

Banner of Truth

March 2004

The Christian And Politics

We have never seen a time when Christians should be more concerned about politics than now! Engaged in a world-wide war with the evil religion of Islam, forces here in our own country are putting forth the greatest effort, to banish every vestige of Godly influence from our society. This evil effort is being waged through our political system as never before.

Almost four years ago I discussed the above subject in *Banner of Truth*, but nearer the national election than we are now. At this time there are about seven months before the 2004 election. Due to the urgency of getting before people what is involved in this upcoming election, and the part the Christian can play, we are running the article again, but with some revisions and added discussion. Before the November election we will have more to say, trusting that we may awaken within our brethren, and other readers, a genuine concern with regard to the spiritual well-being of our society.

Before we begin with the article mentioned above we shall call attention to a few of the things which should arouse our interest and spur us to action in doing all that we can to combat the evil influence which is making great progress in completely overwhelming us. Almost four years ago we thought immorality was the most prevalent ever seen, and it was. However, things are much worse now, and with the way things are going, the worst is yet to come.

It has been decades now since it became legal to murder innocent, God-created, unborn boys and girls at the will of unloving and uncaring adults. Though some progress has been made in halting the partial-birth abortion, millions of lives are still being snuffed out because evil mothers and dads want it to be so. Just think what a great part politics have had in permitting this evil. Were any of the contenders to run for president against President Bush, opposed to abortion? I can't remember one. Just think what it is saying about our society when many politicians have as a major plank in their political platform, the unjust murder of innocent children. Human life can't mean much to such people. There are more and more efforts to make it legal to kill the old, unwanted members of our society. People are opting for legal assisted suicide.

The push for acceptance of homosexuality began several years ago, but the efforts in behalf of this God-condemned practice have grown at a rapid pace since the last presidential election. Who would have thought then that a number of places would now be issuing license for homosexual marriages? The laws which are on the books making this illegal, are simply being flouted, and virtually nothing is being done about it! The blatantly ungodly influence of a minority in our society seems to be prevailing, and those who still have moral convictions are seemingly willing to let it be so.

Faithful members of the Lord's church have an important part to play in this year's election. They can help encourage a condition in society which is more conducive to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. Or, they can align themselves with those who constitute "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18), and who will make it more difficult to live a faithful Christian life. The part

which true Christians can play in the political process is a great opportunity and also a great responsibility. It is about this very thing that our discussion will be concerned.

I write with the full realization that politics constitute a super sensitive subject with quite a few members of the church. Therefore, I'm inviting criticism from some brethren. But when standing for that which is right provokes criticism, so be it. I do, however, ask our readers to please consider our discussion from the standpoint of God's word and not from a purely political perspective. With these thoughts in mind, let us consider a number of important points relative to the Christian and Politics.

I. THE MORAL STATE OF OUR NATION

Though we've already touched upon this briefly, it is simply a matter of fact that our country is now at its lowest moral state ever. Not only that, but the condition is worsening every single day. Evil, when it is unopposed grows worse, not better. The moral scene is much darker today than it was four years ago. Yet, many people aren't disturbed.

Honesty is no longer a virtue with a growing number of people. A lack of regard for truth has reached the highest circles in our nation. The state of sexual immorality is reflected in the great percentage of illegitimate births, to say nothing of the millions of abortions. All manner of sexual perversion is being pushed upon society by strong political powers. This is being done in a boastful way when it is a most shameful thing. With an increasing number in our society it is no longer a noble thing to work for a living. Especially, when lazy people can live on the handouts from government, which are made possible by those who work for a living. We've already mentioned the murder of innocent unborn children. We've never known the disdain for the sanctity of life that we are seeing now. Even animals of the field care more for their young than many parents do. The above has become so commonplace with many, that stark increasing indifference rules the day. Need we say more to prove our point that our nation is in the throes of complete moral dissolution? "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). It is clear for all to see that there is a tragic absence of "righteousness" and a rapid growth of "sin." That "All nations that forget God" "shall be turned into hell" (Ps. 9:17) seems to make little difference with most people, but it certainly should with members of the church.

II. POLITICS INFLUENCE THE MORAL CLIMATE OF OUR SOCIETY

We all know that politicians have a considerable influence upon our society. They have a great part to play in the enacting and enforcing of various laws, some of which may contribute to the bettering of moral conditions, or to the encouragement of immorality. The time was that both of our major political parties stood for much higher moral standards than those which are generally in vogue today. In more recent years this has changed greatly. Generally today, with a few exceptions, it is clearly seen that one major party more often favors a rather wide range of immoral things such as: abortion, homosexuality, dishonesty, feeding the lazy at the expense of those who work, to name only a few.

The above evil things are actually used to appeal to people. The politicians sense that a great many people desire these things, and sadly, it is so often the case that it is true. It has become more common for those of the party which stands for those things mentioned above, to severely criticize those they choose to label as "the religious right," or even "the radical religious right." A powerful example of this is that of Hillary Clinton when she tried to exonerate the shameful and degrading actions of her husband, the President, by blaming the "religious right." Only the President himself was to be blamed, since he was accountable for his actions. In this group of people which is castigated by the political party referred to above, I would be included, as well as all members of the

Lord's church which stand for the truth. The evil spirit which opposes doing that which is morally right is growing stronger every day.

The church members who choose to support the major political party which stands for immorality have a real problem. It sounds so hollow for such members to say anything about "seek[ing] first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33). Yet, I have known members of the church who were strongly opposed to the immoral things we have mentioned, but who would go right on and support those who promote such things. The Bible has a word which describes such people. That word is "Hypocrite" How can one who claims to be a Christian bid God speed to that which is completely contrary to God's clearly revealed will? Consistently, they can't, but some do so anyway.

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN POLITICS

Government, which is to such a great extent run by the political process, is clearly ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-7). As citizens we are to submit to the rule of civil government, unless such would violate the principle set forth in Acts 5:29, that "We ought to obey God rather than men." As citizens we have the opportunity to be involved in the political process by voting. Who can say that such involvement is wrong when one exercises the privilege of helping to select the politician who will be most favorable to the cause of Christ and the principles for which it stands? Those who willfully cast aside their privilege and opportunity to uphold in politics that which is more in keeping with God's will, will be contributing to that which is indifferent or even opposed to God's will for man. Christ pointed out that those who are not with him are against him (Matt. 12:30). This in principle would hold true in the above as well as in some other areas. Some times it is the case that evil flourishes simply because those who are supposed to stand for righteousness fail to do so.

IV. IS IT TRUE THAT "ALL POLITICIANS ARE ALIKE"?

We've all heard people say, "All politicians are just alike." Is that true? Are people really serious when they make such statements? We can't help but have some questions in our minds when we hear that statement, as to whether or not it is actually believed. It is true that we have no perfect politicians. We could go a step further and say that we have no perfect accountable people. Yet, this in no sense of the term proves that "All politicians are alike."

As we consider this statement further, let us consider a few examples which relate to it. Our first example involves abortion, a lively political issue. The first politician we shall refer to as "A." He believes in the right of mothers to murder their totally innocent unborn babies if they for any reason don't want them. The politician is somewhat deceitful in his use of the term "pro choice," and "the mother's right to choose." The facts are that the

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The facts are that the terms clearly mean "pro murder" and "the mothers right to murder her innocent, unwanted child." Vice President Gore was actually warning people that if they didn't elect him as president, appointments to the Supreme Court in the next four years could make the barbarous act of murdering unwanted unborn children illegal! Brethren, just stop and think. Our nation has gone to a state of ungodliness where such murder as the above is used as political appeal! God-fearing people couldn't!

The second politician we shall call "B." This man is opposed to the evil practice of abortion, and believes life should be protected, not extinguished. Now the question — Are the two politicians "alike"? Yet, we hear people say they are all alike. Something is tragically wrong when that is said, and regretfully, some church members say so.

We could use the same example as that above in principle. One politician makes it a special part

of his political efforts to encourage sexual perverts in their ungodly deeds. He becomes a bedfellow with them (no pun intended) and pushes their agenda along with them. He would also approve action to indoctrinate our children with the evil belief that that God-condemned evil is simply another acceptable “life style.” Another politician believes sexual perversion is morally wrong, and would grant no special rights to this shameful group in society, and would in no way encourage this practice. Now, a question — Are these two politicians just alike? It is beyond me how that a person could in honesty say they are alike.

We have two men running for President this coming November. They are about as different as daylight and dark when it comes to moral issues. Who can say they are “just alike” and claim to be honest and knowledgeable even in a small degree? The same question could be asked with regard to a great many politicians who will be running for office this fall. When one politician upholds moral standards to a great degree and his opponent upholds immorality to a great degree, how in the name of common sense can one say they are alike? I have yet to hear anything that has the semblance of a logical answer. This tells us something about people.

Why is it that few people would say, without having mental problems, that all cows, horses, dogs and people are alike, and when it comes to politicians, which are much more important than animals, say they are “all alike”? Could it be that for some reason such people just don’t want to admit the facts?

V. DOES GOD APPROVE THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF EVIL THROUGH POLITICS?

Though civil government is approved of God (See Rom. 13:1-7), God does not approve the encouragement of evil by those who would serve Him, be it through politics or any other means. That God’s servants are to turn away from evil couldn’t be more evident. Job “feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job. 1:1). Paul said, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). Peter wrote, “Let him eschew evil, and do good...” (I Pet. 3:11).

The above passages and many others do not make an exception which allows one to encourage evil through politics while condemning it in all other areas. Even though this is the case, I’ve known members of the church who while wearing their religious hat strongly opposed the evil which God condemns, but bareheaded they would through politics support the evil they otherwise opposed. The true religion, Christianity, is such that the religious hat must be worn all the time.

When one knowingly supports a politician who stands for that which is evil in God’s sight, even using the support of such evil in order to gain political support, that one is bidding “God speed” to evil. How can one who claims to be a true Christian do such an evil deed? Furthermore, some think that what one does in politics is no other person’s business. With members of the church, if others know that that which evil is upheld or sanctioned by members of the church, that is a bad reflection upon the church. We, of the church, are supposed to uphold good, not evil, and this would apply to the area of politics as well as other areas.

VI. DOES PARTY LOYALTY JUSTIFY VOTING AGAINST ONE’S SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS?

To my knowledge there is no New Testament teaching which would disallow one from belonging to a political party, under certain conditions. That is not to say, however, that one is at liberty to support any evil which the party may uphold. Currently, there is a wide difference between the major political parties, relative to standards of morality in the wide sense of the term. There are some exceptions of course, in both parties.

When one’s political party stands for something which is wrong in God’s sight, it is then that party loyalty must be set aside if God, not man, is to be pleased. It is a sad reflection upon the

Lord's church when its members who stand strongly opposed to such things as: abortion, sexual perversion, supporting those who are able to work but will not, and then turn right around and vote for those who stand for those very things which they opposed. This is not being honest. But brethren this does happen.

When the above happens it makes one wonder just how much love such people have for the Lord and His cause. At the day of judgment I doubt there will be a special endorsement for those who betrayed their spiritual convictions due to party loyalty. When it comes to party loyalty, some are what we call "dyed in the wool." People who have such party loyalty are going to put party first and the Lord second, yet the Lord will not accept second place. It would be great indeed if every member of the Lord's body had the same loyalty to Him as some have for their political party. Our Lord told the church at Smyrna to be faithful unto the point of death (Rev. 2:10). If we are supposed to have such loyalty to Christ that we would give up our lives for Him, then surely we should have enough loyalty to Him that we would give up the loyalty to our political party, when that party goes contrary to God's will.

VII. IS IT RIGHT TO UPHOLD EVIL FOR MATERIAL GAIN?

It is a matter of fact that some have supported a political party when it upheld evil, thinking they might get hold of an extra dollar. Even if one is convinced that a certain party would help him gain a little more materially, it is totally inconsistent with our Lord's teaching to make material gain when it involves the violation of God's will. Truly, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

Materialism has probably been one of the greatest enemies of the Lord's church for the past several years. When people are "rich, and increased with goods," as were those of the church at Laodicea, there is a great danger that they may come to feel they "have need of nothing," including the Lord (Rev. 3:14-17). When I was growing up I used to hear people described as one "Who would take the nickels off a dead person's eyes." Some younger people probably wouldn't know what that means. Back then, when a person died they were in many cases "laid out at home." Nickels would be placed on the eyelids to keep them shut. There may be such people in our day. They would for a dollar support one who is an enemy of "the cross of Christ." To them, money talks, but not in the right way. On the better side, we trust there are many who would put Christ first, as He commanded (Matt. 6:33).

VIII. IS MORE GOVERNMENT CONTROL CONDUCTIVE TO SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING?

In the past few decades we have seen a rapid increase in governmental control of society. Along with this governmental control has been a decrease in religious liberties. Various laws have been passed or court decisions made which give outright approval to things which are diametrically opposed to the teaching of God's word. This involves abortion and the sanctioning of homosexuality, and others.

While working in Ukraine over a period of some three years it became evident that there were virtually no moral standards observed by people in that society. Complete governmental control had existed for most of those people's lives, and believe me it had a telling effect. That effect has not been for good in any sense of the term.

The male translator which I used most often in Ukraine revealed some interesting information about their moral standards. Abortion was described as being, "No more uncommon than going to the dentist." When asked about prostitution, my translator said, "There is not much need for prostitutes, most people have their own [woman]."

The thing which stood out most with regard to complete governmental control of a society, was

expressed by my translator in the following words: “If people could just come over here and see how it is, they wouldn’t want complete governmental control.” I’ve been flabbergasted that powerful forces in our country would take our country into the very condition from which the Ukrainians are still trying hard to extricate themselves.

As we approach the elections this fall, there is one thing which we can mark down and be (page 6)
certain about, relative to more governmental control. That is, if the liberal candidate running for the office of President is elected, he will do his utmost to bring about more rigid governmental control of our society. There are many others of his party who would strive for the same goal.

SOME CLOSING REMARKS

Election day will be sooner than we think. A lot is at stake. The sordid moral condition which has swept our society could be made even worse, or on the other hand it could be impeded to some extent. In order for our country to get back to what it was in the 1950s, some time will be involved. But unless a start is made soon, it may never see those days again. Members of the church have an opportunity to influence the future by supporting those who will pursue policies which are more conducive to the well-being of the cause of Christ. It grieves me greatly that even one of my brethren would turn his back upon Christ by supporting that which is evil in politics.

Let me suggest that on election day the following things be seriously considered when casting your vote: 1) If you believe in the wanton murder of the innocent and unwanted unborn children. 2) If you believe in upholding and encouraging the various shameful forms of sexual perversion. 3) If you believe the government should support, at taxpayers expense, those who are able but too lazy to work, and those who are accountable for a great majority of illegitimate births. 4) If you believe in dishonesty rather than integrity in our top leader. 5) If you believe in more taxes and more governmental control of our lives — You should vote for the **Ultra Liberal** candidate for president.

On the other hand, if you are at all serious about living a Christian life, and truly love the Savior who died for you, you will think as you enter that voter booth and pull the lever or press the button. As we stated earlier, there are no perfect politicians, but who can deny that some are better than others? This idea that “All politicians are alike” is nothing more than a cop out. A true Christian cannot support, encourage or bid God speed to those who stand in opposition to that which God has ordained or approved.

As we face the future, anyone who cares to know what political candidates stand for, can do so. When it comes to obeying the will of God or the will of man, political loyalty must not be allowed to put one on the side of the will of man, rather than the will of God. Party loyalty is evil when it results in acts of disobedience to God’s will, as it often does.

Over the past several years I have been deeply hurt and saddened by what is happening within our Lord’s blood-bought church. One of the things which hurts most is that which is happening from within the body, and about which we are repeatedly warned by inspired men in the New Testament. When I obeyed the gospel just over 50 years ago, it never occurred to me that I would live to see what I’m now seeing. Right here in the middle of the “Bible Belt” some are turning their backs upon our Savior by their affinity for and acceptance of denominationalism. Elders and others in leadership are not watching over the flocks, but are in some cases right out front in opening the gates to the wolves.

The upcoming fall election is of the greatest importance to true Christians of any national elections we have seen. The forces of evil are out in force, with a strong determination to take our society into a more ungodly state than it have ever experienced Those people who are standing for moral principles, based on God’s will for man, and being belittled instead of being applauded. More and more liberal minded people are saying in effect, that we don’t like the country in which have

grown up. “We want to change it, and get rid of this Godly influence which inhibits some of the immoral things we like to do,” they are saying by implication!

Brethren, let me plead with you to pray for the best outcome in the November election, and do all within your might to help it be so. Encourage others to support those candidates who are more in keeping with God’s standards. Our opportunity to have a part in making this happen may not always be with us, but it is now. Looking back in history, we learn that many nations have fallen. Indications are that the great Roman Empire came to an end due to moral corruption and immorality which prevailed in their society. Could this happen to our country? Who would be so bold as to say it couldn’t happen?

Some may be critical of the above discussion. But I have said these things with that realization. The fact that some are so sensitive about politics and party loyalty shows a need for such a discussion.

- - - *Walter W. Pigg, Editor*

The Apostasy/Hypocrisy In Middle Tennessee

Paul Curless

Editor’s Note: This article is being run, not just to speak of Middle Tennessee, but because such things as are mentioned as happening in this particular area can also be found, in large measure, in many other places across our country, and even in some places in other countries. Brother Curless is a gospel preacher who loves and stands up for that which is right in God’s sight. Though he does not give specific information as to which congregations have practiced these things, he would, if asked, supply that information. The above article begins below.

At one time the state of Tennessee was part of what was commonly referred to as “The Bible Belt.” But unfortunately, today when one looks around at the majority of the churches of Christ it is apparent that the verbally inspired, inerrant word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21) has lost influence upon them, as far as being their guide in religious matters (John 12:48).

It saddens my heart to see the decline in faithful congregations. Thirty to forty years ago one could usually stop at a church building which had the name “Church of Christ” on the sign and find Christian people who were concerned about the blood-purchased spiritual kingdom (Acts 20:28) where salvation is found (Rom. 16:16; Eph. 1:3). Seemingly, those days are gone. Evidently some of the reasons why so many congregations, especially larger ones, are no longer abiding in the truth are:

1. They, like the Jews of old, want to be like their religious neighbors, the denominations. I fear some would like for us to become just another denomination.

2. The so-called “Christian Universities” are not consistent in teaching Bible truth any longer. They seem to be more concerned about money than they are about training students to teach Bible truth in order to convert the lost to Jesus Christ. I know of no Christian University in our state that doesn’t have liberals/false teachers on their faculty and board of directors. Unfortunately, this has an adverse effect upon congregations in Tennessee. Yet there are some preachers who would not think of missing one of their lectureships but instead boast about going. These brethren seem more devoted to their Alma Mater than to God and His word. Some preachers have compromised the truth in favor of what their school teaches over what the Bible says.

3. Many congregations have appointed men as elders because of their social standings or lon-

gevity, rather than meeting the qualifications God has set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 15-9. Several men from where I preach met with one such eldership about a false teacher they were supporting. Rather than telling the facts about it, they denied supporting him. They not only were supporting him, they were acting as his sponsoring [overseeing] congregation. This information obtained from their church bulletin.

4. Preachers who want to make a big name for themselves are compromising Bible truth by agreeing to speak at congregations which are no longer abiding in “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Jn. 9:-11). Perhaps in times past they were sound but not today. Also some preachers are accepting money from liberal congregations to support their good works!

5. Sadly, many elders do not have enough basic Bible knowledge to ask the right questions when considering a preacher to work with them. A great many faithful gospel preachers have commented that in traveling around and speaking to elders around the brotherhood, that the vast majority do not even begin to meet the qualifications recorded in I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9. These statistics will have a great effect upon whether or not congregations remain faithful or go by the wayside and no longer abide in the doctrine of Christ.

The following are examples of what some congregations [mostly larger ones] in Cannon, Rutherford, and Coffee Counties in Tennessee are doing or have done over the past few years, which should be of great concern within the brotherhood.

a. Many congregations have their pews full of the N.I.V. [New International Version], which is a perverted version containing Calvinistic error.

b. Some promote “women’s ministries,” whatever that is.

c. Advertising “Winterfest” and other activities wherein many of the speakers are nothing more than denominational teachers.

d. Having special “Baby Blessing Services.”

e. Having liberals from so-called “Christian Universities” to conduct summer series, training classes, meetings and lectureships.

f. Some congregations not only are supporting known false teachers, but are also taking the oversight of such men.

g. Special Thanksgiving Services — Some being conducted with denominational churches.

h. A congregation who distorts their actual number by including those in the nursing home as being “present” for worship.

i. Being part of “Adventures in Learning” sponsored by an interfaith coalition of nineteen denominations.

j. Using unfaithful men to lead in worship. One such person has his own singing group who entertains denominational churches with instrumental music accompanying their singing of religious songs.

k. Supporting the local “Arts Center” with contributions from the church treasury.

l. Fellowshiping with denominations during a nursing home Sunday service. Also having a denominational “pastor” to conduct their gospel meeting.

m. Preachers questioning Matthew 19:9, trying to justify those who have several mates before baptism. This position asserts that the Bible doesn’t apply until one becomes a Christian — which is the devil’s lie (Jn. 12:48).

o. Supporting the so-called “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc.”

p. Changing the regular scheduled worship services because of “Christmas.”

q. Advertising in local newspaper — referring to the preacher as the “Pastor.”

r. Inviting preachers from liberal, larger congregations to speak at their local lectureship; where false doctrine is allowed to be taught — such as “no more guilt by association” (2 John 9-11).

s. Foot washing during worship services.

- t. Encouraging Christians to purchase books written by “best selling authors” such as: Max Lucado, Charles Swindoll, Billy Graham, etc...
- u. Elders laying hands on folks, anointing the sick with literal oil during worship services.
- v. Teaching that sprinkling is an acceptable mode of baptism.
- w. Teaching that it is all right to baptize women living in adultery, saying they may repent later.
- x. As a result of the lack of teaching by preachers and elders on marriage, divorce, and remarriage many congregations have numerous couples living in adultery. It has been reported by several faithful Christians that one particular congregation may have between 60-80 couples living in adultery.
- y. Having a “Scratch and Dent” sale at the church building. My question is; “What’s the difference between that and a bake sale or car wash?”
- z. Preachers passing out a Bible version called “God’s Word,” which is as perverted as the N.I.V.

A few of the perversions contained in the above version are as follows:

- 1) “Indeed, I was born guilty. I was a sinner when my mother conceived me” (Psa. 51:5).
- 2) “By believing you receive God’s approval, and by declaring your faith you are saved” (Rom. 10:10).
- 3) “God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it” (Eph. 2:8)
- 4) “Because a bishop is a supervisor appointed by God...” (Titus 1:7).
- 5) “The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day heaven will pass away with a roaring sound. Everything that makes up the universe will burn and be destroyed. The earth and everything that people have done on it will be exposed” (2 Pet. 3:10)
- 6) “I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman” (Matt. 19:9). The word “unfaithfulness” is not true to what our Savior spoke. He said “fornication,” which is explicit. All fornication is unfaithfulness but not all unfaithfulness may be fornication.

Other items could be mentioned, but hopefully these will cause a few Christians to wake up and realize that “...many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I Jn 4:1), and some are sitting in the pews and preaching from pulpits of the churches of Christ. Predictive prophesy by inspired men was true.

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“...I Get to be Naked”

Alan Adams

The entitled quotation is something that someone actually said. it is reflective of the casual attitude that the world, and not a few christians, has toward sexuality, modesty, and propriety. We cite this quotation, not to be sensational or shock sensibilities. There is a point to be made; yet, a little background is essential.

WHO WOULD SAY SUCH A THING AND WHY?

The Olympics had dominated the news for quite some time. Naturally, coaches and athletes alike were interested in anything that might give them the edge in the competition. It seems that the coach of the Canadian swim team, David Johnson, had his own special ideas as to how his charges

might “take home the gold.” In *The Tennessean* (July 22, 1996, 1C), writer, David Climer glibly told the story.

Climer said that “[Coach] ...Johnson established a team policy that declared whoopie a banned substance. His cause/effect logic: No sex, more medals. No pain, no gain you must abstain.” As far as I am concerned, Mr. Climer is a disgusting person, and most of his remarks are disgusting. He finds the whole suggestion of abstinence to be simply hilarious. He scoffs at the notion that anyone might, for whatever reason, suggest that young, virile athletes could possibly, somehow contain themselves.

He said, “When you have this many young, fine-tuned bodies together in one huge dormitory complex, there are a lot of hormones bouncing off the walls.” He quoted a University of Tennessee swimmer, Trip Schwenk as saying, “If they [Canadians, AA] think it’ll help, more power to ‘em. But I’m glad we don’ have rules like that...”

Yes. It would seem that America, as well as the rest of the world, has forgotten how to blush. Johnson, the Canadian coach, is only concerned that his athletes not be “distracted” by sex; Climer and athlete Schwenk are amused at the mere hint that youngsters not be thus “distracted.” One thing is crystal clear, none of them care one whit for what the Bible has to say on the topic: “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb 13:4).

YOUNGSTERS ARE JUST GOING TO DO IT

The “father” of all liars (Jn 8:44), has done a good job of completely blinding the hearts of people into thinking that human beings are like dogs and that sex is some kind of involuntary reflex, like breathing. Is it true that young people are at the mercy of their passions? What does the Bible say? What has the Bible always said?”

“Flee fornication” (1 Cor 6:18). “...because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (7:2). “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3). “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God” (1 Th 4:3-4). “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master’s use, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:21-22).

BRETHREN HAVE BOUGHT INTO THIS LIE

The Holy Spirit was not filling space when he warned, “...be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Rom 12:2). There has always been the danger, in fact, the reality of Christians allowing their moral compasses to be set by the world.

When it comes to this whole subject of sex, some brethren are “dull of hearing” (Heb 5:11), if not downright naïve. Years ago, upon passing a beach in Taiwan, my eldest (then very young) asked, “Why are those people naked?” My (at the time) six-year-old once asked a young guest, “Why are you wearing a bra?” The little friend replied, “It’s not a bra, it’s a bathing suit.” Even a six-year-old understands that what is normally a piece of women’s underclothing and not appropriate for public display, is no less so when you put floral designs on it and call it a bathing suit. It’s not a suit in any sense of the term.

Like the little boy in the story of *The Emperor Who Wore No Clothes*, it seems we still need the unsullied honesty of children to remind us of what we surely know but have suppressed. Taking your clothes off in public: whether at the beach, within the marching band, as a member of the cheerleading squad, or for sports, is called “nakedness” and it is a “shame” (Rev 3:18).

The First Pair shattered original innocence with their disobedience and they “knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7). The prophet Ezekiel describes things that “just” man would do, among them being, “cover[ing] the naked with a garment” (Ezek 18:5, 7). It is frustrating to see so many christians going right along with doing just the opposite. It breaks my heart and angers me at the same time to see adults even happily dressing their very little children, who know no better, in clothing clearly designed to be risqué, even provocative.

BUT, WHAT CONSTITUTES NAKEDNESS?

I often marvel at that the parable Jesus taught of the “unrighteous steward” (Lk 16:1-13). The Lord did not condone this man of the world’s dubious business practices, rather, in reference to this man’s quickness and shrewdness of mind, He said that he had “done wisely.” It was out of this background that the Master said, “the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light” (v. 8).

It is a fact that non-christians are often “wiser” and more forthright in the world of unrighteousness than are christians who are supposed to be “walking in the light” (1 Jn 1:7).

Back to the *Tennessean* article: Listen carefully as one of the “sons of this world” speaks honestly and openly about sex and nakedness:

“...I’m glad we don’t have rules like that [no sex while in competition, AA],” said Tripp Schwenk, a University of Tennessee swimmer, slowly shaking his head and not trying very hard to suppress a smile.

This is after all, a water-logged U.S. delegation that includes Eric Wunderlich, who, when asked why he is still in deep water at the age of 26, said: “I stuck with swimming because I get to be naked.”

I have had many conversations with christians who simply will not be as honest and forthcoming on the topic of sex and nakedness as Mr. Wunderlich has been. If you are determined to give your blessing to your son, daughter, wife, or husband when they go to the beach or the pool in their “suits” [I speak after the manner of men], at least admit, as this Olympian has, they are “naked.”

Fathers and husbands: Please have the love and concern for your daughters and wives that will lead you to sit down with them and to talk openly and frankly about human sexuality, passion, and the power of lust. For far too long, we have sat timidly saying, “Shhh,” while the world defines fashion and fun for us. Sit down with the whole family and candidly discuss what Jesus said about *looking, lusting, and adultery*: “...every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mt 5:28). Read Exodus 20:26, “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that they nakedness be not uncovered thereon.” Then, turn to chapter 28:42, which explains how the priests were to avoid exposing themselves: “Thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ: The Holy Spirit says that we are “to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). Can we be any less concerned about exposing “the flesh of [our] nakedness” than were the priests of old? The bodies of men and women are to be kept pure and private: Pure for the day when you will give yourself in marriage; and, private to all except that one to whom God has joined you (1 Cor 7:1-7; Mt 19:6). “Nakedness” is a shame; it is a sin.

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Is It Wrong To Debate The Bible?

Roger A. Scully, Jr.

Alexander Campbell once wrote, “Public discussion is, we are convinced, one of the best means of propagating the truth and exposing error in doctrine or practice. We now reap the benefits of public debates of former times, and we have witnessed the beneficial results in our own time. And we are fully persuaded that a week’s worth of debating is worth a year’s preaching, such as we generally have, for the purpose of disseminating the truth and putting error out of countenance. There is nothing like meeting face to face in the presence of many witnesses and ‘talking over the matter;’ and the man that cannot govern his own spirit in the midst of opposition and contradiction, is a poor Christian indeed.”

The above was written by Campbell following his debate with W. L. McCalla, a Presbyterian preacher from Kentucky, on October of 1823. Campbell was a one-time affirmer that public debate did more damage to the cause of unity than it was helpful. After he reluctantly accepted the challenge from John Walker (Campbell’s first debate) and seeing the good that came from the discussion, Campbell had a change of heart. Sadly, there are many today who feel the way Campbell once felt.

Most defenders of truth have heard, at one time or another, that it is wrong to debate God’s word. Those who affirm such say, “It is unchristian like,” or “Jesus loves us all and we should all get along.” While I do not deny, and will even affirm, that Jesus loves us all, I cannot, based on my knowledge of the scriptures, agree that it is “unchristian like” to debate God’s holy word, or that we should get along when there are many teaching contrary to truth, and who use “good words and fair speeches” to “deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:18). But, because of the popular belief, which has infiltrated the minds of our brethren; we will take time to answer the question, “Is It Wrong To Debate The Bible?”

In the King James Version of the Bible we find the word “debate” used in Romans 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 12:20. In both instances debate is something that is condemned. Debate is translated from the Greek word *eris*. This same word is translated “strife” in Romans 13:13, and “contentions” in I Corinthians 1:11. It is the idea of having a disposition to be quarrelsome, to engage in strife. This type of debate is condemned.

Though “debate” in the sense of “strife” is condemned, “striving together for the faith of the gospel” is not wrong, but commanded (Phil. 1:27-28). The idea of “striving” is to “contend,” as commanded in Jude 3. *Lenski* has the word “contend” instead of “striving” in Philippians 1:27.

The sense in which “debate” is used in our time is set forth in Webster’s definition: “1. a discussion, esp. of a public question in an assembly, involving opposing viewpoints. 2. a formal contest in which the affirmative and negative sides of a proposition are advocated by opposing speakers. 3. deliberation; consideration. 4. to engage in argument or discussion...6. to deliberate; consider. 7. to argue or discuss (a question, issue, or the like), as in an assembly. 8. to dispute or disagree about...”

Let us now acknowledge that Christians have a responsibility and a duty, which is to be upheld when it comes to defending God’s truth. Paul wrote to Timothy explaining that he was left in Ephesus for the purpose that he might “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (I Tim. 1:3). Charge is translated from the word *PARAGGELLO*, means to command, or demand. So it was that Timothy was to command that no other doctrine be taught. Implied in this is that Timothy could know what the truth was, which could only come from some unquestionable standard.

When we note the context of the book of Jude we learn that “Certain men crept in unawares,” who were “ungodly men” (v. 4). For this cause those to whom Jude wrote were exhorted to “ear-

nestly contend for faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). The idea of “earnestly contend[ing] for” is the idea of wrestling or fighting for the faith. However, we do not fight physically. Our warfare is to be fought with words of truth. Not only is defending God’s truth expected of Christians, we have examples from God’s word of that thing being done.

In Acts 22:12, we find Paul giving a defense before the Jews in Jerusalem, which defense was made in public. On another occasion he even wrote that he was “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). But the greatest example of all is that of Jesus of Nazareth who said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34).

One writer correctly said of Jesus, “He allowed no theories, systems or customs which have to do with human life or destiny to go unchallenged.” In other words, Jesus faced the propagators of error, and that publicly.

On one occasion Jesus, the master teacher, was approached by those of the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They attempted to “get over” on Jesus by asking a question concerning marriage and the resurrection. Jesus responded by saying, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures” (Matt. 22:29). Why did Jesus not say, “You see it your way and I’ll see it mine, and it would be wrong for us to discuss this in public”? The reason was that it was not wrong to refute error and defend truth, especially in public, so that all could see the truth, and the mouths of those in error could be stopped.

On yet another occasion Jesus faced the Pharisees, “which were of Jerusalem” (Matt. 15:1). Here they accused the disciples of Jesus of transgressing “the tradition of the elders,” to which Jesus replied, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (v. 3). In this Jesus acknowledged that the tradition of the elders had been transgressed by His disciples, but the tradition of the elders was not the commandment of God, which had been transgressed by the Pharisees placing their tradition on an equality with the law of God, and by having established traditions which were in contrast to the law of God (v. 4). Jesus then proceeded to teach the truth on the matter, and even explained that their worship was “vain” because they taught “for doctrines the commandments of men” (v. 15).

Not only is it not wrong to debate the word of God, it is commanded, and expected by those who profess to be followers of the Son of God by wearing the name Christian. As Paul instructed the Philippians so are we to “stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27,28). As one writer said, “The only antidote for evil is good, and the only antidote for error is truth.” If we are condemned in our stand for Bible truth and our willingness to defend it, and that publicly, then so is Paul, Timothy, Titus, even our Lord Himself. As our Lord was a great debater in behalf of the truth, so should we be.

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In Whom Do You Trust?

Rodney Cheatham

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). Ancient warriors trusted in horses and chariots for security. We might say, “How foolish to think like that.” Yet, we make the same mistake as they. Does our national security depend on the number of weapons or the military forces our nation possesses? Or is our security tied to the correct foreign policies? Regardless of our mili-

tary might or political skill, it is wise to remember where our national and individual security must lie; in the Lord God of Hosts. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: be we will remember the name of the Lord our God” (Ps. 20:7).

A little child believes its parents will protect it from all harm. Only later will it realize that even its parents cannot measure up to such hopes. Parents are limited in their power. In a similar way those who place their hope and security in any human power or authority will be disappointed. Ultimate security rests in our loving Father who created and sustains the world we inhabit. Therein lies our hope: hope which is centered on His merciful love. Such hope and security will not prove vain!

In today’s society with so many of our political leaders involved in corruption; when many decisions made by our Supreme Court right down through the ranks are leading us away from God and the truth; when our movie and TV producers, along with other well known people are trying to convince us that humanism and immorality are the natural and right things to accept, it is High Time for those of us who believe in the power of God and His might, to Wake Up, and stand for what is correct and proper. Our lack of knowledge of God’s word and our lack of concern of what happens has undermined us.

I am convinced that the great majority of you who read this discussion believe in the power and might of God. Let us renew our knowledge of His will with open hearts and uphold the right. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

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“Shall Suffer Persecution”

Editor’s Note: The following letter from a reader of *Banner of Truth* is being run because it is an example of **Persecution**. This is just one of a number of similar responses from our readers. The name of this reader is being withheld, not because she requested it, but because it might cause further persecution. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul said, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” When a member of the church is put down because of their stand for the plain truth, that is **persecution**. The following letter is from an elderly sister in Christ, and what has happened in her case, has happened in a large measure to other elderly sisters. The letter follows in its entirety.

Dear bro. Pigg:

God bless you for standing for the truth. And thanks for the bundle of BOTs. The one on Urgent Questions Which Elders Should Consider. Here where I go the young folks have brought in clapping when a person is baptized. I talked to three elders about it. Two of them came to my home and talked to me. They said they couldn’t stop them, they had no scripture. We had quite a discussion. They don’t want me to lay any articles down or give any to anyone. That is Catholic doctrine. The Catholics don’t want their members to know anything but what they tell them. Pardon my writing. I have had a stroke and I can’t seem to write anymore. Hope you can read it.

I am not happy there but can’t do anything about it. I told them they could stop that clapping if they wanted to. What next are the kinds going to bring in that they think is o.k.? They said, “oh, the kids are just joyous.” They may be joyous about something else they bring in. I told them the old preachers that blazed the way could stop it if the elders would back them. The preacher got up Sun-

day and said, “What if Paul came to College Street church, what would he say. He would say it is a perfect church? I’m afraid not.”

They are looking for big things. It hurt me to say I couldn’t hand out a good article to read. And they can’t, I’m determined to hand them out and I can’t bow down to that kind of dictatorship. I don’t feel alone in this. God is on my side. I have sat and cried about it. I have my 92 birthday May the 9th, and I wonder when people like you are gone what the church will be then.

I covet your prayers for strength to carry on. I have a real struggle with my sickness. My blood pressure went up to 300 over 100, but the Lord was with me and I came through it better than some thought I would. I figured the Lord had more for me to do. I’m determined to keep trying.

God bless and keep you and sister Pigg. In Christian love — Name withheld by editor.

Easter Worship Services and University church of Christ

The *Murray Ledger & Times*, Tuesday, April 6, 2004, page 14, has a list of eleven churches, under the heading: ***Easter Worship Services***. These four by four inch adds fill almost all the entire page. The following man-made religious bodies were included: First Baptist, Memorial Baptist, First Baptist, St. Leo Catholic Church, New Life Christian Center, First United Methodist, “Poplar Springs, Elm Grove & Cherry Corner Baptist,” St. John’s Episcopal, Emmanuel Lutheran, Eastwood Baptist. In addition to the above man-made bodies, at the top of the page, in the left corner, is the “University Church of Christ.” At 10:00 a.m., Charley Bazzell’s topic is “Why I Believe in the Resurrection of Christ.” At 6:00 p.m. Richard Youngblood’s topic is, “Experiencing the Power of His Resurrection.”

An appropriate question for Charley Bazzell is, “Why do You Believe in Engaging in the Denominational Practices, Which Have No Bible Authority?” If he has ever answered that question, I’m not aware of it. We have written before about the activities of the “University Church of Christ.” They have had their Christmas Program, their Easter Program and a “Pickin and Grinnin” show for July 4th. Once a congregation starts traveling the road of denominationalism, there is seldom a return from that road of error unto the way of truth. It is usually the case that once on the road of error, the speed of travel on that road is accelerated.

How would you like to stand before the Lord on the day of judgment, having been one of the elders at University, or at an increasing number of places which are following the same road? Another timely question is, How would you like to stand before our Lord on the day of judgment, having followed elders and other leaders in God-condemned error?

Thirty-five years ago, when my family and I were with the New Concord congregation, in Calloway County, not a single congregation in the county engaged in such things as the above. If they did, I was not aware of it. Bear in mind that this is taking place right smack in the middle of the “Bible Belt.” If that is happening here, what do you think is happening in other places in our country? The time was that such error as the above would have cause a real stir among brethren. Now we only hear a chirp of concern from a few of our brethren. But God be thanked for deeply concerned brethren who are unafraid to uphold God’s truth. - - *Editor*

READERS' RESPONSE

“Enclosed is a small donation for your Banner of Truth publication which we receive regularly and with much joy. It warms the heart to see one stand firmly for the Truth in a troublesome time for the church. God will bless your efforts, so please continue to press on – **William F. Kelly.**” – **AL.** *(Many thanks for your words of encouragement. People like you are a great source of the same. My aim is to keep on keeping on as long as mentally and physically able. Thanks for your contribution to make our work possible. – Editor.)*

“Remove my name from your mailing list. I did not ask for this publication and do not want it nor agree with most of it – **Carolyn Maddux.**” – **TN.** *(Thanks for letting us know that you want to be removed from our mailing list. This helps us to lower the amount of needless mailings, and saves on our expenses. I don't know who asked that your name be added to our mailing list, unless it was the Lord's church in Crossville. But whoever it was probably thought it would be helpful to you, as it is to thousands. We ask people to express their thoughts about Banner of Truth, and we know that some do not agree with it. But something we encourage people to do is to let us know specifically what they do not agree with. If we are in error in some way, we want to know it, so that we can correct it. In Galatians 6:1, we are taught that if a person be overtaken in a fault, those who are “spiritual” should point this out to the one in error, so that that person can be restored. I just don't know why that almost no one ever follows the above teaching, when they think we are wrong. Would you have any idea as to why this is so? I would just like to know why this is so, from someone that has been involved. We will remove your name from our mailing list. For the cause of truth, Walter W. Pigg, editor).*

“Thank you for publishing ‘Banner of Truth’ and distributing it generously without charge to those of us who receive it. I have enclosed a check to help a little with your expenses. I appreciate you stand for the truth. Your efforts in presenting sound articles is much appreciated. Please keep up the good work – **V. Glenn McCoy.**” – **CA.** *(It is due to brethren like you, who help with our expenses, that we are able to send BOT to thousands without charge. Some might not be able to pay a price – Editor).*

“Just a note to let you know how much we like Banner of Truth, and help you some. We have a boy who preaches for the Pleasant Hill church near Trenton. ‘Robert’ read with interest the letter from one Joe Ankar. My wife was Catholic. In school they were not allowed to read the Bible. I quote, “You can't understand it. We will tell you what it says.” How nice. I have noticed in my years that those who never read God's word are the ones who know it all, but they have never read it. Thank you for everything, you have a great paper and it is really needed – **T. W. & Mary Meredith.**” – **MS.** *(Thanks for your kind remarks and your check to help in our work. I preached at Pleasant Hill from 1964 to 1968. I have met your son. I doubt that many of our brethren realize just to what extent the Catholic Church is built upon outright error. God's word is often put aside to allow their man-made “traditions” to prevail. Their error is not hidden to those who care to examine their teaching and practice – Editor).*

“My husband and I receive the B.O.T. We look forward each time a new one is due. I would like to give you two more names to add to your mailing list. One of these is a young preacher. I feel our young preachers need to educate themselves about the false teachers and doctrines coming into the Lord's church and what better way than to read the B.O.T. –**Carroll & Shirley Miller.**” *(You are so right in your suggestion that young preachers educate themselves as to the state of the church. When I entered school to prepare to preach, just over 50 years ago, false teachers were criticized and opposed. Now, those who stand for the truth uncompromisingly are likely to be criticized and opposed; a drastic change indeed – Editor).*

“Brother Pigg, the article on elders was one of (p. 16)

the best written on elders in the brotherhood. Most will not touch the subject for fear of loosing their job. It is one that is needed so very much in the church today, for when you have qualified elders the church is what it should be. Churches that have trouble often have elders that are not qualified. I appreciate the love for the truth and the stand you take. I pray that you will have many more years in service for the Lord, for when the older preachers have passed on I don't know how strong the church will be, by the way it is going now - **Buster Hughes.**" *(I certainly agree that a strong contributing factor to problems within the church is poor leadership. A number of people in the leadership aren't qualified from the standpoint that they lack a number of the qualifications which God has set forth, including the lack of knowledge to confront false teachers, and often a lack of will to do so - Editor).*

"Return to sender," **Paul Grey.**" - **TN.**

"I called and talked to your lovely wife and asked her to place me on your mailing list for Banner of Truth. I appreciate your love for the Truth. Just keep up you good work. I would like to pass out BOT at the church if you would send me a bundle of 12 or 15. I know other members would love to read. I am also enclosing a small check to help in the work of BOT - **Ronald Davidson.**" - **AL.** *(We are happy to send you a bundle of BOT. We are so thankful when individuals help distribute the paper. Many people, who would have much in common with what we do are not aware of Banner of Truth. Thanks for the check. All help is appreciated - Editor).*

"Can you send me 25 copies of the Dec. issue of Banner of Truth. Send me a statement of charges. The BOT of this date will be very helpful in spreading His word - **Grady Bailey.**" - **TN.**

Has your address changed? You could help us by sending your change of address. Help us save \$\$\$ and don't miss an issue of BOT!

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