, churches, groups help more,”** appeared. The first paragraph of the article is as follows:

“There was (what I hope will be) a historic meeting about a week ago when representatives from Needline, West Kentucky Allied Services, Community Based Services Protection & Permanency, and First Baptist Church in Benton met with several members of the Benton church of Christ to talk about our common interest in helping the poor.”

After pointing out five “common denominators together,” the preacher goes on to say:

“We still have different beliefs and boundaries in a number of areas in which we don’t see eye to eye. However, this should not keep us from working together when we can. We should be able to respect the belief systems of others while maintaining our own.”

In the remainder of the article, which we will not take time to discuss in detail at this time, statements are made which are of great concern. There is nothing said which would indicate that the “differences” have to do with what God’s word teaches, and that the Baptist Church is a religious organization which is completely unknown to the pages of God’s word. The tragic thing about this example of fellowship with a denomination, is that when God’s word is not used as our sole guide in religious matters, “we can” “work[ing] together” with just about any religious group! Brethren, that is where we are swiftly heading!

In addition to the above examples we could have used as examples: Max Lucado, the support of the Billy Graham Crusade by several congregations in Nashville, and many others.

DIRECT OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is no longer the case, as it once was, that nearly everybody believed the Holy Spirit influenced or acted upon people only through God’s word. In relatively recent times we have had a number of differences come to the front among our brethren, with some taking the position that man is influenced by the Holy Spirit other than by God’s word. The implications of this position seems not to have been realized by more than a few. If this position is true, then it remains that God’s word is not the all-sufficient guide that we have thought it to be (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This would leave us in a dangerous situation, since the Holy Spirit may not have influenced us as it has others, according their claims. Is the Holy Spirit a respected of persons?

An increasing number of our more liberal brethren are now taking the position the Holy Spirit is doing a number of things. Such brethren would be hard-pressed to deny any of the outrageous claims of workings of the Holy Spirit by various religious groups, of which there are many.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. In relatively recent years a rash of supposed scriptural reasons for divorce and remarriage have occurred. Since God's word has not changed with regard to the matter, it must be that men have changed.

I remember hearing a discussion on this subject at the Harding College Lectures many years ago. One of the faculty members averred that if God's law on marriage applied to non-Christians, "Just think how many it would affect!"

Brother Jay Lockhart, who has held meetings in this area for years, said that I Corinthians 7:14-15, "Gave at least another reason for divorce and remarriage. By this he meant by "another," one in addition to what Christ gives in Matthew 19:9.

No. God's law on marriage has not changed. But one can find a preacher, and some times without much difficulty, that will justify divorce and remarriage under virtually any circumstance. The practice of unscriptural marriages has simply mushroomed within our ranks in recent years. This may be attributed to "getting around" God's law.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. NOW, one can see all manner of things being punned off as works of the church. The three authorized works: evangelism, edification, and benevolence are now in competition with a wide array of activities.

A drastic change with respect to scriptural authority has taken place. Whereas it used to be a matter of what we can do and please God in the doing of it? It is NOW more and more a matter of, "What can we do to please ourselves?" When it comes to "pleasing ourselves," there is virtually no end to what may be done, and is being done.

An example of what is happening with regard to the Work Of The Church, is from Florence, AL. A brother from that area, Ed White, writes the following, which is somewhat typical of what others are doing across the country to one degree or another:

"Here in Northwest Alabama we are seeing just about everything. In the Wednesday, August issue of the *Times Daily* there was a lengthy article about the Darby Drive church. They have just bought 111 acres of land on Cox Creek Parkway (in Florence). They are building a new church building to seat 1,500 and a multipurpose facility. Also, plans are to build two (2) baseball fields, one (1) football field and one (1) soccer field on the site...."

If the above is the work of the church, what is there that would not be a work of the church? A powerful example of brethren going beyond the authorized work of the church occurred in 1978, when the Madison church made a big splash with their new Family Life Center. From the *Madison Marcher*, Madison's own publication, it was revealed that the Family Life Center contained or provided for: a gymnasium, exercise room, Ladies Slimnastics, Ceramic Class, Macramé Class, Bowling League, and Volleyball League. This was said to be nothing "more than a Sunday School Annex."

The amazing and frightening thing about such things as those above is that multiplied thousands of members of the Lord's church go right along with such unscriptural innovations. If these things did not have the backing of a great many members they would soon fade away, as they should.

SCRIPTURAL WORSHIP — NOW. Much of what is now punned off as worship is without any biblical authority. When the subject of Worship is studied in the Bible it is seen that worship can appropriately be defined as: "Acts of reverence paid to God by man." For the most part, activities of worship are directed only to God. Singing, while being directed to God, also involves the "teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16). The qualifications for

acceptable worship are set forth in John 4:24, where Christ says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Much of what we see now doesn’t qualify.

The trend NOW is toward entertainment, and the more the better. Few would deny that the use of mechanical instruments of music is to please the hearers, not God. If it were commanded of God to play, then each worshipper would have to “play.” Up to this time I haven’t heard of this being done. I do, however, hear of some congregations which claim to be the Lord’s people using mechanical instruments of music.

It is a common thing in more and more circles today for congregations to have a wide variety of singers or singing groups, such as choirs, quartets, duets, solos, etc. As far as I know, no one has shown from the New Testament that such is authorized. From the standpoint of our relationship with God, is there anything more serious than doing that which is a Transgression of the doctrine of Christ (2 Jno. 9)? More and more it is clear that so many of our own brethren don’t care whether or not an activity is authorized, if they want to engage in it. Yet, so many seem totally unconcerned.

Other things which are going on in what is supposed to be worship include: drama groups, various skits, handclapping, lifted hands and swaying bodies. Are these people doing these things with the idea that they are pleasing God? Who would say “yes”? Time was that the going-ons by the Pentecostal people were looked upon as unscriptural. NOW we are seeing similar things among our brethren.

The tragic thing about all the change which has taken place in the Gospel, as men see it, is that people no longer care! People are saying by implication, if not outright, “What difference does it make?” This is the attitude which has brought us to the present point, and until the attitude of many change we need not expect to see changes for the better. We are now seeing a measure of what was clearly predicted in the New Testament.

WHAT CAN AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO HELP RETURN TO THE TRUE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

Far too often people say, “There’s nothing I can do,” when it comes to the state of the Lord’s church. This is the defeatist’s attitude and is simply not true. There is something that every God-fearing member of the church can do! If there is something that can be done, then by all means it should be done. Our Lord expects that of us. In the following we shall set forth some things which can and should be done. Others could be included.

RECOGNIZE AND ADMIT THAT CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE. While the Lord’s church was not perfect fifty years ago, on the human side, it was in a much better state than it is NOW. It is sad but true, that many younger people have not lived through the period of greatest change. We can help inform those people as to what the church was THEN, that is in its beginning. We can also inform them of the state of the church fifty years ago. Some have never been made aware of these things.

As individuals we can help inform our brethren who have gone along with the change. Some will not listen, but others may. It is our duty to help restore those who have been overtaken by error (Gal. 6:1). This is a way to demonstrate that highest form of love, which we are to have for our brethren.

We can, as individuals or as congregations, refrain from fellowshiping and bidding God speed to those who are in error. When we fellowship error we are encouraging it and will not be guiltless.

REJECT ALL LEADERSHIP WHICH LEADS INTO ERROR. It is a most distressing thing that there are leaders (elders) in congregations who are out front in leading their flocks into that which they must know to be error. But it is happening all across the land! Unless the conscience of those leaders has been “seared,” how can they rest when they pillow their head at night?

Some members of the church seem to have a severe misunderstanding with regard to leadership and their responsibility to follow the same. No leader has a God-given right to lead anyone into that which is not according to truth. This includes the elders in a congregation. No elder, teacher or preacher has a right to lead into error! Some people tend to think that if an elder takes a position that they should follow, regardless of whether it is right or wrong. God’s word teaches no such thing. After all, we as individuals will have to stand before the judgment and answer for our deeds.

CONTEND FOR THE FAITH. “The Faith” is that body of truth spoken of in the New Testament. In Jude 3, we are told to “contend” for it. This is in reality saying that we should fight for it. A false teacher likes nothing better than for people not to call his hand when he goes off course.

We hear brethren say that when traveling they have run into all kinds of situations in congregations they visited. How encouraging it is when brethren are not afraid to call the hands of those who engage in error. To me it is a serious matter when we allow the truth to suffer just because we are not brave enough to stand up for it.

KEEP INFORMED ABOUT THE STATE OF THE CHURCH. Some times a member of the church is unaware of some error which has and is wreaking havoc within the church. One important way of combating error is to be well aware of it, and to know those who are propagating it. Since the warnings of false teachers, including the listing of their names, was needed in New Testament times, it is also needed now.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The state of the church is NOW very serious, as error takes its increased toll. We have a perfect description of what the Lord’s church should be, in the New Testament. Our goal should be to go all the way back to what the church was THEN, that is in the First Century. If we could go back to what it was THEN, some fifty years ago, that would be a great step in the right direction. On the Lord’s side the church is perfect. If we love the Lord we’ll help make the human side the best it can be. - *Walter W. Pigg*

God Blessed America

Frank Parker

Since “9/11” we have seen a great increase in signs declaring, “God Bless America.” It is encouraging to see an awareness of the need for Jehovah to bless our nation.

But from a Christian perspective, I would like for us to think as the title declares, “God Bless America”! For those of us who have had the privilege of traveling to other countries, we are fully conscious of these many blessings. Have we (“American” Christians) been good stewards of what our heavenly Father has already given us?

FREEDOM. We are so blessed to have the freedom to serve our Master without oppression from our government. We need to use this opportunity to be daily involved in evangelism. We enslave ourselves in this area by being not interested in the salvation of others and indifferent to our Master’s orders.

MATERIAL PROSPERITY. There is no doubt that we live in the land of plenty! Thanks be to God for the liberal giving of brethren across this great land. But have we reached our maximum abilities in financially supporting the Lord’s work? The honest answer would have to be, NO! Consider what is being done locally and brotherhood-wide and how much more can be done. . . if! We need to do some serious soul-searching and use our increased prosperity to advance the Lord’s cause around the world and locally.

COMMUNICATIONS. Woe!! Through my computer, I can instantly correspond around the world. We can use this marvel to encourage brethren and teach the lost. It is thrilling to see the internet used in a most positive way to reach into countries with the gospel where the individual cannot enter! Web pages, etc. are opening doors of opportunity to teach. How are you using your computer in the cause of Christ? Also, the gospel message in the printed page is still a most effective tool.

TIME. Most of us have time-saving devices in our homes. What are we doing with the “time-saved”? In traveling to various countries, it is evident that much time daily is spent in just taking care of the necessities for life. We have our freezers, microwaves, dinners ready to serve from the deli, an abundance of places for “fast food,” and big and fast lawnmowers. . . all time saving. Time saving for what? If we realize how God has blessed us, we will make wise use of the time saved, more serious Bible study, encouraging the weak and teaching the lost.

No doubt about it, **God Hs Blessed America!**

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Editor’s Note: Brother Frank Parker is a great example of one who has given much time to mission efforts in a number of countries, even though he has worked at a secular job to provide a living.

3RD ANNUAL
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June 23-26, 2003

It is not too early to start making plans to participate in this edifying series of lessons to be delivered by more than a dozen speakers in 28 sermons. Why not arrange your schedule now, so that you will be able to attend?

Interest in the lectures increased in 2002 and we trust that the same will be true next year. Do help us spread the word and encourage others to come. A Spiritual Feast Indeed! You can hardly afford to miss. — Editor

DANCING

Alan Adams, Assistant Editor

Editor's Note: The following article, written about seven years ago, is just as timely now as it was then. The subject of **Dancing** is not now discussed as it used to be. Could it be that such is not needed? No! Prom Participation and other dancing is quite common, yes, even among members of the church.

This is one of those questions that has to be dealt with about once every generation. No. I take that back, it has to be dealt with about once every year of every generation. I say once a year, because that's how often school goes into session, and with it proms and dances. Looking back through some of my books and periodicals from as long as a hundred years ago, I have articles written by brethren, which forcefully demonstrate that "dancing" is a "work of the flesh" and that people who "practice" such things will not "inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). Were they wrong?

Dancing is not a problem unique only to young people; many people, of all ages, dance. But, I think it fair to say, that this is the period of life where such things get started. The teenage years are a time of discovery, change, and wonder. They are also a time of extreme vulnerability: To peer pressure, to newly found passions and curiosities, and an abandonment of inhibitions. This is precisely why Paul told the young man, Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts" (I Tim. 2:22). So, what are young people to do? Lock themselves in a room and live a drab life?

I don't believe that teenage Christians want to sin any more than anyone else does, but, "...they do want to enjoy these years. It is for this reason that sin needs to be defined and lines drawn so that they can know what is right and what is wrong." "God wants the best for his children, young or old (Jas. 1:17), and promises the "abundant life" to those who forsake the world and follow him (Jno. 10:10). He expects us to be happy (Phil. 4:4) and does not restrict us from *any* good wholesome entertainment. [Because he is our loving Father, AA] He only

withholds the things from us which would hurt us, as any good parent does for his child” (Author unknown).

Unfortunately, a lot of Moms and Dads, who love and would die for their children, are not helping one bit in this matter. I see Christian parents proud to see their sons and daughters (and some husbands proud to see their wives) put on ballet tutus, leotards, spandex pants, swim suits, and cheerleader skirts that rise to the top of the thighs. They clap and their faces beam as their youngsters perform and expose for all to see intimate parts of their young bodies. Fathers, who might easily be provoked to kill, at the thought of their beautiful daughters being groped, fondled and touched; will yet, happily let the same thing happen in a ballet performance or on the dance floor. Their hearts would break to think of their precious progeny on a table or in a cage dancing, gyrating, bending over to expose themselves more clearly to a leering audience; yet, let them do the **exact** same thing at a ball game with a cheerleading outfit, on, and Mom and Dad will pop with pride and say, “That’s my girl!” Moms, Dads, Husbands, and Wives,: If you do this sort of thing, you need to fall down on humble trembling knees and **repent** before your children and The Almighty, because you have sinned against both.

The only thing worse than just plain sin is **hypocrisy** about sin. Some of you will remember the following remarks from the Sunday sermon (10/1/95): “If a bunch of ‘bubbas’ go down to Linda’s Market and buy a case of beer and go out and drink, belch and tell dirty jokes, we will, without hesitation turn up our noses in disgust and condemnation; but, put suits and ties on these same people, take them to a dinner party and let them drink Chablis from a goblet, with their little pinkies sticking out; well, that is a touch of class and sophistication.” It will be interesting to hear people try to make that distinction when they “stand before the judge (Rom. 10:14)...of the earth” (Gen. 18:25). In that same sermon I went on to say, “We are repulsed at the thought of a woman or a man (much less our sons, daughters, husbands, wives) putting on vulgar revealing apparel and letting them dance, move, and show themselves before a paying groping audience of leechers: But, let them put on tutus, leotards and spandex; put them in a ballet performance, in an aerobics class, or in a swimming pool — Well, now, that’s what ‘up town’ folks do.

I’m bound to add one more point about hypocrisy and inconsistency. The AGAPE organization has recently announced a fund raising event with Miss America as the featured speaker. Go out here on the street and ask the average Joe about the Miss America contest. Do you think he will remember her “What-I-Would-Do-If-I-Were-Ruler-Of-The-World” speech? (By the way: No. I do not watch the Miss America Contest, but I have read what they say). He will likely remember how she looked in her bathing suit. It will be interesting to see if the movement to get rid of the bathing suit competition will succeed. At any rate, it makes no sense for an organization closely associated with the church (supported by many churches) to promote itself by promoting the presence of a woman who proudly exposes her body for the world to see.

Brethren and friends, we need to repent and pray to God to renew within us a sense of shame and decorum. If you really want people to *see* your sons and daughters, let them be seen as God would have them seen — not, their bodies — but, let others “behold [their] chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plating the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; But *let it* be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of

God of great price” (I Pet. 3:1-3). Do you really want your loved ones to be known for their beautiful bodies or graceful movements, or as Paul said, let the “women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (I Tim. 2:9-10). I’m neither a prude nor a dirty-minded person, but I have often had to look away, or look up when in the presence of some of my sisters in Christ, who at public places (even “at church”), wear garments that are specifically designed to draw attention to parts of their bodies that no one, save their mates, has any right to see.

While I’m at it, there is also plenty of blame here for Christian parents in general when it comes to open and honest discussion of human sexuality. Over the years, many parents have prudishly avoided any open and clear discussion of this God-given side of life. Why should this be any different than any other part of life? Does the Bible have anything to say about it? You bet. We’d better be calmly, clearly precisely teaching our young people about the beauty and wonder of sexuality and the happiness that God has reserved for two people who keep themselves pure and save themselves for one another in marriage. Open your Bibles to the Song of Solomon and read and discuss it with your family. Openly discuss First Corinthians 7:1-9. It just flat ‘bugs’ me to see brethren get incensed and put out at freely discussing what the Bible freely discusses. These Scriptures (and many more) are not in the Bible just to take up space.

There’s also blame aplenty for spineless (and some ignorant) preachers. Perhaps, desiring praise from the sophisticated “yuppie,” upper class, and job security, they will simply **refuse** to teach what the Bible says about “lasciviousness, reveling and such like” (Gal. 5:19-21). I even know, personally, of preachers who willingly allow (some even take) their children to the prom and other dances.

Let me ask you to ponder this thought: If you just absolutely **know** that *lasciviousness, revellings, and such like* do **not** include what we call *dancing* today; then, would you please, tell me, **precisely** what these words mean and to what activities they apply? I mean, you can’t just spend your time reading the Bible only to prove what it *doesn’t* mean; it does after all, *mean* something. You see, Paul says that they who “practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Do you really believe that our loving Heavenly Father has set forth a list of sins, the practice of which will keep us out of Heaven; yet, they are for all intents and purposes indefinable?

It was several years ago in my home town of Murray, Kentucky, that a public high school teacher (a Christian), told of a very perplexing problem. The principal was putting pressure on him to serve as a chaperone for a school dance. He tried to explain to his principal that, as a Christian, he was opposed to dancing, that he believed dancing to be an immoral activity. As a former high school teacher myself, I could empathize with his plight. Well, the principal basically said, “Don’t give me that; the ‘Church of Christ’ [the principal’s usage, not mine, AA] preacher here in town, he takes his sons to the dances!”

I knew/know that preacher and that congregation. What the principal said was true. That congregation was quite large and in its midst were quite a number of brethren and their children, known personally to me, who regularly drank, danced, took their clothes off and frequented public beaches and swimming pools. That church was, shall we say, “up town and silk stocking.” There is quite a bit of money there, and it is clear that neither the elders nor the preacher are about to deal with the favorite sins of the people.

I don't claim to be the last bastion of bravery or the essence of fortitude when it comes to standing up for the Truth and against Sin. But, I just have to say, the manicured, blow-dried, silk-laden, breathlessly theatrical, hireling preachers who refuse to apply The Book in a specific way make me sick. Elders, who allow such pabulum to pass for preaching, who will not stand behind straight Bible preaching, need to either repent or resign.

What about *Dancing*? Is this just something that old foggy preachers from long ago came up with? Or, does the Bible have something say about this activity for all times and all people? You bet it does. The following is a precisely written article by Maurice W. Lusk, III, entitled, "Lasciviousness and Dancing." It gets right to the heart of the matter with a minimum of words. His paragraphs are set apart by quotation marks:

"To know the word of God one must know the words of God as they are inscribed in the pages of Scripture. Especially is this so with such words as are found in Gal. 5:19-21. In the midst of this list of works of the flesh is 'lasciviousness,' the meaning of this word dare not miss our attention."

"The Greek word for lasciviousness is *aselgeia* which is defined as, 'sensuality, inclination to shamelessness, wanton acts of manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females' (cf. *Greek-English Lexicons*, Arndt & Gingrich, Thayer, Green, Abbott-Smith, Liddell & Scott).' In the KJV and ASV the word is translated primarily as 'lasciviousness' which is defined as 'characterized by or expressing lust or lewdness, conduct which excites lustful desires (Webster's NWD, Col. ed. p. 824)'"

"*Aselgeia* was used among the ancient Greeks to describe activities which excited lustful thoughts, desires, or which produced lustful emotions. This is readily determined from a reading of the literature of that period. The word is found in the writings of Plato, Basil, Plutarch, Demonsthenes, Josephus, and the LXX [Septuagint; AA]. The idea of arousing sexual desires was not necessarily evil in the eyes of the pagan writers. Such activity was common in their religion, the worship of Aphrodite and Diana involved the engagement in sordid sexual immoralities; and also in their recreation, such as the athletic games and in their circuses, much sexual immorality was present. [Take a good look at some of our 'games' today. Years ago, you would have had to go to a 'strip joint' to see what cheerleaders and majorettes wear and do today at a highschool event. AA]. Illicit sexual conduct was so common in Corinth that the expression 'a Corinthian' became a term used to describe a lascivious person, i.e. a person who reveled in sexual desire (cf. William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, pp. 31-33, also *NT Words*, pp. 60-62)."

"In the midst of all this sexual immorality was dancing. In the temples of the pagan gods and goddesses beautiful, seductive women would dance to the music of the lyre or cithara (Grecian harp), so as to incite lustful emotions and excite lustful desires. Among the ancients this type of activity was common in their festivals and celebrations. The night Cyrus of Persia marched his armies under the walls of Babylon, Belshazzar, the king, and a thousand of his lords were being entertained by a thousand slave girls dancing on the tables before them."

"In the NT the word *aselgeia* is most usually used in connection with sexual sins or activities of a lustful nature. It is found nine times in the NT; in Rom. 13:13-14 it is listed among such activities as reveling, drunkenness, chambering (*koite*—sexual intercourse, in this context: whoredom or prostitution), and wantonness (*aselgeia*). In II Peter 2:7 *aselgeia* is used to describe the kind of life being lived in Sodom before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In I Pet. 4:1-6 it is used to describe the course of life followed by the Gentiles before conversion

to Christianity. They had walked in lasciviousness, lust, winebibbing, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries (which involved sexual immoralities).”

“From what we have seen thus far *aselgeia* was used in the first century world to describe: Activities which excited lustful desires, or produced lustful emotions, wanton acts or manners, as filthy words or thoughts, and indecent or seductive bodily movements. This definition goes hand in hand with physiological and psychological effects of modern dancing and rock music. The physiological effect upon the dancer is as follows: The pulse rate tends to adjust itself to the rhythm or beat of music, the faster the heart beats the more adrenaline is secreted into the blood stream, creating excessive amounts of energy, accompanied by hormones which tend to arouse sexual desire. This arousal in sexual desire is also enhanced by the psychological effects brought upon the dancer by the bodily movements and gesticulations of his or her dancing partner. Dancing, rock music, and sexual activity (mental and physical) go hand in hand with the ancient understanding of the Greek word *aselgeia*.”

“Dancing may be described as the ‘rhythmical movement of any or all parts of the body in accordance with some scheme or individual or concerted action which is expressive of certain emotions or ideas (cf. Encyclopedia Britannica).’ It ranges from the simple body movements of a person expressing joy to that of one skilled in arousing powerful human emotions. Such was the case with Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who danced before Herod. What kind of emotions did she arouse in him to cause him to vow to give her anything she asked for? [Think about Moms and Dads today who proudly send their sons and daughters out (some even watch and applaud) to dance before the Herods of the world. Can anyone honestly call this good clean fun? AA]. There is no better example of indecent or seductive bodily movements than can be seen in much of today’s dancing. When males and females stand before one another gesticulating their bodies in response to one another’s movements to the beat of raging music, what else could that be called but *aselgeia*—lasciviousness? Dancing has been called the vertical expression of a horizontal inclination.”

“There are those who claim they don’t experience emotions while dancing; perhaps they are too young, perhaps they are impotent, or perhaps they are lying. There is no place in the life of the New Testament Christian for such gross worldliness. Romans 12:2 tells us to be not conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; Ephesians 5:3 tells us to conduct ourselves as becometh saints; I Thess. 5:22 tells us to avoid every appearance [form of; AA] of evil, and Gal. 5:21 tells us that those who **practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God** [my emp.; AA]. We need to take serious thought to the word of God and learn the meaning of the words of God lest we sin against him.”

Brethren, are these “works of the flesh” set forth in Gal. 5:19-21 simply indefinable terms? If *aselgeia* does **not** include dancing; then, will someone please tell me precisely what it does mean? Is it conceivable that God has set forth a sin the practice of which will result in eternal condemnation, yet, the definition of which is unattainable? Our God, who is the essence of Love, Justice, and Knowledge cannot possibly act so capriciously. Dancing is a dangerous sin; it incites people, especially the young, to think about and feel things that will start them on the path to tragedy and heartbreak. How can we as preachers, elders, parents abdicate our responsibility to warn and guide in this matter?

- - 1653 Pine Ln. , Cantonment, FL 32533

Preachers and Teachers: When have you preached or taught on the subject of Dancing? Do you have those who engage in this activity where you worship? From what I hear, most would have to answer the last question in the affirmative! - Editor

A Growing Problem, A Matter Of Great Concern

Freddie Clayton

There is a deep gulf developing between the young and old in the Lord's church. It has not happened overnight, and yet it continues at rapid speed with few seeming to care or even be aware. Since the bulk of the problems stem from those things geared toward the youth, these are problems that can only increase as the young get older and exert their influence in the future. In the following we shall consider some examples:

“CHRISTIAN” UNIVERSITIES

The “Youthworkers University” of David Lipscomb University each fall offers assistance in “ministering youth.” With Jeff Walling (well-known cheerleader of error) and Steve Flatt (David Lipscomb President) usually twin-billed, this must be one of the President's attempts at “turning the school around.” (personal assurance Steve Flatt gave me in a visit I had with him shortly after he assumed the office).

Scheduled for October 23,24, 1998, the speakers were: Tim Adair, kinesiologist in Nashville; Daniel Cline, youth minister at the Peachtree Corners church of Christ in Norcross, GA; Shana Curtis, part of the youth ministry team at Madison church of Christ; Randy Gill, worship leader at Woodmont Hills (Rubel Shelly's home base. FC); Steve Joiner, Bible department chair at Lubbock Christian University; Israel Lewis, marriage and family therapist and Lee Milam, youth minister, both of Mayfair church of Christ, Huntsville, AL; Brewster McLeod, student minister at Southland church in Lexington, KY (Christian church youth minister); Doug Varnado, Bible professor at Lipscomb and a minister at the Hendersonville Community Church; Craig Wilson, former high school teacher with expertise in graphic design, theatrical design, etc.; and Rick Bundschuh: “Rick” is a pastor, veteran youth worker, writer, speaker and cartoonist based in Kauai, Hawaii. Currently, Rick serves as the teaching pastor at Kauai Christian Fellowship as well as youth director.

In calling the number provided on the announcement flyer I found out some interesting things. When asking about Mr. Bundschuh, I was told that this would be his fourth time to be with them. When I asked if Mr. Bundschuh was a member of the church, the lady to whom I was forwarded could only stutter and say she really didn't know how to answer that question. I told her that the information beside his name seemed to indicate (in bold type above) that he wasn't. Then I asked as to why a man that wasn't a Christian was going to be teaching youth minister how to be better youth ministers? She said, “Oh, he is a Christian. He just doesn't go to the church of Christ.”

The lady told me that Steve Davidson was responsible for those invited. Brethren, Steve Flatt is responsible for Steve Davidson, and the board of directors is responsible somewhere in

here, don't you think? Where are the responsible brethren? Only a lack of love for the truth and souls would allow the toleration of such garbage. If not, why not? Brethren, if this does not bother you at least a tad, let me encourage you to sell your building, send the money to Flatt at Lipscomb or Bundschuh in Hawaii, and throw your hat in the ring with the Baptists, Methodist, etc.

With such things being now common occurrences it was not a surprise to me to read in the October 12, 200 *Nashville Tennessean* the following:

CHRISTIAN MUSIC LIGHTS UP LIPSCOMB

“David Lipscomb University’s Collins Alumni Auditorium is the site of a notable contemporary Christian show (open to Christian and non, contemporary and old-school) tonight. The concert features Caedmon’s Call, a seven piece band that blends Rootsy rock, Hootified ball-cap guitar pop and even a few urban flourishes into a lively mix that fits nicely with lyrics of wonders both worldly and deified.

“Equal intriguing is Nicole Nordeman, whose *This Mystery* is a beautifully sung, pop song set, a brave album that calls into question the validity of narrowly framed religion and doctrines as a means of understanding divinity (sounds like a bit of a drag when I put it that way, but the album is actually pretty fun). Justin Roberts is also on the bill. Tickets are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door, and available at Lifeway Christian stores or by phone at 251-1500. 8 p.m. is the start time.”

Lipscomb University Continues To Prostitute Itself By Affinity With Contemporary “Christian” Music Concerts. (from the official Lipscomb website: <http://www.lipscomb.edu>)

“Lipscomb University hosts Jars of Clay with guest Jennifer Knapp, and special guest Shaun Groves. 3/14/02, 7 p.m.

“Lipscomb University will host Jars of Clay with Jennifer Knapp and special guest Shaun Groves on March 14 at 7 p.m. in Allen Arena, 3901 Granny White Pike, Nashville. Tickets are \$22 for Lipscomb students or for groups of 15 or more, and are \$25 for all others. Tickets can be purchased at all Ticketmaster locations, through the Ticketmaster charge-by-phone line at (615) 255-9600 or on their website at www.ticketmaster.com. . .”

WHO'S ON FIRST?

The comedy routine with the above title has delighted many for generations, but that is not the concern of this article. My desire is to provide information that should cause alarm and sadness among right-thinking brethren everywhere. I am writing of a recently stumbled on to website: <http://churchathletics.faithside.com/>. The purpose purported for this site is in “Covering Nashville Area Church of Christ Athletic Leagues.” From the links to this page you can find the following churches participating in at least one of the four different leagues of softball competition: Antioch, Bellevue, Belmont, Brentwood Hills, Community, Crieve Hall, Donelson, Granny White, Harpeth Hills, Hendersonville, Hermitage, Hillsboro, Jackson Park, Northside, Madison, Mt. Juliet, Rivergate, Riverwood, Rural Hill, Smith Springs, Tusculum, West End, Western Hills, West Nashville Heights, White House, Wingate, Woodmont Hills, and Woodson Chapel (If I missed your participation please let me know).

The list above includes those who extended an invitation to and supported a Billy Graham crusade, showing their affinity with denominationalism, and those who actually opposed such a

sinful extension of fellowship. It includes those who left the faith decades ago and who claim present day miracles and an apostle in their midst to those who know the falseness of such a claim. It even includes a church and the very ones who split it and formed a community church. It includes those I would and have warned against and those who I have recommended. Is it possible that the platform of ecumenical agnosticism promoted by the now dead “Jubilee” and the powers that be at David Lipscomb University will find greater acceptance with those now young through their ball playing?

I have tried contacting the “commissioner” of the “Nashville Area Church of Christ Athletic Leagues” (Seriously! CACOMCommissioner@earthlink.net) to no avail. Clearly, “Who’s on first?” also means “who’s tending the flock?” “Who’s kidding whom?” and for far too many it may mean “Who cares?”

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Editor’s Note:

The problem with David Lipscomb University, as set forth in part above, is by no means the only one of “our schools” which is contributing to the hurt of our Lord and His body, the church. I don’t know of a single one of “our schools” which now maintains the level of soundness found in most of our schools four or five decades ago.

Just think what this declares for the next generation, to say nothing of the evil influence which has already been unleashed upon multiplied thousands. A most serious question in my mind is this: “Do the parents who send their children to “our schools,” those who run “our schools,” and those who support “our schools” have any concern for the spiritual well-being of all who are being spiritually hurt, even destroyed? There continues to be displayed a loyalty to “our schools” that is stronger than the loyalty to the Lord and His will. This problem could be cured if brethren wanted it to be.

“COME TOGETHER & Worship” ? ? ?

The above quotation is from a brochure sent out to “Youth Director” at a congregation. The billing pictures and names the following: “MICHAEL W SMITH THIRD DAY with very special guest MAX LUCADO”

This so-called “WORSHIP” is to take place in Memphis, TN, Nov. 3, 2002, at The Pyramid. “Advance Ticket Price \$26.25 • Door \$28.25.”

Addressed to “Dear Group Leader,” in part is the following:

“Mark your calendars and plan to attend a night of worship unlike any other you have ever experienced! The *Come Together & Worship Tour* is coming to Memphis on Sunday, November 3rd at The Pyramid. For one night, on one stage, three of Christian entertainment’s largest names join forces to present the Gospel in a fresh and powerful way!

“...Don’t miss this opportunity to not only hear two of today’s top musical acts, but also to

hear the inspired words of a best selling Christian author. Third Day, Michael W. Smith, and Max Lucado, all on one stage....”

Someone asked me if I thought members of the church would attend the above event. As hard as it was to answer this question, in keeping with my conscience I had to answer, “Most likely.” Brethren, whether we like it or not, whether or not it disturbs us — This is what a portion of the Lord’s church is coming to. The “Gospel” and “Worship” are words of little or no meaning.

The very idea that the above activities would be classed as “Worship” and the “Gospel” is as erroneous as anything could be! And, what about “the inspired words” of Max Lucado. As used in this context, how presumptuous and how misleading! “False words” would be more apt.

What a shame and disgrace it is that Max Lucado has been associated with the Lord’s church! What a shame and disgrace it is that some follow such a false teacher and “enemy of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18). - - *Editor*

How Will You Vote Nov. 5th?

Some say: “All politicians are just alike,” or “All politicians are crooked.” Such statements as these are an outright denial of reality!. None that I know makes a claim that any politician is perfect. But an honest person would have to admit that some stand for different standards than do others.

A chief concern of Christians should be that of the politician who stands for the highest moral standards. Let’s consider abortion as an example. The practice of killing innocent boys and girls, even minutes before they would have been born naturally, is a total disregard for the sanctity of human life. When human life is valued no more than that of an animal of the field that is just about as low as one can get Yet, that is where many politicians stand. There can be no stronger evidence of this than the fact that a number of politicians have as a main plank in their political platform, “Not to do anything that would interfere with a woman’s right to choose.” Words to this effect were spoken by the 78 year-old man in New Jersey who was able to have the state law set aside in order for him to run for the Senate. Would my conscience allow me to bid God speed to such a politician as that? No. Not mine!

What about the upholding and promotion of sexual perversion? Here again it is generally easy to know which politicians stand for this ungodly act and practice. God’s word clearly condemns this sin as it does the taking of innocent life by abortion. Can a member of the Lord’s church vote for those who support such ungodliness? Some will, but they will not be consistent in doing so, and neither will they have God’s approval of their action. It is not “seeking first the kingdom of God...” - *Editor*

READERS’ RESPONSE

“Would you please take our name off your mailing list? - **M/M Lester Gene McCartney.**” - TN.

“Refused - **Robert Elton Holden.**” - CA.

“You may take the following off of the your mailing list. Thank you. - **Garrard St. Church of Christ.**” - **KY.**

Eric Snider.

(Editor’s Note: We know that some do not want to receive BOT and we are thankful when they let us know. If there is something about the paper which is considered to be in error, we would greatly appreciate being informed by our readers. We do not intentionally run material which is not in harmony with Truth.)

“I commend you for the excellent work you do via BOT. I know it is a rewarding work, yet very difficult and demanding. Betty and I were back in Kiev in June/July. I once again taught the Minor Prophets at the school of preaching. Three excellent men/brethren/students graduated and are now preaching. We look forward to returning in 2004. We spent one week in Chernovtsy where two graduates and former students are now working for the Lord....We continue to be involved in the work in Taiwan in various ways. I was there for two weeks in August 2001. We keep in touch with some via e-mail. - **Frank Parker.**” - **FL.** *(Included in this issue of BOT is an article by brother Parker. It brings back memories to me to think about Ukraine and Taiwan and the brethren there. Since I almost died in the Philippines a few years ago I have not ventured out of our country, but I do think often of the brethren in other countries. - Editor).*

“Dear Banner of Truth, We want to commend you all for helping us keep up with the errors in the church - **Martinsville church of Christ.**” - **VA.** *(Signed by 15 members of the congregation).*

“I’m Milton Mathers, Jefferson, NC. I’ll be moving to Bluff City, TN. Please unsubscribe me to save postage. The Mountain View congregation gets BOT, I’ll get it there. Thanks so much. Appreciate the good work that you do with this sound publication. May God bless you, your wife and family - **Milton Mathers.**” *(Thanks for letting us know - Editor).*

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