

Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

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The Ungodly Act of Wantonly Murdering the Unwanted Unborn

Those who wantonly murder the unwanted unborn children, who is made in the image of God, have undoubtedly reached the highest rung on the ladder of disrespect for God and the sanctity of human life.

When the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973 with its infamous *Roe v. Wade*, then began the sordid story of the freedom to murder unwanted unborn children and signified the breakdown of respect for God. Whereas there were abortions before it was made legal, they were not done on the grand scale we see now. People say, "You can't legislate morality," but the highest court in our land has surely legalized immorality of the worst kind.

God-given principles of right and wrong once generally influenced our society; but, disrespect for God in a nation, which used called a "Christian Nation, took on a new form of growth during and following World War II. Families were disrupted as people went to work in the war factories and served in the military; moral standards began to crumble as never before. This rejection of God and His ways began slowly, but with the passing of time picked up speed. The pace of depravity during the past two or three decades

has been phenomenal, as materialism and secularism have flooded society. In their lust for power and control, politicians as never before have encouraged perverseness and ungodliness. All indications are that the worst is yet to come.

Along with the ungodly practice of abortion, our society has steadfastly headed toward Sodom and Gomorrah at breakneck speed. So many people, however, seem unconcerned.

The same lack of concern and prevalence of indifference which has brought about wholesale murder by abortion has not only encouraged homosexuality but a number of other things which can be expected in a nation and society which has forgotten God.

Murder by abortion is a subject which needs to be kept before everyone who has any respect for God. The recent action of our Supreme Court and the attention it has garnered has encouraged me to address the horrible subject of abortion. →

BANNER OF TRUTH

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I. THE SUPREME COURT'S RECENT ABORTION DECISION PRECIPITATES NEW ROUND OF DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT OF ABORTION

The recent Court's decision has brought forth many comments from each side of the important issue. Anti-abortion people have been encouraged that the Supreme Court has upheld the law which makes one type of abortion illegal. The pro-abortion group, however, has been greatly disturbed that even one kind of abortion has been made illegal. It tells us something when Many people decry a court's decision upholding a narrow ban on taking the life of an innocent child who is literally only inches away from a normal birth and the life that follows.

The type of abortion considered in the recent Supreme Court decision is called "partial-birth abortion," about which more will be said. It is a peculiarly gruesome procedure used to snuff out the life of an unwanted boy or girl baby. Suffice it to say, all

abortion is despicable, but this type is the most heinous of all forms of this terrible sin.

Congress actually passed legislation to ban partial-birth abortion on three occasions. On April 10, 1996, President Clinton issued his first veto of the legislation. On October 10, 1997, Clinton vetoed the legislation the second time. These vetoes made it clear that President Clinton was determined to uphold the evil, in spite of the fact Congress opposed it, as did a considerable majority of Americans. The third time that Congress passed a ban on partial-birth abortion, President Bush signed it into law. But opponents contested and took the matter to the Supreme Court, where the Court approved the ban by a 5-4 decision.

In their efforts to uphold abortion in general, one of the several senseless arguments advanced was that the unborn child is not a human being. Some have describe the unborn child as "a glob of tissue," and nearly always use the term "fetus" rather than simply a baby, a child.

II. IS THE UNBORN CHILD A HUMAN?

In the first place, such a question defies common sense. Before abortion became such a common practice, people where I grew up described a woman who was going to give birth as being "in the family way." They understood that the woman was going to have a baby, not a glob of tissue or a fetus. Mothers understood that what was inside their womb was a living child on its way to a natural birth. Most mothers wanted that child to be normal and healthy, because they had a mother's love for her unborn. The idea of killing the baby because it was unwanted was far from the mind of most mothers. Few doctors would have killed it just to please the mother, or anyone else, for that matter. It is so different now.

For people who truly believe God's word, the question of whether or not a child is a child before birth never occurs to them. The sanctity of life is often emphasized in God's word, and the fact that a child is a human being before birth is also emphasized. When God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26), He was speaking of something which would characterized only the human race. Many references in the Bible make

it clear that what is made in God's image is alive, a person, inside the womb of a mother.

The Psalmist declares that life is in the womb: "For thou has possessed my reins: thou has covered me in my mother's womb, I will praise thee; for I am wonderfully made: marvelous are they works; and that my soul knoweth right well..." (Ps. 139:13-16). Isaiah said, "...the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name...the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant..." (Isa. 49:1-5). An angel appeared to Mary, mother of Christ, and informed her that she would have a child, which would be called "the Son of God." Mary entered the house of Zacharias, "and saluted Elizabeth." When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, "the babe leaped in her womb..." Elizabeth continues and said, "For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Lk. 1:35-44).

Since belief in God has decreased so drastically the past few decades, it is sadly understandable that more and more people now think of the unborn as a nothing, even of less value than animals of the field or forest. If there is no God, then why not kill the unborn; or, even the old and feeble who are no longer worth anything to society? Unless God-fearing people stand up and speak out, there's no telling where the killing will stop. Human life is more highly valued by God than any other, but an American eagle has more protection than the unborn child.

Many aspects of abortion need to be discussed, but we cannot give as much attention to some aspects as we would like. One thing about the abortion discussion, however, which urgently demands attention is the deceptive language used by those who favor and try to justify the evil. As with other evils, proponents of abortion try to gloss it over with semantics.

III. EFFORTS DESIGNED TO MAKE GLOSS OVER ABORTION

Misery loves company; and, practitioners of evil want others to stand with them (cf. Rom. 1:32). This is certainly true in the case of abortion. Evil people use deceit and evil means to uphold their cause. Abortionists, who are simply put pro-murder, wrest and

deceitfully use words.

A responsible person with any degree of respect for the sanctity of human life knows it is wrong to take the life of an innocent human being, whether born or unborn. Even the proabortionist must have some respect for the life of their children and others for whom they care. Otherwise, they would do nothing to protect their lives. To nullify our inherent impulse to respect life, those who uphold killing innocent unborn children take certain steps to disarm those who stand for life. I personally believe that if some mothers who have abortions truly understood the horrible and inhuman action of the process, they would not choose to do so. I can see no other reason for the use of several terms used by abortionists, than to keep people from realizing the true horror of the action.

Why speak of "a woman's right to choose," and make no mention of what the choice really involves; that is, the right to kill an unborn, defenseless boy or girl because she doesn't want him or her? Most people know murder is wrong, which is why abortionists avoid realistic terms. Have you ever heard even a proabortionist call abortion killing, much less murder? Another closely-related misleading term is "pro-choice," which avoids the idea of choosing to kill an unwanted child.

Proabortionists also mislead saying, "The woman has a right to do whatever she wishes with her own body." The fact, however, is that it is not her own body that is under consideration, rather it is that body of a living boy or girl within her womb. If the mother has a right to kill that baby when it is only inches from the exit of the birth canal, why not the same right when it is out of the birth canal? The unborn child had nothing to do with its beginning, but the mother did. How unfair, wicked, to disallow its God-intended life. Other misleading terms are: "women's rights," and "reproductive freedom."

Another noticeable omission in the language of those who favor abortion is the very term "abortion." They shy away from the term, since it sounds worse than "right to choose."

These semantics are designed and used for the benefit of those who oppose abortion. Why so? Because those who have such an evil heart →

as to kill the innocent unborn, would not be affected by terminology which reveals the true picture. If a person has a conscience that is dead, evil is not evil.

The strategy of these pro-murderers has worked quite well. This is seen in the fact that there are so many abortions now being performed in our country. Though they must be well-pleased that so many are taking the lives of the unborn, you are not likely to see them speaking of the extent of this evil of which they are a part. That could possibly cause some people to think, and “thinking” would not be an asset to their cause. But caring people should know how many innocent lives are being taken by this inhuman practice.

III. THE EXTENT OF MURDER BY RUTH-LESS ABORTION CONSIDERED

No one knows the exact number of the murdered. But it is commonly stated that forty-six to forty-eight million lives have been taken since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. This would amount to well over a million lives taken each year. In common language this should be infanticide, a massacre. It is somewhat difficult to realize just how many lives we are talking about, and apparently many are not trying to realize. To help us comprehend the extent of this needless and wanton evil, Texas lawyer and political activist, Gina Parker Ford says, “In 2003, more children died from abortions than Americans died in the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and Gulf wars combined.”

This fact sadly does not seem to shake up or wake up this nation. What has happened to us? Instead of trying to do away with this evil, many are working to increase it. Solomon said, “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 15:34). In view of the evil which abounds in our nation today, we need not expect to be exalted. We can expect, unless there is drastic change, to meet the fate of those of whom David spoke when he said, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17).

Getting back to the recent Supreme Court decision, which has precipitated a great deal of discussion, we shall discuss some of what the Court decision involves. Then we shall consider some of the positive and negative responses to the ruling.

IV. WHAT DOES THE SUPREME COURT’S DECISION INVOLVE?

Though many believe the Supreme Court’s decision is an indication that other rulings on abortion may come, the recent decision pertains *only* to partial-birth abortion. Other abortions are not affected by the ruling. In other words, all other abortions are still legal. A boy or girl baby could be torn limb from limb even as it enters the birth canal, as long as it is not outside the birth canal.

Though the Court’s decision is only a tiny fraction of what is desired by God-fearing people, it is significant in that it is the first ban on any type of abortion since the “Black Monday” of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. The decision is evidence of a change that was urgently needed in the Court. Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, who issued his majority opinion, has before voted to uphold abortion, including partial-birth abortion.

The Court’s decision also suggests there is now a greater respect in our Supreme Court for the constitution of our country. If this respect were carried out to its fullness, all abortion would be made illegal. The decision to uphold the ban on partial-birth abortion was made without any “exception for the health clause,” which had often been used as a loophole for regular abortions where health was not involved.

It is interesting to note the response to the Supreme Court’s ruling. It tells us something about people who have a great deal to do with the governing of our country. We shall give some attention to the response by both the anti- and pro-abortionists.

V. POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE RULING

An editorial in *The Paducah Sun*, Apr. 22, 2007, sets forth an important matter which is so often overlooked by our courts:

The U.S. Constitution, with its clear separation of powers, restricts the judiciary to interpreting laws made by the elected representatives of the people. The court is not authorized to make laws and certainly not charged with creating rights.

AP writer, Julia Hirschfeld Davis, said in *The Paducah Sun*, Apr. 20, 2007: †

The Supreme Court's endorsement of the first federal curbs on an abortion procedure in a generation suggests that even with Democrats in control of Congress, efforts to preserve abortion rights may be losing ground.

Davis also quotes Rep. Steve Cabot, R-Ohio, a leading sponsor of the ban:

"[who] said the court's ruling could return abortion-rights to the states," where he said they belong. "It forced many people to consider what actually occurs when an abortion is carried out," Cabot said. "It's not a reach for one to think that the child is just as much a human being earlier in the process, and those other forms of abortion are pretty awful too."

She cites a statement by Douglas Johnson of the National Right to Life Committee, an anti-abortion group:

"the ruling 'provides further encouragement' to state and federal lawmakers to enact better 'informed consent,' laws, such as those requiring that women be offered an opportunity to see ultrasounds or hear about a fetus' ability to feel pain before they have an abortion."

The Washington Post, April 19, 2007, quotes President Bush as saying the decision "affirms the Constitution does not stand in the way of the peoples' representatives enacting laws reflecting the compassion of humanity in America." Bush went on to say, "The Supreme Court's decision is an affirmation of the progress we have made over the past six years in protecting human dignity and upholding the sanctity of life."

Various sources have said that the Court's decision was favored by a considerable majority of people. Even some who are in favor of abortion in general, are opposed to the partial-birth procedure. We may perhaps positively view the ruling with hope and reason to believe that the future may bring about other restrictions on the evil act of abortion. At least one step in the right direction has been made, and if one step has been made, others could follow. Let us all pray that such will be the case.

Another matter, which brings hope to those who have any respect for the sanctity of life, is the fact that the law in some areas protect the life of the unborn making it illegal to take the life of the unborn. Of course there is a great inconsistency involved in

this matter. It is illegal to kill the unborn, with the exception of abortion. It does not make much sense to make it illegal to kill the unborn but allow the abortionist to kill the unborn legally.

A much publicized case was that of the murder of Laci Peterson and her unborn son. Scott Peterson, the father of Laci's son, is now on death row. He was charged and convicted of the murder of both Laci Peterson and her son. This case led to the passage of a federal law, "The Unborn Victims of Violence Act," or "Laci and Conner's Law." This law, however, does not go far enough. It does not make it illegal for an abortionist to take the life of the unborn boy or girl. Let us pray that such laws, which make it illegal to kill the unborn by acts of violence, will also make it illegal to kill by abortion.

VI. NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE RULING

Be reminded; these negative responses have to do with the partial-birth abortion which allows the murder of the child when only its head remains in the birth canal. The child is murdered in a most horrific way, having its brains suctioned out by powerful vacuum device.

Before noting some negative responses, some of them with anger, to the Court's action, bear in mind that we earlier pointed out that President Clinton vetoed the Congress approved ban on partial-birth abortion twice in the 1990s. This was in opposition to the majority of the people and the Congress.

Syndicated Columnist Cal Thomas quotes The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists who called the court's decision "shameful and incomprehensible." Stop, and think. They are saying it is a shameful and incomprehensible thing to protect an emerging baby from cold blooded murder. How much lower can such people go?

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a very liberal justice wrote: "The court's defense of it [the ruling] cannot be understood as anything other than an effort to chip away at a right declared again and again by this court." The court had no right to declare a right to murder unwanted children. To declare something wrong to be right does not make it so, regardless of how many times it is declared. A Supreme Court Justice should know this. Had Ginsburg's mother had →

the mind of her daughter, Justice Ginsburg might not be around today; the same would be true of many pro-abortionists.

Liberal Senator, Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said, “By validating a ban on such abortions, the court has taken the first major step back toward the days when abortion was illegal.” Can you imagine a mother — and Feinstein is one — thinking it is right to puncture the skull of her child and suction out his brains? Evil, when unbridled, has few limits.

Note the words of Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America: “The court has given anti-choice state lawmakers the green light to open the flood gates and launch additional attacks on safe, legal abortion, without any regard for women’s health.” Once again: so-called “women’s health” is just one of the deceitful efforts to try to justify the evil of abortion. Evil people will do evil things in an effort to justify their evil deeds.

The aforementioned AP writer, Davis, said, “Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said they would reintroduce a measure to put a woman’s right to have an abortion in federal law....” Within minutes after the Supreme Court ruling, pro-abortion members of Congress raced to introduce what they called a Freedom of Choice Act which would reverse the decision of the Supreme Court, Congress and the President.

Jay Sekulow writes, “For Senators Barbara Boxer, Hillary Clinton, Charles Schumer, and others to introduce a bill (H.R. 1964 and S.1173) enshrining abortion into law is nothing less than a brazen, political move – but it is also extremely dangerous.”

Much more could be said with regard to the dastardly actions of those who encourage and uphold murder by abortion, but we move on to another aspect of abortion. This has to do with the process of partial-birth abortion and the actions which take place in the process. It is hard for me to understand how anyone with any conscience could stand for such evil. But they do.

VII. WHAT TAKES PLACE IN A PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION?

God forbid that I should ever have witnessed a partial-birth abortion. At the age of sixteen, I was out of

high school and went to work in a VA hospital. I worked as an orderly in the operating room. The first day, they allowed me to just watch the operations. That did not upset me; but, from what I know about partial-birth abortions, I would not be able to watch such a ghastly procedure.

The following is a description of the partial-birth procedure, beginning at the later stage.

With a lower extremity [of the baby] in the vagina, the surgeon uses his fingers to deliver the opposite lower extremity, then the torso, the shoulders and the upper extremities. The skull lodges at the internal cervical os. Usually there is not enough dilation for it to pass through. The fetus is oriented dorsum or spine up. At that point, the right-handed surgeon slides the fingers of the left hand along the back of the fetus and “hooks” the shoulders of the fetus with the index and ring fingers (palm down). Next he slides the tip of the middle finger along the spine towards the skull while applying traction to the shoulders and lower extremities. The middle finger lifts and pushed the anterior cervical lip out of the way. While maintaining the tension, lifting the cervix and applying traction to the shoulders with the fingers of the left hand, the surgeon takes a pair of blunt curved Metzenbaum scissors in the right hand. He carefully advances the tip, curved down, along the spine and under middle finger until he feels it contact the base of the skull under the tip of his middle finger. Reassessing proper placement of the closed scissors tip and safe elevation of the cervix, the surgeon then forces the scissors into the base of the skull, he spreads the scissors to enlarge the opening. The surgeon removes the scissors and introduces a suction catheter into this hole and evacuates the skull contents. With the catheter still in place, he applies traction to the fetus, removing it completely from the patient.

Only a conscience “seared with a hot iron” (1Tim. 4:2), would not be deeply bothered by this.

Even more troubling is the testimony of a witness. In September, 1993, Brenda Pratt Shafer, a registered nurse with thirteen years of experience, was assigned by her nursing agency to an abortion clinic. Since Nurse Shafer considered herself “very pro-choice” she did not think this assignment would be a problem. She was wrong. This is what Nurse Shafer saw: †

I stood at the doctor's side and watched him perform a partial-birth abortion on a woman who was six months pregnant. The baby's heartbeat was clearly visible on the ultrasound screen. The doctor delivered the baby's body and arms, everything but his little head. The baby's body was moving. His little fingers were clasping together. He was kicking his feet. The doctor took a pair of scissors and inserted them into the back of the baby's head, and the baby's arms jerked out in a flinch, a startle reaction, like a baby does when he thinks that he might fall. Then the doctor opened the scissors up. Then he put the high-powered suction tube into the hole and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby was completely limp. I never went back to the clinic. But I am still haunted by the face of that little boy. It was the most perfect, angelic face I have ever seen.

During the past few years opposition to the death penalty has grown considerably. We are talking about the putting to death of criminals who have committed horrible crimes. God's word teaches that the civil government has the power to use the sword, that is, put people to death for their crimes. It is ironic that one of the arguments against the death penalty is that it is "cruel and inhuman." What, I ask, could be more cruel and inhuman than the terrible punishment inflicted upon innocent children when they are killed by abortion? This horrific evil was legal, but has only just been banned by the Supreme Court. But other forms of abortion are still legal, and the methods used to take those innocent lives are also horrible beyond description.

The practice of abortion is indeed very troubling to me, and should be to every person who has any faith in God. Yet, some who claim to believe in God are guilty of encouraging the practice in one way or another. There are many questions that should be asked and matters discussed. I will admit that I do not know exactly how to go about it, but I am going to suggest a question that covers a lot of territory, and that question is:

VIII. JUST WHAT ARE PEOPLE THINKING ABOUT THE PRACTICE OF ABORTION?

Killing millions of unborn children is nothing less than genocide. It is the systematic eradication of a large social group, unborn babies. It is as though many have something against the unborn and want to do away with them. Come to think of it, they do have something against them: they are alive, and inconvenient.

It is a natural thing for a mother to love her child. It is both natural for women to want to have children, and to protect them. Even most animals want to protect their offspring. It is sad that some mothers, and fathers, and the doctors and those who assist them in the murder of the unborn, do not have that love for life that God intended.

We can be thankful that most mothers and fathers still have that love for children that God intended. It is interesting to note how that newborn children, or the very young, draw the attention of adults, and of other children. At Hickory Grove, we have three children just months old. At church meetings, a number of adults gravitate toward those children. They want to look at them, touch them, and hold them. Other children are drawn to the youngsters as well. It is hard for me to understand how any adult who has known the joy of holding a newborn, touched its silky smooth skin, sensed the smell of that bundle of joy, as it is cuddled against the face or chest, could even think about murdering that precious human being which was made in the image of God. Those who can are surely and unfortunately evil in heart.

I wonder if the mother, who has her child legally murdered by abortion, ever dreams of the evil she has done? Can she pillow her head at night and go to sleep with a good conscience? How can she?

What about the doctor who may have murdered hundreds or even thousands of innocent boys and girls, and deprived them of the right to live? Does he do this evil deed for money? Some people, actually quite a few people, will do just about anything for money. Paul said, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (I Tim. 6:10, ASV). Do the doctor and his →

assistants have a conscience?

Then, there is the politician who campaigns on a promise and assurance that he or she will continue to uphold the right of mothers to have their children murdered legally. The time was that politicians were more likely to promise something good. That has changed; it is more common now for them to promise evil rather than good. Do politicians have a conscience? Evidently some do not, or if they do it is on the verge of total death.

I wonder what goes on in the mind of some of my brethren? They may claim they do not believe in abortion, but they betray their statement when they support the abominable practice of abortion through the political process. Sometimes even elders of the church politically support this evil. Do they have a conscience? Surely, they do. But then, Paul says that in the later times some shall depart from the faith, “having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1Tim. 4:2). Just as many evil things took place in New Testament times, evil things are still happening within the church. If anyone has a conscience which is alive and sensitive, it should be members of the church including all in leadership.

IX. WHAT SHOULD WE, AS CHRISTIANS, DO ABOUT THE SIN OF ABORTION?

The first thing we should do is to learn what God’s word has to say about the subject. If we do not know what God’s word teaches on a subject, we are not going to be able to uphold that which is right. Just to say, “I think so and so,” does not mean much. People “think” all manner of things which are nor right.

When we know the truth about a matter, we must not be afraid to uphold that truth. I’ve heard people say about some error being taught, “I just did not say anything.” What a pity. When we do not speak up for the truth against error, we are allowing the error to go unchallenged with the truth. It is indeed a compliment to be called “a fighter” when it comes to upholding the truth. This is exactly what the New Teaches us to be.

We are to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The word “contend” carries the idea of fighting, a combatant. Paul told Timothy to, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...” (1Tim. 6:12). Error, including abortion, often prevails because people who know the truth do not uphold it.

Elders should see that preachers and teachers teach the truth about abortion; they should know the truth themselves, and know when it is being taught. The fact that some may disagree on a subject is no reason for not teaching the truth. In fact, if there is disagreement with the truth there is even more need to present the whole truth.

We should oppose the practice of abortion through the political process. As citizens of our country we have the right to help choose our leaders. Our country is run by politicians; and, as we choose our leaders through the political process we have a responsibility to support those who will be the most in keeping with what is morally right. There are no perfect politicians, but some are less odious than others. One of the most disappointing things to me is when members of the church give their loyalty to a political party which promotes, encourages and bids God speed to the practice of murder by abortion, especially when they had a choice to do otherwise.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to point out some of the evils of abortion, and call attention to the horror that is involved. We trust that this discussion may encourage some to put forth more effort in opposition to this evil, and encourage others to do likewise.

Finally, we should not be discouraged as we face the evils of our day. Others have faced greater trials than we are facing, and remained faithful. If they did, so can we. We close with Paul’s admonition:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). —*Editor*

Was Cornelius Lost Before Peter Brought Him the Gospel?

Over the years I have heard many a good lesson on Cornelius in which he was described as a “good moral man” who was lost and needed to be saved. Fifty years ago, when I first began preaching, I likely described him that way myself. I would not do that now, because I am convinced that Cornelius’ example does not fit that mold. Let us carefully consider the case of Cornelius and apply it correctly.

Who was this Cornelius, who is mentioned several times in Acts 10? “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band” (v. 1). From this we learn that he was a military man, a “centurion,” one in charge of a hundred men.

How was Cornelius described spiritually? He is “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (v. 2). The men sent to Peter from Cornelius described him as “Cornelius the centurion, a just man [righteous, ASV], and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nations of the Jews...” (v. 22). A man “in bright clothing” said, “Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God” (v. 31).

Cornelius clearly had a very good relationship with God. The same things said of a Christian today would be commendable. Is it as simple as saying that Cornelius was in a lost, albeit “good” man when Peter came to him? We will say more about that later.

Cornelius was a Gentile. This was a very significant thing, because the gospel had not been offered to the Gentiles before its having been preached to Cornelius. When Peter went in to speak to those gathered together, he said, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (v. 28), thus showing Cornelius was a Gentile. In Acts 11, we find the brethren contending with Peter for going in to “men uncircumcised” (vv. 1-3).

The brethren had heard that “the Gentiles had also received the word of God” (v. 1).

It was somewhat difficult for Peter to understand that the Gentiles were now entitled to hear the gospel. The vision he had; Cornelius’s sending for him, etc. had persuaded him of the fact. He concluded, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accept with him” (10:34-35).

Why do some think that Cornelius was in a lost condition when Peter came to him? In Acts 11, when Peter was rehearsing what had happened with reference to Cornelius, he said:

And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man’s house: And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him. Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter: Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved (vv. 12-14).

As we noted, it is not as simple as saying Cornelius was a lost “good” man. The text does not say Cornelius was lost before Peter came to him. At this point, the Gospel had not yet been preached to Gentiles in general, and Cornelius in particular. This was eight or nine years after Pentecost during which time the gospel was preached only to the Jews.

An important transition takes place in the Book of Acts: A transition from divinely-given Judaism and Patriarchy to the Law of Christ. When Peter brought the gospel to Cornelius, a faithful Gentile living under Patriarchy, he then became responsible for obedience to the gospel, the Law of Christ. If we simply say Cornelius was a lost “good” man before he heard the gospel, that raises some difficult questions —

1. Was Cornelius lost because he had not obeyed the gospel, though he could not have done so because it was not yet available to him?

2. Did God arbitrarily condemn Cornelius for failure to obey the gospel when He (God) →

had not yet made it available to him?

3. Were all the Gentiles lost, and hopeless, from the Day of Pentecost, when the church was established, until Peter took the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile?

4. Were all the Gentiles lost from the giving of the Law of Moses until the gospel was given to Cornelius?

5. Were the Gentiles ever under the Law of Moses, unless they became proselytes?

6. Did the Law of Patriarchy *not* continue in force for the Gentiles after the Law of Moses was given?

7. Is there any evidence that Cornelius was not living under the Law of Patriarchy before Peter came to him with the gospel?

8. Was Cornelius amenable to the Gospel, only when Peter brought it to him and not before?

9. Is it proper to compare Cornelius to “a good moral man” today who is lost?

10. Is any person living today under the same circumstances as was Cornelius?

I believe each of these questions warrant a negative answer; which ones would not?

Cornelius was surely under some law from God? If he was under no law, by what means would it have been said of him that he was a righteous man, a man whose prayers were heard whose alms were had in remembrance in the sight of God?

The important lesson we should learn from the account of Cornelius, is not that he was a sinner in need of salvation before he could obey the gospel, but that he was a man with a good and commendable relationship with God, who was blessed as the first Gentile to have the gospel offered unto him, and that he was responsible for obeying the gospel when it was made known to him.

The gospel was intended for all men, but it was first given to the Jews only. But with the conversion of Cornelius and his house it became clear that, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (11:18). Peter asked, “what was I, that I could withstand God?” (v. 17). This great news resulted in the glorifying of God.

—Editor

What Are “The Steps of Conversion”?

Though some people frown on the idea of “steps of conversion,” but there are different actions involved, and the examples of conversions in the New Testament bear this out. In the process of conversion there is a starting place and an ending action resulting in conversion, a change, to a Christian.

Faith is the starting place. The number of atheists in our country is growing. An atheist does not believe in God. That person can never become a Christian unless he comes to faith in God. The writer of Hebrews says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). A person must also believe Christ is God’s Son (Jno. 8:24). Saving faith comes from hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17).

Repentance is a response to faith. When a person comes to believe in God, God’s demand of repentance is respected. Repentance is a change of mind with respect to God and His will, and results in turning from sin to do the Lord’s will. Talking to those who knew not God, Paul said, “and the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Confession of faith. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). When Philip preached Jesus unto the Ethiopian they came to a certain water, and the eunuch asked what hindered him in being baptized. Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. “And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:35-37).

Baptism into Christ. The consummating step in conversion in baptism, the means by which one gets into Christ. In every conversion recorded in the book of Acts, baptism is the last step in that conversion. That baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) and it puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:27).

The converted one, the Christian, must continue to be a faithful servant of God: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

—Editor

No One Can Legislate with Regard to Morality

Marvin L. Weir

Wicked, perverse, and pro-immoral people scream loud and long that no one is to legislate morals. How dare anyone say that something is right or wrong unless the someone is speaking in opposition to Christian principles and ethics. The government can no longer state what is morally right. The public schools can no longer affirm what is morally right. Private business can no longer say publicly what is morally right. And, according to those advocating blatant immorality, God can no longer declare what is morally right.

The word “abomination” is used 79 times in the American Standard Version of the Bible. Words have meaning, and the meaning of this word is not good. Dare I make such a statement? Yes, I do, and the scholars on such matters agree. *Brown, Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* say the word abomination (*tow’ebah*) means: “in [an] ethical sense [it is] used of wickedness, etc.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* says:

First, to’ebah defines something or someone as essentially unique in the sense of being “dangerous,” “sinister,” and “repulsive” to another individual... Another clear illustration of this essential clash of disposition appears in Prov. 29:27: “An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.” When used with reference God, this nuance of the word describes people, things, acts, relationships, and characteristics that are “detestable” to Him because they are contrary to His nature.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament states:

This word is primarily understood in the context of the Law. It identifies unclean food (Deut. 14:3); the activity of the idolater (Isa. 41:24; the practice of child sacrifice (Deut. 12:31); intermarriage by the Israelites (Mal. 2:11); the religious activities of the wicked (Prov. 21:27); and homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22). In a broader sense, the word is used to identify anything offensive (Prov. 8:7).

God, our Creator, states clearly that homosexuality is an abomination. “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). God stresses again, “And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). In the New Testament the Bible

states: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due” (Rom. 1:26-27).

The March 16, 2007 edition of *One News Now* reports: “Homosexual groups are criticizing Super Bowl champion coach Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis for his upcoming appearance before a pro-family group...homosexual activists are pressuring him not to attend because of the Institute’s opposition to same sex marriage.”

And, most everyone is aware of the uproar Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, caused when he stated that homosexual acts are immoral, likened such a lifestyle to adultery, and said the military should not condone homosexuality. Of course, such a remark did not appeal to homosexual advocacy groups, and one group immediately criticized Presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for not speaking out against General Peter Pace. So, these two aspiring leaders of our nation quickly “spoke out” as reported by *One News Now*:

“Well, I’ve heard from a number of my friends, and I’ve certainly clarified with them any misunderstanding that anyone had, because I disagree with General Pace completely,” Clinton told Bloomberg News. “I do not think homosexuality is immoral.”

Obama can ill-afford to fall behind Hillary in his bid for the Presidency, so according to *One News Now* he affirms:

“I do not agree with General Pace that homosexuality is immoral,” the Illinois Democrat noted. Attempts to divide people like this have consumed too much of our politics over the past six years.

I am grateful that neither Hillary nor Obama will have the last word on this matter. Too many people evidently believe that a standard of morality no long exists. The Bible, and all who love God’s Word, begs to disagree. God says, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9-10).

—1272 Bonham St., Paris, TX 75460

Seventh Annual Banner of Truth Lectures

Murray, KY, June 25 – 28, 2007

Place: Murray State University Campus

Curriss Center: Third-floor Theater

**Theme: The Urgent Need and Basis for Optimism
within the Lord's Church**

**The facilities are excellent with comfortable seating,
lighting, and a good sound system**

Twenty-two Speakers will present 28 lessons during the four days, with sessions beginning at 10:00 a.m. and ending with the 8:00 p.m. lesson each day.

In these perilous times we have never seen a greater need for optimism than now. God be thanked, we have the basis for that optimism if we take God at His word.

Every person who loves the truth and the cause of Christ can be uplifted and encouraged if they attend these Bible-based lessons.

Motel accommodations: We have arranged special rates with the Best Western University Inn, 1503 N. 12th St. The rate per room is about \$42.70 and that includes tax. I'm told by those who have stayed there that the motel has a good breakfast. The motel phone is: (270) 753-5353. Individuals making reservations should specify that it is with Walter Pigg and the Hickory Grove church of Christ. If you desire for us to make reservations, you may call me at: (270) 753-3675, or Richard Guill at: (270) 489-6219, or Virgil Hale: (270) 767-0625.

Camper Park: Holly Green Park, 102 Parks St., Murray. Rate per day: \$15.00 for a complete hookup. Phone: 753-5652.

We encourage brethren to attend, and encourage others to do so. Get a group together, and come partake of a spiritual feast.

—Editor

SCHEDULE FOR BOT LECTURES — JUNE 25-28, 2007

MONDAY, JUNE 25

10:00 a.m.	<i>The Need and Basis for Optimism within the Lord's Church</i>	Alan Adams
11:00 a.m.	<i>Fight To Lay Hold on Eternal Life</i>	Roger Scully
1:30 p.m.	<i>Power To Overcome Temptation</i>	Rick Knoll
2:30 p.m.	<i>Overcoming the Influence of Busybodies</i>	Garland Robinson
3:30 p.m.	<i>Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord</i>	Guyton Montgomery
7:00 p.m.	<i>He That Winneth Souls Is Wise</i>	Roger Campbell
8:00 p.m.	<i>God's Faithful People Will Be Saved</i>	Ken Burleson

TUESDAY, JUNE 26

10:00 a.m.	<i>Some Will Turn Away Their Ears from the Truth</i>	Roger Campbell
11:00 a.m.	<i>Being an Example of Believers</i>	Steve Baisden
1:30 p.m.	<i>Committing the Truth to Faithful Men</i>	Ken Burleson
2:30 p.m.	<i>Overcoming the Devil by God's Armor</i>	Caleb Campbell
3:30 p.m.	<i>The Blessings of True Unity in Christ</i>	Walter Pigg
7:00 p.m.	<i>A Crown Laid up for Me</i>	Garland Robinson
8:00 p.m.	<i>Overcoming Non-Contenders for the Faith</i>	Leon Cole

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

10:00 a.m.	<i>A Rest for the People of God</i>	Leon Cole
11:00 a.m.	<i>Beware Ear Ticklers and the Tickled</i>	Jacob Campbell
1:30 p.m.	<i>The Eyes of the Lord Are over the Righteous</i>	Jeff Bates
2:30 p.m.	<i>False Prophets in the World</i>	Lloyd Gale
3:30 p.m.	<i>Loyalty to Christ, Not People or Places</i>	Richard Guill
7:00 p.m.	<i>The Lord Is Not Willing That We Perish</i>	Virgil Hale
8:00 p.m.	<i>I Know Whom I Have Believed</i>	Alan Adams

THURSDAY, JUNE 28

10:00 a.m.	<i>On the Right Hand, Eternal Life</i>	Robert Alexander
11:00 a.m.	<i>Food To Prevent Spiritual Starvation</i>	Rusty Stark
1:30 p.m.	<i>Continued Forgiveness by Walking in the Light</i>	Jimmy Bates
2:30 p.m.	<i>Beware the Influence of Lukewarmness</i>	Paul Curless
3:30 p.m.	<i>The Lord Is with Us When We Take His Word</i>	David Lemmons
7:00 p.m.	<i>Victory for the Overcomers</i>	Roger Scully
8:00 p.m.	<i>No Death, Sorrow, Crying or Pain in Heaven</i>	Lenard Hogan

Caution: Religious Routine Can Be Hazardous To Your Health

Daniel is a good example of a transitional conservative. His life can be described on the one hand in terms of changes which were forced upon him. Yet, in the midst of all the change, he remained the quintessential conservative. His faith, character, and practice remained the same, and through this God blessed him. In about 605 BC, he was ripped from his homeland by the Babylonians and placed within the court of king Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs. Verse 8 of chapter one is so characteristic of how Daniel dealt with changing circumstances: "Daniel purposed in his heart..." Verse 9 is characteristic of the results of Daniel's conviction: "God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs."

About sixty seven years later (538 BC)—in accordance with God's promise to the then Babylonian king, "thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (5:28)—"Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (31). Darius set about to shake things up in his newly acquired empire. One would think these would have been scary times for someone like Daniel who had served in the old Babylonian order, but no, he instead became one of three presidents who were over the kingdom's 120 provincial "satraps" or governors (Daniel 6:1-3). Darius was so impressed with this Hebrew's "excellent spirit" that he "thought to set him over the whole realm." This didn't set too well with the other presidents and the governors, so they began to look for ways to get rid of Daniel. It proved to be easier said than done, for though "the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel as touching the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (4). Thus, they thought to use Daniel's religious habits against him. They said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. (5).

THE LAW OF HIS GOD. Gesenius says that the Hebrew word *dawth*, here rendered "law," has reference to "religion, *or* system of religion" (pp. 210-211). It's this sense of the term used by Daniel to describe one who centuries later would arise and "think to change the times and the law" (7:25). In other words, the jealous bureaucrats hoped they could hang Daniel on the basis of his actions and practices as governed by God's law: The way he lived his life. The New Berkeley Version has, "We shall find no ground of complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with service to his god" (6.5).

DANIEL'S SERVICE, OR RELIGION, GETS HIM INTO TROUBLE. Appealing to the pride of Darius and using the rule that "the law of the Medes and Persians...altereth not" (6:8), Daniel's antagonists connived to have a decree passed stating that, "whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions" (7). The plan was ingenious. They knew what Daniel's religious habits and routine were. Thus in verse 10,

...when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

The NBV says he did all these things "as he was accustomed to do." One might fairly, albeit with irony, ask the question, Would a little less routine and pattern—a little more spontaneity perhaps—in Daniel's spiritual life have made life easier for him? Isn't this a case of a person's religion just being entirely too predictable? Maybe Daniel just needed to shake things up, vary them a bit. Enough!

WOULD YOUR RELIGION, UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, GET YOU INTO TROUBLE? Daniel went about doing what he had always done, and we're told, †

“these men [Daniel’s accusers] assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God” (11). Were the police out to arrest you on Sunday morning at your congregation’s typical Bible study time, could they bank on finding you there? Would they catch you at the evening assembly; or, Wednesday at 7:00 PM? There are way too many brethren who would never get into Daniel’s predicament, for the simple reason: *They are unpredictable and undependable as to their lives and service.*

Some brethren live their lives as though they were undergoing espionage training. People trained to be spies are taught to avoid habits and routines. Don’t do the same thing twice. Daniel surely would have flunked this course, but many Christians today would undoubtedly earn high marks as their religious lives and service are totally lacking in routine or habit.

MAYBE SOME JUST THINK A SPONTANEOUS RELIGION IS MORE MEANINGFUL. Periodically one comes across the notion that we need more spontaneity in our religion; that by doing things according to habit, system, or routine, we lose the meaning and spirit of things. Why this is necessarily so? — Thus far, no one has stepped up to say. One suspects lovers of spontaneity in religion would have a fit if employers and schools decided spontaneity were a good thing. Are there things in our lives as Christians which ought to be predictable?

Should people be able to set their clocks, or make plans, based on what they know to be our habit or practice? Are there people who would be deterred from coming to your house on Sunday night between six and seven because they know from long-standing observation of your practice that you won’t be there?

Or, what of this “prayerful attitude thing”? Isn’t that what Paul means when he says, “Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17)? It’s a bit difficult to have a prayerful attitude while you’re asleep. But, Paul’s admonition makes perfect sense in light of Daniel’s practice: “*He kneeled upon his knees*

three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

Or, what of this feeling more spiritual thing? Do you suppose there are those who really believe that it is best not to get into a practice or routine, lest we lose the right feeling and become less spiritual? They truly think that, Variety is the spice of life. But, we learn that their “variety” is based solely upon a manipulation of external things: order of worship, dimming the lights, speed and modulation of a song’s chorus, and so on. To the point of weariness, we repeat, *When one’s feelings about worship, or sense of spirituality, depends on spontaneity, there is something seriously amiss in that person’s thinking and life.* Fiddling around trying to “pump” people up with T-shirts, slogans, innovative singing, Bee Bop worship, testimonials, and a whole lot of crying is folly.

I will take Daniel’s spiritual life any day. Note the *order* of things: 1) he went into his house, 2) his windows were *already* [as per his custom] open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, 3) he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and 4) prayed. I once listened to that “spiritual giant,” Marvin Phillips make fun of our assemblies where we, “Push a little button and pray, push a little button and sing...” We wonder what he would say about Daniel and his “buttons”?

THE REST OF THE STORY. When Darius knew that he had been had, he was “sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. (6:14). It was no use, Daniel had to die in the lion’s den. The king could not sleep that night, and the next morning he approached the execution chamber with apprehension. With “a lamentable voice” he “cried...and said, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions” (20)? The NBV says, “Has your God, whom you worship so regularly, been able to save you”?— Daniel’s “regular worship” had “shut the lions’ mouths.”

Dearest friend and loved one in the Lord. Could Darius describe you in this way? —AA

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Speaking of Spontaneity

Let us note a couple of experiences and raise some observations and complaints. While I was once in an assembly, the song leader announced we would be singing “There’s Not A Friend Like The Lowly Jesus,” only, he told the audience, “This version of the song will be different from that in the book. For those of you who are fans of __ you will recognize it.”

First of all, the “fan” thing set my teeth on edge, and that because it is all too true. We have developed such an entertainment mindset, that there is no doubt many brethren have become “fans” or groupies of some preachers and song leaders. In — I believe — 1984, at Freed-Hardeman, I was appalled at the sight (and sound) of an auditorium full of mind-numbed groupies wildly applauding Rubel Shelly who had just essentially said, nothing. Icons come really cheap these days.

Second, as regards the song leader. A tune is not sacred; and it was not so much that he put an old classic to a hip hop tune, but more that few knew the tune he was singing. But, even more egregious, in my estimation, was his personal, spontaneous, ad-libbing. All we needed were a few “Oh yeahs,” or “Yeah, yeah, yeahs,” and that song would have really flown.

Stick in the mud?—What comes of “decently and in order” if everyone in the assembly decides to get spontaneous? At what point does the song leader cease leading congregational singing and become a solo entertainer? Are we supposed to be singing together? The same thing? Are all equally free to ad lib? So, when the song leader ad-libs “Sing it now church,” may I follow with a “Sing it to yourself”? I have said it before: Somewhere behind this is a misguided notion of what it means to be “spiritual.” —AA

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