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## "So You Want A Glorified Holiday?"

by Andrew M. Connally

*(Editor's Note: The following article was taken by permission from the author's book of the same name. Brother Connally has been involved in every phase of the work in the African mission field for thirty years. He knows, therefore, whereof he speaks. In the early stages of his thus far very limited experience with such, this editor has already experienced some of the same situations and mindsets about which our beloved brother writes. We are appreciative of his allowing us to reprint this article.)*

1. "A Glorified Holiday." Recently, a friend sent a letter in which he reported the feelings of an elder in one of the congregations in Texas. This man did not desire to do foreign mission work as he felt most of us were enjoying a "paid holiday" while abroad.

In the 30 years I have been working for Africa, I have heard numerous statements concerning missionaries and their work in distant lands. Most were made by brethren who either did not have the facts needed to correctly judge, or who were simply lacking in the Spirit of Christ.

Often we hear, "You don't have to get seasick to do mission work," or "We've got plenty of heathens in America to convert," or "He can't get a job at home so he went into the mission field." Often it is, "What's the matter, you want a trip abroad?" or "Why don't we concentrate here so later all of us can do work elsewhere." Some feel we should "spend our money at home so we can see after it." "Since we can't support a man full-time, let's just wait until we can." Again, "Those people don't appreciate what we're doing, so let's use it here." "All that Brother So and So has said is good, but let's not forget our mission field right here at home." "You are wasting your talents when we need you so badly at home." One well-known preacher is fond of saying, "It's the fellows who stay at home who are really doing the mission work," or "The greatest mission field on earth is in the Dallas-Fort Worth area." Once in a while we hear, "They've had trouble over there; we

don't want to get mixed up in something like that." And finally, "We can't afford it as we have a new building to pay for," or "What about your families here at home?"

Most of these statements show a universal lack of information on the matters involved. No missionary I know feels he is the end of wisdom or that improvements cannot be made. This does not change the need for the other side being known. Each of us working beyond America realizes we owe our being here to godly elders, dedicated gospel preachers and sacrificing Christians who make it all possible.

2. *Preparation.* Anyone who would seek to discredit a missionary or field because of it being a chance for a "paid holiday" needs to "come on over." It is a favorite tactic of the devil to seek to slander the character of the men of God whether they preach at home or abroad. If such is successful, then our efforts fail and souls are lost. Usually a man, in order to go abroad, must literally "beg" for a period of one to three years to get his support and travel fund (longer if his work includes anything else). He must "scour the brotherhood" for a congregation to send him and speak hundreds of times on the "why, ways, and needs" of his work. He has to convince elderships of their congregation's desire to preach the word abroad. He must compete with "new buildings, classrooms, air conditioners and parking lots." He must devise ways of touching hearts and pocketbooks so it will cost them nothing. Most of his traveling will be at his own expense and the hours involved are better forgotten. Usually the man does "full-time" work locally as well.

When he finally has "sold" a few on his going and their need to fulfill the Great Commission, his "holiday" really starts. He must secure passports, visas, resident permits, vaccinations, shots, radiologist reports, X-rays, birth certificates, marriage license, reservations, tickets, insurance, shipping regulations, custom and immigration requirements.

Throughout this period, he is keeping financial reports, informing the papers, "selling" the brethren, gathering equipment, crating and shipping household effects and soothing his family. Still he is meeting "objections."

3. *In the Field.* When once his destination is reached, the "holiday" really is on. He must go through customs, immigrations and usually deal with the government in various ways. He must find or build a home, sometimes erect a tent in the bush, make contacts, teach classes, file financial and progress reports, write articles in behalf of the work, correspond with prospective supporters, replacements, government officials, friends, new converts and prospective Christians and their families.

In the meantime, he must often learn a new language, write tracts to fit the new situation and devise new means of evangelism as "reports" are leaking back that "someone" has "criticized" his work. People, whether at home or abroad, have a way of making the preacher a "catch all" for troubles, domestic or economic. The missionary is no different. He must be ready to supply money to everyone in need and never expect it to be repaid, even if it is a short term loan, drive his car endlessly and even "loan" it to the brethren, feed countless visitors and strangers and ever be open to the "tourist trade." He must spend countless hours counseling delinquents, unwed mothers, polygamists, adulterers, thieves and liars.

He must keep a ready smile and happy disposition even if a half dozen of the supporting congregations drop out or just "skip" a few months to "catch up" at home, or fail to begin on time. He shouldn't write and "ask" lest he be presumptuous, nor wait too long, lest "they just forget about it." He should never ask concerning any eldership's decision to "drop out," even though no word is sent to say such has been done, lest he ruin his chances of "future help." He should never question any "forgotten pledge" regardless of the position it puts him in because "it is a matter of grace anyway."

4. *Your Return.* At the end of his missionary tour, he must have satisfied his supporters by not having called for too much too often and never putting his

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sponsors in a "tight." He must have provided "twenty dollars" return on every dollar invested. He must have been a diplomat in dealing with the government, a Job in patience with his brethren, and a Samson in strength to accomplish the job. He must possess the stubbornness of a mule so he won't quit, the zeal of a Zealot like Peter to inflame the hearts of the brethren at home so they will do more. He must be as wise as Paul in every situation; the love of John must make him return, and the poverty of Lazarus must accompany him home lest he "has made merchandise of the gospel." He must give a first-hand report to every contributor, find a new sponsor, speak for every school, Lions Club, P.T.A., and Young Peoples group. He must advise countless interested parties, settle local church problems, teach classes on mission work and "fill in" for all contributing churches when their preachers are going on meetings, lectureships, and vacations, teach Vacation Bible School and be available for special classes to encourage the sponsoring church. In the great vacuum of time available, gospel meetings must be held, and obligations to friends, parents and one's own family must be met. Also, one must raise his needed support and return, lest his "vacation home" be too long and the brethren in the foreign field become discouraged and quit.

5. *"Fringe Benefits."* Besides "fringe benefits" of a "paid holiday," by brethren, there are the fears of physical danger in many foreign lands, anxiety for the churches, despair over the amount of work yet to be done and disappointment over the failures made. There are the sleepless hours wondering "what more can I do?" and "how can it be done

better?" There is the constant justification of the work accomplished and the decisions made. There is the seven days a week grind with no place to go or money to go on if a day off is taken. There is the problem of education for your children, lack of association with people of a similar background and the constant pressure of a strange environment to contend with.

Where can you get men, usually to go at a financial loss, to pioneer a new nation in the Kingdom of God? While others leave the pulpit for greater financial security, your missionaries will give 20 to 50 percent of their salary to make the work successful. Yet, if they return home to stay, they have "wasted the brethren's money and just couldn't take it."

He must avoid controversy and problems or else the brethren at home will be discouraged. At home they can split, fight, fire and hire preachers, but it's all right, the elders are "watching over it." At home we can waste money, make mistakes and fail miserably and generally this is all right, the elders were "riding herd"; they "knew what's going on." But abroad—don't you dare have a problem!

Elderships and local preachers seem to feel, at times, it is a great contest to see how much we can spend at home and how few crumbs we can scatter abroad. Jets have shrunk the world to 48 hours and if an eldership wants to investigate a work, they can. The quicker and easier we can travel, the greater our obligation to "go" with the gospel becomes. Brethren seek to make it appear as an "either-or" proposition; "either" we do mission work, "or" take care of things at home. If this were true, which it is not, then the mission fields are long overdue! Any man with sense enough to be sent to a mission field knows the "needs" at home as well. He can understand the "need" for cushioned pews, carpeted floors, indirect lighting, air conditioning and paved parking lots. But it is a sad commentary on our intelligence to say, "We must stop our mission work to provide them, as we cannot do both." Some feel they are "doing all they can," and "there is a limit to what anyone can do"—how would we know? Ninety-eight percent of us never sacrificed the "second mile" much less all we can.

6. *How Long, Oh God, How Long?* How long will the cry of the damned ring in the ears of such a precious few and they be unable to stop it? How long will the denominations be able to scorn our meager efforts? How long will a few stifle and thwart the only Hope of God found in foreign lands? How long before

we realize mission work abroad is as much the work of the church as paying our preacher at home? How long before pride is crushed under our heels and we step out to do the work of God in the Macedonias of the world? How long before we stop competing and start cooperating? How long before we stop apologizing and start accomplishing? How long before we stop "counting pennies and wasting dollars?" How long before we stop criticizing and start evangelizing—How long, oh God, how long?

7. *There are Self-Serving Missionaries.*

While most missionaries are really dedicated people, some are unqualified, self-serving, time servers who waste the Lord's money and take advantage of elderships and churches, who get well at the expense of the church. They are arrogant, ungrateful know-it-alls who are lazy, indifferent and who waste the Lord's money. I could give a list of them, but new ones come on the scene regularly. The shysters refuse to recognize the oversight of elders, they fiddle the accounts and line their pockets at the brethren's expense. They are greedy and always want money. They act like martyrs and constantly complain. Many go for a few months and return while wasting tens of thousands of dollars and yet blame all their troubles on others. *At this point, we caution brethren to investigate, question and know your missionaries before sending them.* If you do not, the cause of the master will suffer and you will regret your sending them. *They must not be devious, self-serving, greedy people. They must be qualified, have common sense, be hard-working, and totally dedicated.*

510 N. Kaufman  
Seagoville, TX 75159**EDITOR TO BEGIN WORK  
IN MISSION FIELD**

For over two years I have had the privilege of working with the Fulton County Gospel News and the great Mammoth Spring Church of Christ which publishes it (along with the assistance of other fine congregations and individuals). Recently, a great opportunity has availed itself to our family. We have the privilege of going to the country of Tanzania, East Africa and working with the Chimala Mission and Hospital. We have committed ourselves to three years of service in this field. We are to leave for that work in September of this year (1991).

It has been a joy to work with this periodical and those who oversee its publication. I am greatly appreciative of all who have assisted in any way to help



make this paper more productive for the cause of Christ. Those who write for it, contribute to it, assist in its addressing and mailing and provide encouraging words have truly been (and continue to be) the backbone of its outreach efforts. You have made my task an easy and enjoyable one.

We undertake our new work in Africa delighted with the opportunity to serve our Lord in this capacity, yet saddened at the thought of leaving such a delightful work as this. To you, our loyal readers, we say "Thank you" for the privilege of coming to you in this fashion. We trust that this publication will grow and become an even greater means of spreading the gospel under its next editor. With the good people who currently work with it, we know that shall be the case. Though our efforts will take us to distant lands physically, a part of our hearts shall always remain behind with the people here.

We are currently in the process of raising funds for our efforts in the mission field. If any individual or congregation receiving this periodical should desire to assist in such an effort, we would be delighted to send further information and/or speak with you personally.

Again, we express our thanks for the efforts of so many who have assisted in such a valuable way to make our work with this paper a delightful one indeed.

—Eddy Gilpin

## THE "I-GAVE-AT-THE-OFFICE" SYNDROME

by Eddy Gilpin

Many times, when someone is asked to contribute to a cause, one can hear the joking response, "Not me. I gave at the office." While this response is used often in a humorous manner, it is also a means used by many to avoid contributing to such causes. While contributing to causes of the outside world (is right within themselves) is neither here nor there, one's contributions to the spread of the gospel and assistance in benevolence are essential factors of eternal consequence. And yet, even though the subject is one of vital importance, far too many simply brush it aside with the "I-gave-at-the-office" attitude.

Some in the Lord's church have the idea that as long as they flip a token sum in the collection plate each Sunday morning they have fulfilled their obligation to God, self and their fellow man. When approached at any other time

with an opportunity to assist in some worthy effort for the good of the kingdom, theirs is the standard reply, "I gave at the office." From where did such a mentality originate? It certainly does not come from the study of the Scriptures. The Bible reveals a ready disposition to service by those faithful of the infant age of the church. Notice the attitudes prevalent in these first century congregations.

The believers of Jerusalem saw the pressing needs of the church during the very age of its establishment. In Acts 2, the Word reveals that they "had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (vss. 44, 45). Did they suffer from the "I-gave-at-the-office" syndrome? Not in the least! They saw a need and they responded accordingly. What did they do? They sold possessions and gladly surrendered the funds therefrom to further the cause. What was the result? Not only did they please God by their actions, but they had the favor of all the people (vs. 47). People took notice to the fact that here were people who truly believed in the cause which they espoused. Do people of the world take such notice of the church today?

In Acts 4:32-37, the Bible reveals the background of the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). The record reveals that the need for assistance was still prevalent and obvious in the city of Jerusalem. The text demonstrates the attitude of the Christians who saw that need. They "were of one heart and one soul" (should we be any different?) "neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (are our possessions REALLY ours?) "but they had all things common" (vs. 32). Was this a "socialistic" system? Not at all. It was a situation in which there was a need, and a response to that need. This is not a "communal" pattern for the church in which every member must surrender everything he owns to some governing body once he becomes a member. However, every possession that each owns does, in actuality, belong to another (I Cor. 6:19, 20). This text further reveals the results of that response. "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (vss. 34, 35). Had these people contracted the "I-gave-at-the-office" syndrome? Certainly not. Just think what the lasting results of such might have been. The church might very well have "died on the vine" having never gotten off the ground in

Jerusalem had it not been for the faith of these brethren. However, thanks to their support of the truth and those in need, the gospel was indeed taken to "Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Another point of interest along this line from the text of Acts 4 is a look at Josés. Josés (surnamed Barnabas by the apostles) was a Levite. According to Mosaic law, a Levite's land ("the field of the suburbs of their cities") was not to be sold, as it was to be a "perpetual possession" (Lev. 25:34). However, knowing that the Law of Moses had been blotted out at the cross (Col. 2:14) and seeing the need at hand, Josés quickly sold his land and laid the money at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36, 37). This land had probably been in his family for generations. Yet, he did not hesitate to dispense with it when the need arose. He could very easily have said, "I gave at the office," but he did not do so.

Many others in the New Testament could be cited for their sacrificial giving in times of need. When the time for harvest arose, the means and laborers were provided. If they had not been, perhaps no reader of this article would know "the riches of Christ." Now what about us? When I say "us," I mean those of us who are average American citizens. We "own" far more than any other average citizen of any other country. Many households have multiple cars, televisions, boats, etc. Many households even have multiple houses. We possess lands, businesses, corporations and such like. We have food in abundance and waste enough to feed someone else. We have not just clothing, but wardrobes. We spend more on a vacation than most people of the world make annually. We are consumed with recreation, along with its high price tag. We indulge regularly in "the finer things of life." And, yet, when a need arises for assisting someone in dire need, providing for the spread of the gospel, furthering the cause through the printed word, assisting in the training of a faithful gospel preacher or some other avenue, "we gave at the office." How must our Lord feel when He sees such stingy attitudes by far too many brethren?

In Colossians 3:5, Paul commanded, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY." Covetousness is often thought of as being the inordinate desire for that which another possesses. But, while that is a form of covetousness, the most prevalent form is the attitude that "what I have is

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mine, and I am going to keep it." This latter attitude concerning one's possessions is just as much covetousness as is the former. Such covetousness is idolatry! It is indeed sad to think that on the day of judgment many will be destined for a devil's hell because of their worshipping at the temple of treasures, their service to the shrine of savings and their bowing at the palace of possessions.

This writer is not suggesting that we should all sell everything we own and give the money to a worthy cause. What I am suggesting is that each of us re-evaluate our own lives and make adjustments accordingly. The church needs such, we are responsible so to do and the Lord expects it. Living in a land of plenty provides so many comforts and freedoms from worry. Yet, it also provides responsibility for assisting those who do not enjoy such. Paul said, "As we have therefore OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD..." (Col. 6:10). Such an attitude would forevermore eradicate the "I-gave-at-the-office" syndrome.

There are scores of faithful congregations and individual Christians across this nation who contribute greatly of their time, efforts and finances to worthy endeavors for the spreading of the kingdom. Think where the Lord's church would be without them. But, then again, think where the church would be if every congregation and individual were like them.

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**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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