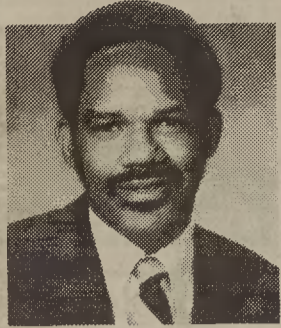


RELIGION



Insights

JOHN ADAMS

The Church's Response To Homosexuality

The churches' response to homosexuality is not given in the so-

called gay church nor the majority of established mainline institutional churches in America. They are not capable of presenting the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. The average homosexual who desires to change his or her life-style would not find an authentic liberating Word of God in these churches.

The goal of the gay church, according to Rev. Troy Perry, a professing Christian who dedicated the Metropolitan Church on March 7, 1971 in Los Angeles, is to have a place for gays "to worship God in dignity, not as lepers or outcasts but as his children." The fundamentalist wing of the gay church as well as the Charismatic wing teaches that two men or two women may enter the church and that in the name of Jesus Christ be united in marriage and live together acceptable to God. The liberal wing of the gay church has not hesitated to consider the fundamentalists kooky and the Charismatics as just a trip.

A homosexual who looks to be liberated from homosexuality would find that the majority of institutional churches in America do not believe that the omnipotent power of God would be operative in delivering homosexuals.

Many institutional churches today are not more than an echo, not a voice. Such churches not only lack having the zeal of God but also having knowledge of God as well. Very few Christians denominations today have remained faithful to the Bible's clear affirmation that homosexuality is a sin.

But change is possible. The average homosexual does not have to remain forever trapped in the vile bondage of lust, sin and degradation.

Case studies have proven homosexuals can change. Darlene Bogle, a woman who struggled with lesbianism for 17 years, is completely free through the grace and mercy of God.

Frank Worthen, a practicing homosexual for 25 years, was delivered in 1973 and has remained free without once falling back into his old secular behavior.

Where the majority of churches have failed to evangelize the gay community, other organizations are. Exodus International and Homosexuals Anonymous. These organizations in New York and California are dedicated to communicating God's restorative power to gays. These organizations provide real hope for those who struggle with homosexuality.

Preachers Use Computers; Bible Goes On-Line

By Sean Gannon
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, W.Va.--In the old days, pastors pored over concordances and Bibles to find the perfect one-two punch for Sunday's sermon. The high-tech '90s is changing all that.

About five years ago, computer Bibles came on line. Though still a novelty to most, users and vendors say the speed and ease of these programs are attracting computer-literate religious researchers and Bible readers.

"I don't have a computer yet, but I'm planning on getting one and will definitely use that type of software," said the Rev. J. Allen Dean of the First Church of the Nazarene in Charleston.

"We'll certainly use the computers for record-keeping and bulletins, but I'll use it for sermon construction, too."

Depending on the edition, the software programs offer one of many Bible translations, as well as useful reference works such as Nave's Topical Bible, Nelson's Bible Dictionary, Strong's Greek-Hebrew Dictionary, Englishman's Concordance and Vine's Expository Dictionary.

Dean plans to buy a laptop computer and sees the computer disks saving him from lugging volumes of books when he has to be away from his home or church.

"It's a matter of taking advantage of technology. I plan to do my sermon on the computer since I tend to preach from a manuscript type of sermon anyway. This will be more efficient."

As a 40-year-old budding computer enthusiast, Dean is precisely the type of person that Bible software compa-

nies want to capture.

"There has been a dramatic increase in the number of computers in the home and in churches since we opened in 1988," said Warren Bailey, marketing director for Seattle-based BibleSoft, the maker of the PC Study Bible.

"We have a lot of pastors and theologians who use our products, but that's not our target audience. Eighty percent are people like you and me who just want to learn more."

"If all you really wanted to do was look over a Bible, you probably wouldn't need us," Bailey said. "But most people who get involved in the Bible have questions and would like access to answers. That's where we feel our product fits."

Bailey says the competition is tough in the religious software business, with about 30 different companies making some type of program for personal computer use. BibleSoft is one of the largest, with more than \$2 million in sales last year, mostly through wholesale, he said.

Tim Spradling, a part-time salesman at the Bible Book Shop in Charleston Town Center, uses Bible software on his home computer to help prepare for youth church lessons he leads.

"For example, it can type all of Chapter Two of Proverbs for me," he said. "My text can then be printed out and everything is right there in front of me. I don't have to flip through the pages to find it."

The software sold at the Bible Book Shop can range from a Bible and concordance package for \$69.95, to the latest CD ROM disks that cram huge amounts of information together for about \$500, Spradling said.

So far, local vendors and users say there haven't been

any barbs thrown by traditionalists who swear that white pages with black ink are the tried and true tool of biblical study.

"Most people who have computers love it and are very open to it," Spradling said. "When you look in a concordance book, only part of the verse is shown. You still have to go look up the verse to find the context. With the computer Bible, it actually looks up the entire verse at the same time."

QuickVerse, made by BibleSoft's chief rival, Parsons Technologies, based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is a popular program sold by Spradling's store

because it's easy to use, he said. It has an atlas, a concordance, a Greek lexicon and a complete Bible, he said.

"Many pastors, though it's not true in all churches, have a bachelor's degree and a master's," Spradling said. "Along the way in college, they will have had computer classes. However, some ministers who went to schools ago may be intimidated by computers."

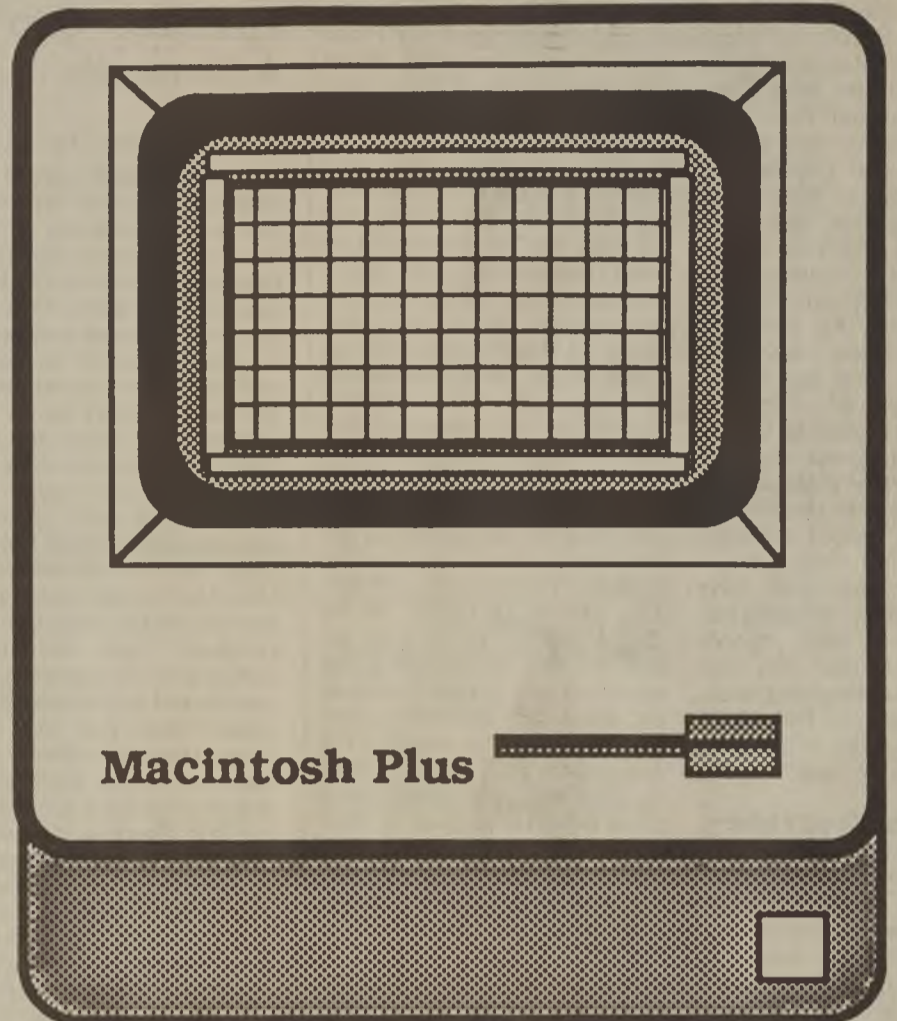
More popular in Charleston than the software programs are the hand-held computerized Bibles, said Diane Tolley, manager of Tolley's Bible Book Store in Kana-

wha City.

The \$200 Franklin Electronic Bible looks much like the small computerized dictionaries available in stores, she said.

"The Rev. F. Leon Alexander, of Blessed Sacrament Church in South Charleston, says he hasn't stepped into the computer age yet, but sees value in the software."

"Anything that goes to helping access information for scriptural scholarship is a good thing in my opinion," Alexander said. "It's still good for people to leaf through the Bible, but as far as using it (software) for the purpose of study, it's all right."



Graphic: Charles M. Rammert, Jr.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON 'The Sufficient Christ'

Lesson Background

The opening verses of Colossians 2 express Paul's deep concern for the Colossian Christians and others whom he has not met personally. He wants their hearts to be encouraged, joined closely in love, and rich in understanding of God's way. Paul is a prisoner far from the Colossians, but he rejoices as if he were with them. We all do something like that at times. While the body is in one place, the mind and emotions are somewhere else. Paul finds joy in two things among the Colossians. First is their order. They are well organized and disciplined, like soldiers marching together in the ranks. Then Paul rejoices at the steadfastness of their faith. Their confidence and trust are strong, not shaken by any fad, folly, or false teaching. Their steadfast faith is in Christ, of course. Otherwise it would not have brought such joy to Paul.

We take our place in Christ when we receive Him, and we show that we are in Him by the way we walk. That means the way we live day by day. Our walk is not just what we do on Sunday; it includes what we do every day in every situation. Our weekday activities may be different from what we do on Sunday, but we should not have a change of character. The kind of character we show on the Lord's Day should be carried through every day.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" If we are to walk in Christ, we must agree with Him about the right way to live. Are we

agreeing with Him in the way we spend our money? In forgiving those who have hurt us? In caring for the poor in our communities? In letting go of prejudices? In not being nitpicky and complaining? In the way we talk? In giving our employer a full day's labor?

Rooted refers to our beginning; built up to our maturing. When we plant something we expect it to take root and grow. Its growth will be of the same kind as the root. Rooted in Christ, we are to grow in Christlikeness. We must let go of concepts, priorities, feelings, activities, and practices that do not reflect our root, and we must hold to those that do.

To be established is to be strong that we will be unshaken in all the storms of life. Abounding in a faith so firm, we can find in every situation a reason for thanksgiving.

There are many things in the world that are trying to rob us of our Christian faith, and so to take away our eternal life as well. Four of these spoilers are mentioned in this verse; philosophy, vain deceit, tradition of men, and rudiments of the world.

Various kinds of philosophies are capturing Christians today. For example, humanism teaches that there is no God above humans, that God is only an idea created by humans. This philosophy is running wild in many universities today. It makes fun of Christianity. It denies creation and says evolution is the way we began.

Vain deceit is any kind of teaching that produces nothing

eternal. Such teaching is empty and useless. Materialism, for example, teaches that our worth is measured by how much we make, where we live, what we drive, and how much we have accumulated.

Jesus and His disciples were criticized because they did not keep the tradition of the elders. Had Jesus kept all their traditions, perhaps they would not have crucified Him--but they would have kept Him from teaching the truth.

It is okay to have traditions; we all do. But it is not okay to condemn others because they do not value our traditions as we do. Traditions must not destroy the unity of Christ's body, the church. We have traditions about many things: the time of worship, the length of a worship service, the order of worship, the style of music, when to use the Lord's Prayer in worship, whether the choir should wear robes or not. None of these is established by the Bible. Then let none of them disturb the harmony that is taught in the Bible.

We are complete in him does not mean we now are all we can be as Christians. It means that in Christ we have all we need to become all we can be. We do not need to be Jews as well as Christians; we do not need to accept some human philosophy or tradition. We need to know Christ, to follow His example and teaching, to become more like Him. He is superior to the philosophies, the traditions, and the rudiments of the world.

The Harvest Is Past, I

This Is A Paid Advertisement

"The Harvest Is Past, The Summer Is Ended, And We Are Not Saved."

(Jer. 8:20). Are these not the sad words that can be applied to so many who have sat under the truth for so many years? Yes. While others have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ as their Lord and their Savior, some of you here who are close to this servant of the Lord are more dead than ever. Some have been under the truth for almost 30 years. Yet there are no impressions. You have scorned the truth over the years. It seems that you are past all feelings (Ephesians 4:19).

Are you among the group just not destined to be saved? There is no safety in just being under the truth. It can be rightly said of some that you are dead while you live. "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." (I Timothy 5:6). What a sad and tragic state to be in. The Lord is still saving sinners but you see no need to be awakened. You want to be left alone. And if the Lord leaves you alone, you will go to Hell just as straight as a martin to his gourd. Every sinner in the death sleep of Satan wants to be left alone. There is only one thing that God has to do for a sinner to go to Hell, and that is just leave you alone and you will automatically go to Hell.

Yes, the harvest is past for some here. Some of you will never be saved, even though

you have been under the truth for a long time. The long-suffering of God leads to salvation, but much long-suffering fits a vessel of wrath for eternal destruction (Romans 9). The most awful thing is to go out into eternity without Christ. There is a great damnation in Hell for those who sat under the truth, but refused His call from Heaven (Proverbs 1).

The greater the light, the greater the damnation. You take the truth lightly, if that much, but, dear soul, there is coming a day not too distant in the future when you will look back in regret, but to no use. For as death finds you, so shall eternity hold you. There will be no second chance to come back and live your life over. When you draw your last breath here on this earth you'll get the greatest shock of your life. You will be ushered out into eternity and see your awful, lost, and ruined and hopeless state as an enemy of God. In this life, you spurn the mercy and goodness of God.

You count the Blood of Christ as a common thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, according to Hebrews 10. And when you lift up your eyes in Hell, you'll see all the space God gave you to repent. You'll see all your true lost stage but you'll not be able to do anything about it. There are no words to describe the torment you'll experience there. Perhaps the most awful thing about Hell will be memory.

By J.M. Little