The Christian Courier



Send all correspondence to: 9914 Arkansas, Bellflower, California 90706

FEBRUARY 1982

Without Spot and Blameless
2 Peter 3:14

In the above scripture, attention is drawn to a condition that is altogether too prevelant in the Church today. We will do well to consider all the implications alluded to, and ponder the alternatives.

"Spot" is defined by Strong in his concordance-dictionary as, "spilos": a stain or blemish; (fig.) defect, disgrace.

We are told that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this--to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27. Is it possible for us to prefer the company of the world, be affected by the customs and morals of the world, and become "spotted" thereby?

Paul, the Apostle spoke bluntly in 1 Cor. 15:33, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The revised text puts it, "Evil company doth corrupt good manners." The Revised Standard states, "Bad company ruins good morals."

This is not to state that we are corrupted by the company of those among whom we are cast by no choice of our own in the everyday concourse of life. It deals with those whom we desire to be with, whose company we seek, and the accompanying result: corrupted good manners (morals).

We have resisted all the innovations that have crept into the Church for the past many years, and continue to do so. This is as it should be. But the tide of worldly living practiced by individual christians poses a more serious threat to the spirituality of the Church than all the "individual cups", "instrumental music", etc. that have entered the Church the past 100 years.

How can we be a "light of the world" and "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is

in heaven" (Matt. 5:16 paraphrased) if our works are the same as of those surrounding us?

We are told to "come our from among them and be separate--touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you--" 2 Cor. 6:17. The alternative is, for christians, simply unthinkable!

Paul deals with many "works of the flesh" in Gal. 5:19; immorality, impurity, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger selfishness, dissention, party spirit, envy, drunkeness, carousing, AND THE LIKE." These are in reality additions to the ancient proscriptions against murder, thievery, etc; all of which we are all fimiliar with, and which we all shun. Admittedly, we all should abhor, and probably do, all the above vices of the spirit, but is this all a christian should shun? I think not. Note the statement, AND SUCH LIKE!!

We are admonished by the Apostle Paul in Heb. 5:14 "--strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

How can we recognize "AND SUCH LIKE"? How are our senses "exercised to discern (recognize) both good and evil"?

Strong defines "senses" as "--an organ to perception, i.e. (fig.) judgement." A christian is to possess sound judgement and be able to "discern" a practice, whether it be "good" or "evil."

I believe there are some tests to which we can put each act or practice with which we come into contact to determine what class it may be.

1. Is it a good work? 1 Tim. 6:18, "(Charge them)--that they do good, that they be rich in good works--."
2. Can we give thanks to God for the opportunity to do it? Eph. 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
3. Would we like to be found by Jesus, participation in in when he returns? 2 Peter 3:14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
4. Is it highly regarded among men? Luke 16:15, "--Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."
5. How does it affect our influence over others? Matt. 5:15-16, "--Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

6. What is its effect on the Lord's Church? 1 Cor. 12:25, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

For many years I have been repeatedly urged to speak out on several questionable practices engaged in by many christians in many parts of the country. That I have not done so, I now see to be either negligence on my part, or an unconscience act of moral cowardice. In either event, I am not blameless in these matters, and I ask the Lord's forgiveness, and beg the indulgence of my brethren.

Let us apply the above six tests to the following practices. Perhaps we can see more clearly how to "discern" good from evil.

SOCIAL DRINKING

This habit (practice) has crept in the church quietly and sometimes innocently throughout the ages. The wise man, Solomon urged all to "Look not on the wine when it is red, (fermented) when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Pro. 23:31. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Pro. 20:1. THIS IS NOT A VERY FLATTERING COMMENT OF THE CONTENTS OF OUR DRINKING GLASSES!! How much more should we not shun stronger drink??

Alcoholic bevereges are tolerated by society because we are an alcohol-oriented culture. This does not make it desireable, or right. It is consistently stated by all medical authorities that the most frequently abused (used) narcotic in use in America today is alcohol. It is addictive and physically destructive. It possesses all the undesirable characteristic that a christian should shun.

Yet it is used by many in Christ's Church today. Let's put it to the test.

1. Who would call social drinking a good act? It takes better than 20/20 vision for anyone to read our text to say, "rich in social drinking." I believe an unbiased understanding of the scriptures will not show social drinking to be a "good work."
2. I wonder if a christian ever held a cocktail skyward and gave thanks to God? That would be a foul spot on the institution of prayer!
3. Where would we like to be found of Jesus at his coming? The "happy hour" at the local club (bar)? The beer-bust at the company picnic? (I've been to some of these and, although I did not partici pate, I felt I was in the wrong company and stopped going.)

4. Nothing is more highly regarded among a large majority of men. (worldly people) We can only regard this to be an abomination to God.
5. I personally know of several instances in my local community where young christians witnessed older "mature" christians participating in drinking alcoholic bevereges and as a result were weakened in their spirituality. (Some were affected to depart the Church.) Whose responsibility will these souls be at judgement day?
6. Many christians have be offended by brethern and sisters drinking alcoholic bevereges. It has divided many congregations and caused much disharmony which simply would not have happened if they had abstained.

Alcohol is a narcotic and thus addictive. Cannabis (marijuana-hashish "pot") is also an addictive substance. The same is true of many opiates. We can see the harm all around us caused by these substances! How can we insist that our youth abstain from one narcotic, when they see their parents freely and openly using another substance equally addictive? (Many doctors say worse)

IS ONE NARCOTIC WORSE THAN THE OTHER? WHY? How can we permit a "moderate" amount of one and "none" of the other? (Or do we?)

In simple dollars and cents (sense??) we can balance the effect of the narcotic, alcohol compared to others in use in our country. Compared to the cost of purchase, effect on society, loss of wages, rehibilitation, medical expenses, etc., alcohol use squanders more than all the others combined, several times over.

In light of these simple facts, well known to most, we ask, "WHY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WILL YOU USE THIS NARCOTIC??"

GAMBLING

Not many years ago it was a rare christian who engaged in gambling. Gambling is a social disease, a social sickness. Gamblers are social parasites. They add nothing to society: they only take from it.

It is the shame of my home state of California that it almost single-hadidly supports the legalized gambling industry of our eastern neighbor, Nevada, along with its sister-vice, Prostitution. That the gaming industry and prostitution rackets (also openly conducted) are controlled by the Mafia is well known. To whom are we contributing our money? And WHO ARE WE SUPPORTING?

It is also the shame of many-christians that they go to, and participate in, gambling in such places. THINK OF THE COMPANY ONE KEEPS

WHEN IN SUCH PLACES!! participating in such activities. Public nudity and near nudity; open advertizing in public of prostitution. Remember, "Bad company ruins good morals."

Let anyone going to such places apply the six tests above and see what the answer is.

1. Who can call gambling a good work?
2. Who would thank God for the privilidge of gambling?
3. Where would we like for Jesus to find us at his return? at the crap-tables? playing black-jack? Poker, etc.
4. Gambling is highly regarded among worldly-people. I know of many people on welfare, old age assistance, etc., who can't wait for the first of the month to arrive in order to take their monthly trip to Tahoe, Reno, Las Vegas, etc. It is a sickness of the mind. It is to be shunned by christians. It is an abomination to God!
5. This practice can destroy christians' influence on others about them. Also, it induces their young children to follow after their examples. This last fact should give us pause for reflection in regards to gambling in the home. Think of our children!! HOW DO WE WANT THEM TO GROW UP?? For those who think we can indulge in gambling in our homes and be blameless but refuse to do so at a public place, I ask, "Why not?" If it is a good work, do it publicly. If we would not do it publicly, let us refrain from doing it privately.
6. Gambling is becoming a widespread issue in the church and is spreading more and more at a rapid pace. Many professed christians openly participate in the "sport" of gambling, the result of which is widespread dissention among the Churches of Christ and complaints of many of their brethren.

Apply these six tests to this so-called sport and ask yourselves if any christian can afford to identify with this cancerous growth adopted from the world.

DANCING

One of the most subtle practices that has entered into the church in these latter years is the social pass-time of dancing.

Today dancing is taught in most of our public schools. It is propaganized on TV and through all other media as though it has some socially redeeming virtue. But what of the Lord's teaching?

Let me say to begin with that the modern concept of ballroom dancing is of relatively recent vintage, and was unknown in biblical time. However,

make no mistake about it; the overriding aspect of dancing is today what it was in ancient times; a sexual practice.

It is wholly rediculous to attempt to argue otherwise. I might add at this point that dancing is a rather promiscous passtime. If this is denied, then we ask, "Why go to public places where our wives, daughters, mothers, etc., will be asked to dance with other men?" And also, why go to public places and ask other women to dance with us? One can only draw the conclusion that those who go to such places do so because they want such things.

Look at the company we keep and the accompanying evils that more often than not go with dancing.

How many tragedies have taken place at dances!! Just recently in our area of California four children lost their father and uncle over jealousy caused by someone dancing with another's wife.

I will not try your patience with account after account of fights, deaths, broken families, divorces, destroyed lives, ad. inf. These are all documented amply, not only by christians, but by the world.

The scriptures speak of dancing in a poor light. Exodus 32:6, "(the people)--sat down to eat, and rose up to play." Of the expression "play", Funk and Wagnalls Bible Dictionary says, "to enjoy oneself with singing and dancing, after sacrificing." In verse 19, we read, "--he saw the calf and the dancing. And Moses' anger became hot,--"

Dr. James Moffatt renders verse 6 thusly: "The people sat down to the sacrificial feast, after which they rose to amuse themselves."

Surely, all can clearly see that their "play" consisted of dancing. They were amusing themselves with dancing!!

Now read 1 Cor. 10th chapter with emphasis on Vss. 5, 6, 7, "But with many ~~of~~ them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the widerness." Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither should we be idolators, as some of them were, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." (dance)

Of this verse Dr. Benjamin Wilson in his Emphatic Diaglott says, "dance." Dr. Moffatt says "sport."

If these things were given as examples after which we should not follow, why will christians follow after the "amusement" and "sport" of dancing, and thus invite the displeasure of God? 1 Cor. 10:5.

Let us apply the tests:

1. What good could possibly come from a dance? How can a christian call dancing a good work?

2. Can anyone imagine a christian lifting his voice at a dance in thankfullness for the priveledge of being there?
3. Could anyone imagine a scenario as follows: The Lord has returned as promised, and seeks to gather his own---He sends his angels throughout the world---They search for some wellknown Bro. and Sis. christian, but can't find them---Asking of bystanders, they are informed that they can be found at the local dance, or maybe they're in San Francisco dancing the night away with friends.
   Let's draw the curtain at this point by simply saying that Bro. and Sis. so and so would in all probability miss connections and not reach the desired destination.
4. Dancing is a worldly passtime and is highly regarded among worldly people; thus abomination.
5. One can hardly be surprised at the adverse influence we have over others when we are found running to the same "amusements: and "sport" as the world.
6. This activity is adversely affecting the Churches of Christ in many places and is spreading.

It is obvious that children of God must not indulge in the same infamous sporting passtime (dancing) as the world, but rather repudiate it.

These worldly activities are causing much trouble throughout the congregations of the Church today. It is useless for anyone to think that only their own congregation is affected. In one way or other we are all affected, and not at all for the good; it is all harmful.

To those who in many places today engage in these practices, I wish to consel thus: Consider your actions in light of the six tests set forth in this article, (they come from the scripture) and ask yourselves if you should not abstain.

NO GOOD CAN COME OF ANY OF THESE PRACTICES!!

Consider your actions prayerfully and I'm sure you will come to the same conclusion so many thousands of faithful christians have; that they are spiritually harmful.

Written in love of the truth and for the unity of the Church,

J. D. Logan
3708 Mission Rd.
Stockton, CA 95204

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."
Prov. 25:25

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SAN PABLO, CALIFORNIA

Dear Brethern:

Here it is again another year, and yet another month has passed and I have not written any news or articles to the Courier. I pray that our God in heaven will forgive me for being so lazy.

Nevertheless, I would like to report that we were not washed away with the heavy rains that we have been having. I know we all are faced with the possibility of being taken by some feat of nature, but unlike the world, we have our confidence and faith in God, so if anything does happen, we are with our God. Everything is quite normal here in San Pablo. We are proud grandparents (again). Our son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Di Anna are proud parents of Daniel James Bryant, born January 18, 1982 in Martinez, CA. All is doing fine.

We would like to express our love to all the brethren everywhere. And to those we have never met, that is our feeling toward you also. I would like to meet each and every Brother and Sister in Christ, but I'm afraid if they all came to San Pablo, we would have to rent something a little bigger. But don't worry about that, come anyway.

In the November, 1981 issue of the Christian Courier, there was a letter from the editors. In that letter was a comment that I would like to bring to your attention. It stated, or rather asked the question: "We say we care for each other, but do we really?" I know here of late, my actions have indicated that I don't really care about others, and I hope and pray that I will reverse that action, and turn my ACTION toward getting better aquainted with the people that I plan to spend eternity with. It was stated that, "We look at the Church and wonder why it is so small." Why is it? We know we have the answer for everything that pertains to life here on earth and for everything that pertains to life everlasting. So what is our problem. I'll tell you what my problem is. I am too caught up in this "world's business" and have forgotten that I am dead to the world and forgotten that I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. I need to remember: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For

 (cont.)

ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." No, I truly believe that we do love one another, but it is Satan and his kingdom that has caused us to become lazy, and forgetful that we do have Jesus, our meadiator sitting on the right hand of the throne of God.

Let us do as was suggested in the Editor's letter. "Brethren in the love of Christ, lets pick ourselves up and go to work. He's waiting." So is eternity.

In Christian love,
Homer Bryant
San Pablo Congregation

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SAN PABLO, CALIFORNIA

Dear Loved Ones in Christ,

We at San Pablo have managed to keep afloat during the recent flood. The water was deep but no one has suffered any loss or casualty, thankfully We pray that all of you are well spiritually and physically.

It seems like it has been a long time since we have enjoyed seeing so many of you at our Labor Day weekend meeting. We have enjoyed having occasional visitors from the Modesto group- Gene McKinney and his family and Eric and Lillian Smith with their baby. It is always especially uplifting to share our Lord's day worship with friends from other congregations.

We thank all of you or the Courier staff for your fine efforts in keeping us in touch and remembrance of each other.

May our Father continue to bless us with His love, strength and guidance in all that we do.

In Christian Love,
San Pablo Congregation

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PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

There is very little news from here. Some families were gone over the holidays. All had safe trips and are back now. Brother and Sister

(cont.)

Randolph, John and Debby are meeting with us again. We have had a few colds but that has been about all, so far this winter. God has blessed us as a whole.

We are looking forward to the meetings this next summer. We will try to get to two or three of them anyway.

Dan Ross of Yakima will be holding a weeks meeting for us through the first week of August 1st - 8th. We would like to see as many Brothers and Sisters here as can make it. August is our best month of the year. We have always had room for all who can come.

I really enjoy the paper and it seems it is the only way we can get news of the different churches.

All our love and prayers to all the Brethern,

Robert McCay
For the Glenwood Church of Christ

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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Dear Brethern:

There is not too much news for the Sea-Tac Church of Christ in Seattle. Our group is small at the present, but Lord willing and a little effort on our part I'm sure we can increase our numbers. We are happy to have the occasional support from both the Yakima and Port Orchard congregations. Their help is very much appreciated. We would dearly like to have a gospel meeting during the summer but the owner of the building we are renting won't let us schedule for more than three months in advance. Hopefully we can get something worked out by the summer of 1983.

If anyone is in the Seattle area feel free to stop by. Our address is 5112 So. 178th, Seattle, WA 98188. Just give us a call. We welcome visitors. Ellis Forsman - 248-0605 and Wayne Orendorff - 242-5656.

Yours in Christ,
Ellis P. Forsman
For the Sea-Tac Church of Christ

GRANTS PASS, OREGON

Dear Ones in Christ:

We certainly enjoy the Courier here in our area in the Pacific Northwest and wish to compliment all who have a part in writing, publishing, and mailing it to us.

The congregation here in Grants Pass, Oregon is quite small but you would receive a warm welcome if you came by to worship with us at 10:30 A.M. on the Lord's Day.

After services on Feb. 7, 1982 we all went out to eat and later drove to the Harry Wegley residence for refreshments and a pleasant visit with Harry and Betty Wegley, Dick and Marie Henney and one of our senior sisters at (almost) 92, Sister Maybel Bumgardner.

Tom Broadway
For the Church in Grants Pass, Oregon

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Dear Brethern:

Our family would like to know if there is any loyal Churches of Christ around Missoula, Montana. Or if there would be any information at all on the Northwestern region of Montana pertaining to loyal churches. We would also like to know if there is any churches on the Eastern side. This information would be appreciated very much. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Chadwick & Family
405 W. Centennal
Springfield, Oregon 97477

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Dear Brethern:

Thank you for your outpouring support. We have some articles and news letters that will be held over until next issue. We apologize for putting the wrong speaker's name in the last issue for the Humble, Texas meeting.

Keep the news coming. We love you.

The Editors

1982 MEETINGS

Humble, Texas	April 4-11	Harry Dye
Baron, Oklahoma	May 30-June 6	Ken Baldwin
Yakima, Washington	June 6-13	Sammy Boen
Waterford, California	June 20-27	Camp
Delta, Colorado	June 27-July 4	Camp
Bellflower, California	July 4-11	Howard McCay
Grass Valley, California	July 11-25	J. D. Logan
Port Orchard, Washington	August 1-8	Dan Ross
San Pablo, California	September 4,5 & 6	Camp

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BAPTISMS

Brother Al Jones — Yuma, Arizona — February 11

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BIRTHS

Richard and Di Anna Bryant of the San Pablo congregation are the proud parents of their new son, Daniel James Bryant, born January, 18, 1982. Congratulations!!

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---JOB OPORTUNITIES SECTION---

WANTED: Full time worker with opportunity for plenty of overtime and excellent advancement possibilities. A firm lifetime committment offers the best of associates and the head of our organization guarantees your pay will be over one hundred times what you invest with a retirement plan that is truely "out of this world."

All interested parties must apply in person. Contact any faithful Church of Christ members for details and assistance.

-Tom Broadway