

WE CONFESS

April—June
2014

Newsletter of The Confessing Movement
Within The United Methodist Church

CONNECTIONAL TABLE DISCUSSES HUMAN SEXUALITY

(By Dr. Bill Bouknight)

On April 29, the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church (UMC) offered a panel discussion on human sexuality. After an opening presentation by the new leader of the General Board of Church and Society, Susan Henry-Crowe, a devotional message by Bishop James Dorff focused on Jesus' plea in John 17 that the church "may be brought to complete unity." He expressed the hope that even though United Methodists disagree on matters of sexual morality, hopefully they can still "be one of heart and mind." Interestingly, his lesson began with verse 20 and did not include verse 17—"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

Including Susan Henry-Crowe, there were five speakers. Bishop Dorff attempted to be neutral in regard to the Church's position on homosexuality. The other four speakers split three to one in favor of changing the Church's position. In addition, the moderator of the panel, Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, though scrupulously fair in managing the discussion, has a history of promoting change on this issue.

It was a cause of concern that no question was

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raised about the seven specific Scriptural passages that are quite negative toward homosexual practice.

The token conservative on the panel, Dr. Mark Teasdale, pointed out the conflict between the Wesleyan tradition and the American tradition. Wesley's high view of Scripture and his focus on holiness caused him to regard homosexuality as sin. By way of contrast, American tradition focuses on "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Every person's pursuit of happiness is legitimate, without regard to religious approval or disapproval. The conflict between the Wesleyan and American traditions is being reflected in the UMC today.

The real heart of United Methodism's struggle over sexual morality may have been addressed by Bishop Daniel Arichea, Jr., of the Philippines. He stated that some parts of Scripture are "timeless truths" and other

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John
Wesley

"Preach our doctrine, inculcate experience, urge practice, enforce discipline. If you preach doctrine only, the people will become antinomians (those who believe that Christians are freed from the moral law by the dispensation of grace); if you preach experience only, they will become enthusiasts; if you preach practice only, they will become Pharisees; and if you preach all these and do not enforce discipline, Methodism will be like a highly cultivated garden without a fence, exposed to the ravages of the wild boar of the forest."

parts are “time-bound messages.” Those time-bound messages, and he includes the passages about homosexuality in this category, need to be adjusted by science and modern scholarship.

One of the problems with Bishop Arichea’s view is that it disagrees with the official United Methodist position that ALL SCRIPTURE is “the true rule and guide for faith and practice” (Paragraph 104, Article III).

Furthermore, if one presumes to designate parts of Scripture as “first-class” and others parts as “second-class,” such a position expresses extraordinary arrogance and lack of respect for the ancient church councils which, led by the Holy Spirit, decided which books to include in the canon. To put the

church on that slippery slope is to risk ending up where the people of Israel were at the end of the book of Judges: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25).

The April 29th discussion of sexual morality may have been well motivated, but it was a monotonous repeat of what we have seen so often---- an attempt to change orthodox, traditional believers to the liberals’ point of view. But as Bishop Dorff admitted, not many United Methodists are on the fence anymore. Most know where they stand on the presenting issue—sexual morality—and, more importantly, on the fundamental issue—the authority of Holy Scripture. ♦

HONORING A SAINT

(In April the Roman Catholic Church canonized two popes—John XXIII and John Paul II. Bernard Lecomte, in an essay in *L’Osservatore Romano*, made the following observations about John Paul, as quoted by Peggy Noonan in a *WALL STREET JOURNAL* editorial.)



Pope John Paul II

“John Paul passionately defended his convictions in matters of family and sexuality and was the first pope to celebrate the beauty of the sexual act as an absolute gift of a man to a woman (and vice versa). At the same time he condemned all that would change the absolute character of this gift. He condemned the death penalty, stood for workers, frowned on rapacious capitalism, and decried a ‘culture of death’ that did not grant the right to be born and to die a natural death.” ♦

IF YOU LEAVE JESUS OUT OF YOUR PREACHING

(By Charles Spurgeon, England’s best-known preacher of the 19th century.)

“The Spirit of God bears no witness to Christless sermons. Leave Jesus out of your preaching, and the Holy Spirit will never come upon you. Why should He? Has He not come on purpose that He may testify of Christ? Did not Jesus say, ‘He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you’? Yes, the subject was Christ, and nothing but Christ, and such is the teaching which the Spirit of God will own. Be it ours never to wander from this central point: May we determine to know nothing among men but Christ and His cross.” ♦



Charles Spurgeon

BUBBA HAS HIS PRIORITIES RIGHT

**“I am a Christian, husband, daddy, and pro-golfer,
in that order.”**

*(Bubba Watson’s description of himself after
he won his second Masters Tournament
on April 13, 2014.)*



THE DANGER OF “HOLY CONFERENCING”

(Following are excerpts from an editorial by Andree Seu Peterson in
WORLD magazine, April 5 issue, used by permission.)

“When church leaders say we need to have a ‘conversation’ about LGBT groups, be careful: Most often they have already given away the store. Part of being a Christian with ‘all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent’ (Philippians 1:9-10) is to watch out for slippery vocabulary. The observable surge in the use of sweet-sounding words like ‘dialogue’ and ‘conversation’ and ‘listening to each other’s stories’—and the dearth of the language of ‘sin’ and ‘sexual immorality’—is neither accidental nor benign. You wouldn’t expect Satan to rush in with pointy horns and a 10-point plan on how to destroy the church.

“The goal of ‘conversation’ used to be arrival at truth. An open mind on the subject used to mean openness to being persuaded to change your mind. As G.K. Chesterton said: ‘Merely having an open mind is nothing. The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.’

“Not anymore. Nowadays, ‘conversation’ is the way we avoid something solid. ‘Keep on posing problems and you will escape the necessity of obedience,’ wrote Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, who was on to the gimmick. ‘Conversation’ has become the ingenious way that everyone does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

“But as author and counselor Dr. David Powlison writes in *GOD’S LOVE*, ‘God’s love has hate in it too: hatred for evil.’ We are not loving people when we tell them they can embrace sin and embrace Christ simultaneously, for Jesus said, ‘Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction’ (Matthew 7:13).

“I am reminded of a scene in Shakespeare’s *JULIUS CAESAR*: Brutus hears that Cassius is in town and asks his friend Lucillius how he seems toward him. Lucillius answers: ‘With courtesy and respect enough. But not with such familiar instances, nor with such free and friendly

conference as he hath used of old.’ Brutus, not a man with a tin ear for the subtleties of language, says to Lucillius, ‘Thou has described a hot friend cooling.’”

We too must cultivate an ear for a subtle cooling toward Christ. It will tell in the language. Instruction in the Word of God will be replaced by ‘conversation.’” ♦

“Keep on posing
problems and
you will escape
the necessity of
obedience”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

FORCED TO VIOLATE CONSCIENCE

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case of a Christian wedding photographer who faced fines after refusing to photograph a lesbian couple's commitment ceremony in 2007. New Mexico photographer **ELAINE HUGUENIN** said participating in the event would violate her Christian beliefs in the biblical definition of marriage. A lower court ruled her actions were discriminatory. Justice Richard Bosson concurred with the majority opinion in the state's Supreme Court, but said the law compels Huguenin and her husband to "compromise the very religious beliefs that inspire their lives."

(From *WORLD* magazine, used by permission.)

THE KEY TO REAL CHANGE

(By Robert L. Woodson, Sr., an
African-American conservative who
Heads the Center for Neighborhood
Enterprise, as quoted in a
Wall Street Journal editorial.)

"The most effective community leaders that I've seen and worked with all over the country agree that it's transformation and redemption that changes the heart. They take you into communities and introduce you to hundreds of people who were former drug addicts and criminals, who tell you that prison couldn't change them and a psychiatrist couldn't change them but a religious or spiritual experience did. I don't understand why it works. It's irrational. But it works."

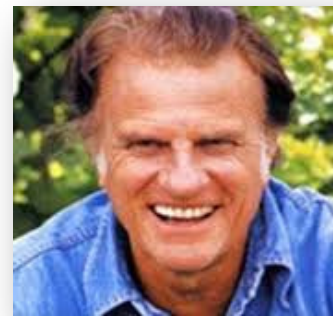
SPIRITUAL SEEKERS IN CHINA

The news agency Foreign Policy released a fascinating glimpse into what Chinese citizens are searching for on the internet. The short answer: more Christianity, less Communism. The compilation of information from Weibo, China's primary social media platform, showed far more mentions of God than Chairman Mao, and more mentions of Jesus than President Xi Jinping. The term "Christian congregation" garnered 41.8 million hits, while "Communist Party" registered 5.3 million.



CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

(A question-and-answer from Dr. Billy Graham)



QUESTION: I respect your work, but I think it would have been better if you had devoted your life to bringing the religions of the world together. All religions worship the same Higher Being, even if they see Him in different ways. Won't all religions come together some day?

ANSWER: No, I do not believe all religions will come together, even in the distant future. The differences are too great, and their beliefs about God (or their various gods or spiritual forces) are too opposed.

Nor can I agree that beneath the surface all religions worship the same Higher Being. Yes, all seek after God (even if they do not realize who He is). But if you study the various religions of the world closely, you will find they disagree sharply in their basic beliefs.

The Bible does teach, however, that at the end of time "...every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). Why is this? Because Christ was God in human flesh, sent from Heaven to save us from our sins. As the Bible says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Don't put your hope in vague, man-made ideas about God; turn to Christ. ♦



“Some flippantly say, ‘A business cannot be a Christian,’ but the truth is, every business is either moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, depending on the values on which they base their business. When the government starts coercing businesses to violate their religious, moral, and ethical values, that is a flagrant violation of our Constitution.”

(Rev. Rick Warren, discussing Hobby Lobby's case before the Supreme Court)

THE LCI2014 CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA

LCI 2014 Large Church Initiative of the United Methodist Church

*A Gathering of Excellent UMC Clergy and Leadership
in Johns Creek, GA on April 28-30, 2014*

The Confessing Movement was a sponsor of the Large Church Initiative (LCI) Annual Conference held at Mount Pisgah UMC near Atlanta, April 28-30. Confessing Movement President, Judy Graham, Board Members David Stanley and Joe Kilpatrick, and Executive Director, Pat Miller, were all in attendance.

CM Board Member Charles Kyker presented a workshop entitled Two Wesleyan Essentials for Growing Healthy Churches: Passion and Multiplication. There was standing room only and a great response to his message.

The Rev. Jim Collett of First UMC, Richardson, Texas, shared his experience at the LCI by lifting up provocative questions that the various speakers posed.

“Steve Wood, Pastor of Mount Pisgah UMC [and CM Board Member], opened the conference by challenging the participants to ‘pay attention to your DNA!’ Each of us is a product of the unique combinations of our ancestors that imprints who we are. What hereditary coding do we carry that will allow us to not only survive as a church today, but to thrive and grow, whether in numbers or spirit or mission?”

“In the workshop offered by the Mission Society, Stan Self asked the group to concentrate on Acts 1:8: ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ Of those various destinations, Samaria represented the place that most Jews did not want to go. Where is your Samaria? Where is it that you don’t want to go? Where are the people and places you avoid or even shun?”

“Dr. Tim Tennent, President of Asbury Theological Seminary, pointed out that the two largest growth areas of evangelical populations are in Brazil and China. The face of Christianity is changing. The West is the fastest growing mission field in the world. Tennent explained that in the West we have moved from ‘Jerusalem,’ a place defined by Christian tradition and a receptive audience to ‘Athens,’ where the rules are experimentation, open discourse, and scattered unbelievers. How ready are we, like Paul, to speak to our new constituency in ‘Athens?’”

Read a Good Book Lately?

The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson
Reviewed by Pat Miller, Executive Director



The Circle Maker examines the legend of Honi the circle maker, an “eccentric sage” in Jerusalem during the second half of the 1st century. In a time of severe drought and waning faith, Honi believed God was still listening even though others had given up. His story is one of bold obedience and how that obedience allowed God to work through Honi to accomplish the impossible. The story challenges the reader to pray circles around their biggest God given dreams and stand firm within that circle until He answers.

Mark Batterson shares his experience with praying circles, even those for which he had not yet conceived of or prayed! God’s overwhelming response was far more than he could have ever anticipated:

“Those answers are a testament to the sovereignty of God and a reminder that if you draw prayer circles, God will answer those prayers somehow, someday, sometime. God has been answering that prayer for fifteen years, and He’ll keep answering it forever. Like Honi, your prayers have the potential to change the course of history. It’s time to start circling”.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who has ever questioned the purpose or power of prayer. Mark Batterson has presented a compelling picture of what our lives can look like if we boldly pray for those impossibly big dreams that God has put on our hearts!



OUR ANONYMOUS SAINTS

When the history of United Methodist renewal is written one day, the unsung heroes will be the thousands of church members who prayed and contributed money to renew their beloved church. God knows who you are! Your help is critical, in terms of prayer and contributions. Some are skipping the Friday noon meal each week and using the time to pray for the UMC. Then they contribute their lunch money to The Confessing Movement. For directions on contributing, just call our office at 317-356-9729. Or, go to our website at www.confessingumc.org and click on “donate.” Thanks so much!!

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within The United Methodist Church**

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Purpose Statement

**Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord.
The Confessing Movement exists to enable
The United Methodist Church to retrieve its
classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as
disciples of Jesus Christ.**

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