

# Presbyterians Kindle Fiery Debate by Rejecting Popular New Hymn

Fans of a beloved contemporary Christian hymn won't get any satisfaction in a new church hymnal.

The committee putting together a new hymnal for the Presbyterian Church (USA) dropped the popular hymn "In Christ Alone" because the song's authors refused to change a phrase about the **wrath of God**.

The original lyrics say that "on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied." The Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song wanted to substitute the words, "the love of God was magnified."

The song's authors, Stuart Townend and Nashville resident Keith Getty, objected. So the committee voted to drop the song.

Critics say the proposed change was sparked by liberals wanting to take God's wrath out of the hymnal. The committee says there's plenty of wrath in the new hymnal.

Instead, the problem is the word "satisfied," which the committee says refers to a specific view of theology that it rejects.

Debate over "In Christ Alone" is a mix of church politics, the touchy subject of updating hymn lyrics and rival views of what Jesus' death on the cross meant.

The decision to drop the hymn wasn't made lightly, said Mary Louise Bringle, a religion professor and hymnwriter who chaired the hymnal committee. It was complicated by a foul-up with the rights for the song.

Committee members had found a version of the hymn with the alternate text in the Celebrating Grace Hymnal, a Baptist hymnal published in 2010. They assumed the songwriters already had agreed to the change.

“We had every reason to think that this was an authorized text because it appeared in a recent hymnal,” Bringle said.

When it asked for permission to use the song, the committee learned that the song’s authors hadn’t approved the change.

Capitol CMG Publishing, which manages rights for “In Christ Alone,” said it is working with the hymnal’s publisher to fix the problem. Neither Getty nor the Celebrating Grace publisher was available for comment.

“We respect our songwriters and the integrity of their lyrics, and the intent of our request was to ensure the song retains the original lyrics as written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend,” Capitol said in a prepared statement.

“Celebrating Grace Inc. is cooperating fully and is taking steps to make the correction in all distributed copies of the song, including the Celebrating Grace Hymnal.”

That left the committee in a bind, Bringle said. The Presbyterians’ new Glory to God hymnal, due out this fall, includes songs such as “O Sacred Head Now Wounded,” which talk about substitutionary atonement—the idea that Jesus took the place of sinners on the cross. It also includes songs about God’s wrath.

“People think that we’ve taken the wrath of God out of the hymnal,” Bringle said. “That’s not the case. It’s all over the hymnal. The issue was the word ‘satisfied.’”

That term was used by the medieval theologian Anselm, who argued that sins offended God’s honor, and someone had to die in order to satisfy his honor.

The 15-member committee rejected Anselm's view and voted 9-6 to drop the hymn.

The Rev. Chris Joiner of First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tenn., agrees with that move. He said some of his church members are fans of the song and will be disappointed that it was dropped. But the words of the song don't work, he said.

"That lyric comes close to saying that God killed Jesus," he said. "The cross is not an instrument of God's wrath."

But the Rev. Scott Sauls, pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, disagrees. He said the word "satisfied" means that Jesus paid the whole price for sins.

"There's no more work to be done," said Sauls, whose congregation is part of the more conservative Presbyterian Church in America. "It is finished."

Word about "In Christ Alone" being dropped spread slowly. Bringle wrote about it in the May issue of *The Christian Century* magazine, but it got little attention until it captured the attention of the blogosphere.

Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala., criticized the committee in an online column called "No Squishy Love" at the conservative journal *First Things*.

George said he worries that the committee dropped the song because the idea of God's wrath has become unpopular.

"I don't see this as an isolated case," he said in a phone interview. "It fits into a wider pattern of downplaying parts of Christian doctrine that are offensive."

Other conservative bloggers such as David French of Columbia, Tenn., also criticized the committee, seeing its ruling as a sign that the committee was abandoning Christian doctrine. On Aug. 1, the committee issued a public statement defending its

decision.

Bringle said the controversy proves that hymns still matter. People care about them and get upset if someone tries to change a song they love.

Mike Harland agrees.

Harland is the director of LifeWay Worship, the music department of the Nashville-based publisher affiliated with the Southern Baptists. He said he admires the Presbyterians for paying close attention to the lyrics of hymns because songs make emotional and intellectual connections with worshippers.

So the words in a hymnal matter.

“The faith of current generations and future generations is shaped by what we say and what we sing,” he said. “That’s why you stress over every word.”

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## **How to Help Your Kids Prepare for the School Year**

Getting ready to go back to school impacts the entire family.

For kids, a new school year means new teachers, new classrooms and new responsibilities. Sometimes it means new friends. The first days at a new school—or first days in middle school or high school—can be very intimidating.

Dad, I’m sure you realize all of this, but I hope you’ll embrace your role during this time.

If your summer was pretty unstructured, like it is in many homes, your kids will benefit from being gently reminded that the routine is about to change pretty drastically. But it isn't just a reality check for them; it's also a recommitment for you. It's your chance to make a big investment of encouragement in your kids.

What I recommend is simply sitting down to talk about it—maybe at bedtime or during a meal. Talk about past school years, like: “What memory do you have from kindergarten?” “What experience at school embarrassed you the most?” “When did you feel most proud of something you accomplished?”

Make sure you dig into your memory, too, and tell them your own back-to-school stories, good and not-so-good. That will help your kids open up. Then ask about what friends they'll be reconnecting with soon or what teacher they're looking forward to having.

Through it all, Dad, listen closely. Take mental notes. You may uncover a deeper worry your child has, and you can keep that on your radar screen.

Also, the first time you bring up the school year, don't jump right in and start setting expectations about grades and homework deadlines. Keep it positive for now.

At the next conversation, you can begin asking about goals and schedules. Then let that transition to a new promise by you to partner with them and help them stay on target.

If they start to groan about all the work that's ahead, you can change the mood by saying something like, “You know, kiddo, even if you failed every class and got kicked out of school for setting a thousand frogs loose in the cafeteria, I would still love you.”

After the laughter dies down, remind them of their gifts and talents and their past success. Send them off to school with a

new hope and a heartfelt blessing. Then do all you can to keep it going the entire year.

Additionally, I challenge you to give your children a larger vision for what the school year can be. As you know, life is about a lot more than academics, and the school year provides plenty of opportunities for your children to grow in other important character qualities.

What other characteristics do you hope your children develop? Leadership? Generosity? Perseverance? Empathy for those in need? Talk about that with them too. Encourage them to look for chances to grow in those areas, and keep reinforcing those qualities over the coming weeks and months.

Last thing—don't forget it's also an adjustment for your kids' mom, and maybe a welcome one. With the kids at school on weekdays, maybe start scheduling a regular lunch date for the two of you.

Dad, what back-to-school exercises or routines have worked well in your family? Please contribute to the discussion and help other dads.

### **Action Points for Dads on the Journey**

- One of the best ways to be involved in your child's education is to volunteer at his or her school as part of our WATCH . (Dads Of Great Students) program. Start looking at days you can volunteer, or bring the program to your local school. Find out more.
- As you talk with your kids, be sure to include at least a comment or two about potential dangers and pitfalls (bullies, alcohol, drugs, etc.).
- Do you typically do back-to-school clothes shopping? Don't go overboard, but if it's in the budget, consider letting your kids get one or two new things to make those first days back a little more special.
- Update the family calendar with all the upcoming school-

related events—and make sure you make them a high priority on your calendar also. Plan to attend as many as you can.

- Do you live apart from your children? Do all you can to stay updated on their assignments, projects and school activities. For example, get a copy of the book your child is reading in school and read it at the same time so you can talk about it.

**Carey Casey** is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers who to make the Championship Fathering Commitment.

For the original article, visit [.](#)

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## How Religious Freedom Has Become a Non-Issue in Our Country

“It would be difficult to name a single country in the world over the past 15 years where [the State Department’s] religious freedom policy has helped reduce religious persecution or increase religious freedom. ...”

That was the testimony of Thomas Farr, the widely respected director of Georgetown University’s Berkley Center. Farr was testifying before the House National Security Subcommittee of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. And in his original statement, he referred to “America’s **religious freedom** policy,” not the bracketed “State Department” I added.

But that is exactly the problem: The U.S. State Department is the nexus. It is there that American foreign policy is largely hammered out. And it is there that religious freedom is routinely hammered down.

Farr testified that some foreign policy professionals think it violates the **First Amendment** for the United States to promote religious freedom abroad. Others view the defense of religious freedom as a battering ram wielded by American evangelicals to open mission fields in hostile lands.

George Weigel, in a column at First Things, defended Farr and recognized the world historical import of religious freedom and America's defense of this "first freedom."

Why call religious freedom a first freedom at all? It is the first freedom listed in the **Bill of Rights**.

But more than that, our Founding Fathers so regarded it. James Madison's *Federalist 51* states:

"In a free government the security for civil rights must be the same as that for religious rights."

Madison knew whereof he spoke. He had been the legislative champion of Thomas Jefferson's historic Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, which, for the first time in history, established not a specific religion or a particular church but religious freedom itself.

Upon its passage by the Virginia General Assembly in January 1786, Madison proudly wrote to Jefferson in Paris that the statute would "add to the lustre of our country." This letter was written in the middle of our nation's critical period, a time when our country saw Shay's Rebellion, state repudiation of debts, the near collapse of the economy and American seamen seized with impunity by Muslim Barbary pirates.

In truth, Madison's glad tidings from Virginia may have been

the only “lustre of our country” the young statesman could report. Even so, Jefferson while in France eagerly translated and distributed the handiwork of his state’s lawmakers.

No late 18th-century European state, monarchy or republic could begin to approach America’s new standard for religious freedom. And few nations since then have attained that highest standard.

Not only did this widely-commented-upon Virginia statute create a sensation among the *philosophes* of France and the Enlightenment thinkers of Europe, but America’s religious freedom also began a surge in immigration by common folk yearning to breathe free.

All such understandings of the religious freedom foundation of American civil liberty and foreign policy seem long forgotten by the elites of today. The media cares little about religious freedom. The famous Rothman-Lichter study of 1981 surveyed 240 journalists from the prestige press. Of course, 80 percent of them voted one way, but a whopping 91 percent said they never attended a religious service of any kind. No wonder CNN’s Bill Schneider could famously say the media “doesn’t get religion.”

But if 91 percent of top journoes never worship, they are a tent revival in comparison to our foreign policy clerisy. And there’s the rub: Not only is religion not important in their own lives, but our top foreign policy thinkers also fail consistently to understand why religion is important in the lives of others—especially those restive peoples whom they are forever trying to explain to America’s rapidly dwindling readership on **foreign affairs**.

It’s no exaggeration to say the once-proud foreign bureaus of major American news outlets have atrophied. They look strangely like the church pews of the mainline Protestant churches that once played so prominent a role in American life.

Americans who do care about religious freedom need to speak up and make their voices heard. Thomas Farr is right: There is not one country in the world where U.S. policy—as enunciated by this administration and the permanent foreign policy elite—has moved “a country of concern” toward greater respect for religious freedom.

As a matter of fact, Americans’ religious freedom is in grave jeopardy. We are forced to prop up and pay tribute to oppressive regimes abroad. Consider Egypt, Libya, the PLO. These are persecutors of Christians, Jews and off-brand Muslims.

But we are also taxed to support an administration that issues “mandates,” including the Obamacare’s contraceptive mandate. Some of these mandates are the greatest threat to religious freedom at home since 1786. It is no accident, as our non-believing Marxist friends would say. When those in power care nothing for religious freedom, all civil and religious liberty are at risk.

*Ken Blackwell is a senior fellow for family empowerment at Family Research Council. This article appeared in WORLD Magazine on Tuesday.*

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## **India Awaits Outcome of ‘Anti-Conversion’ Law Amendments**

Madhya Pradesh state in central India awaits the outcome of proposed amendments to its “anti-conversion law,” which would lengthen prison time and fines for anyone convicted of forcing

someone to change their religion.

With state elections looming before this government ends its term in October, some observers claim the move is an attempt by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to appease Hindu hardliners.

The Christian minority now awaits the verdict of the state Governor, Ramnaresh Yadav, who must sign the bill before it can become law.

The amendment was one of a number of topics considered during a two-week local assembly meeting beginning on July 8 and scheduled to finish on July 19.

However, local sources told World Watch Monitor that proceedings were halted on July 11, while the opposition prepared a no-confidence motion against the present BJP government.

The governor has therefore delayed his response to the proposed amendment and called for another meeting of the local assembly.

The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, introduced in 1968, prohibits forcible conversion, but critics say the law has been abused by those who wish only to prevent others from changing their religion. As such, they have been widely labeled "anti-conversion laws."

John Dayal, a member of the National Integration Council for the Government of India and Secretary General of the All India Christian Council, says that rather than promoting freedom of religion, laws such as the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act of 1968 are in fact "violations of the religious freedom guaranteed by the constitution."

"It is a deliberate attempt to polarize society and to keep Dalits and other marginalized groups in serfdom," he says. "We

are determined to challenge such black laws.”

As punishment, the 1968 Act recommends a fine of up to 5,000 rupees (\$83) and imprisonment of up to one year. In the case of a conversion involving a child, a woman or member of a “scheduled caste or tribe” (those recognized in India’s Constitution as “historically disadvantaged” by background), prison term and fine can be doubled.

The proposed amendment recommends maximum punishment of three years’ imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 rupees (\$830), or four years and 100,000 rupees (\$1,660) in the case of a child, woman or member of a scheduled caste or tribe.

The amendment also introduces the requirement for both the converter and would-be convert to obtain state permission at least 30 days prior to conversion.

For this purpose an application would need to be filed with the district magistrate, who may then ask the police to investigate.

Those failing to obtain prior permission—both convert and converter—could face one year’s imprisonment and a 1,000-rupee fine.

## **Protests**

Christian leaders in Bhopal, the state capital, met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan before the July 8 congress and petitioned him to reject the bill, while hundreds of Christians have attended protests across the state.

“We will not lay back, we will fight,” said protest organiser Indira Iyengar, Chairperson for non-profit organisations Mahashakti Seva Kendera, Jan Shikshan Sansthan Jhabua and Alirajpur Madhya Pradesh.

“For us this bill is very important. The poor community in Madhya Pradesh will face a situation like Gujarat [a state in

the west of India, where the law is particularly severe] if this amendment is made.”

Iyengar said that meetings had been held in every district in Madhya Pradesh and petitions signed against the amendment. Non-religious groups such as the centrist Bahujan Samaj Party (Majority People’s Party) also attended the protests.

“Never were the Christian community so united as at this time,” she said.

### **Background**

In 2006, a comparable amendment to the state’s “anti-conversion law” was reported internationally as “passed,” but then former Gov. Balram Jakhar twice refused to give his approval.

This was also the case for a proposed amendment to the respective law in the mountainous northern state of Himachal Pradesh, which was quashed last year after protests led by the Evangelical Fellowship of India and Act Now for Harmony and Democracy.

Christians comprise a tiny fraction of the population of Madhya Pradesh (the 2001 census put the figure at around 170,000 people, or 0.3 percent) and just 2.3 percent of the total population of India (2011 census).

In the vast and diverse country, Christians often live freely. However, India ranks among the 50 countries where life as a Christian is most difficult, according to Open Doors International, a global ministry that serves Christians who are pressured because of their faith.

The country is No. 31 on Open Doors’ 2013 World Watch List, largely because of a streak of Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, that envisions India as a purely Hindu state.

Earlier this week, World Watch Monitor reported a number of

specific examples of attacks against India's Christians in recent months.

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## NC Governor Signs Law for Tougher Abortion Clinic Rules

North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed into law on Monday new requirements for clinics performing **abortions** that supporters say will protect women's safety and opponents say will restrict access to the procedure.

The new law places sweeping new restrictions on **abortion clinics**, including a requirement doctors be present when abortions are performed.

It also bans publicly funded health insurance programs from paying for most abortions, and authorizes state health officials to design rules for increased safety standards for abortion clinics.

The move comes just a week after Texas passed new standards on abortion clinics and judges delayed anti-abortion legislation in North Dakota and Alabama.

McCrory, a Republican, said Monday that the North Carolina legislation furthers women's safety but does not unconstitutionally restrict access to the legal procedure.

He had threatened to veto an earlier version of the bill that required abortion clinics to follow the same standards as ambulatory surgery centers, saying it was clearly aimed at shutting down clinics in the state. McCrory said during his campaign that he would not sign legislation aimed at

restricting access.

“These higher standards will result in safer conditions for North Carolina women,” McCrory said Monday. “This law does not further limit access and those who contend it does are more interested in politics than the health and safety of our citizens.”

But **abortion-rights advocates** said that his signature amounted to a broken promise, because the new standards on clinic doctors will make it impossible for some clinics to continue operating. They vowed to fight the new laws in North Carolina and in other states.

“Over the last month, North Carolina women have stood up to fight back and they aren’t just going to stand by and take this,” said Planned Parenthood Action Fund President Cecile Richards in a statement. “They’re going to take the energy and enthusiasm that has been built here and run with it.”

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## Radical Gay Activists Turn Traitor Into Military Martyr

When Jason Collins made sports history by becoming the first active-roster homosexual player to come out of the closet, the **gay agenda** gloried—and so did the mainstream media.

Much the same, the **gay agenda** and the mainstream media joined hands in celebration when Jodie Foster came out during the 2013 Golden Globes; when CNN anchor Anderson Cooper finally came out last year—and just about any other time a famous

person has declared same-sex attractions. Of course, when pro-**same-sex marriage** laws are passed, there is hype and buzz (and sometimes even dancing in the streets), and the mainstream media is right there to capture it.

But the mainstream media and **radical gay activists** are seemingly at odds about a homosexual military man who turned out to be a traitor to his country.

According to a report from the Culture and Media Institute, just eight of the 125 mentions Bradley Manning—the U.S. Army private who was convicted of a massive intelligence security breach via Wikileaks—has received on ABC, CBS and NBC news programs between his arrest in 2010 and July 30, 2013, included references to his homosexuality. And only then were they made to help defend his case.

“Lawyers for Pfc. Bradley Manning began laying out a defense to show that his struggles as a gay soldier in an environment hostile to homosexuality contributed to mental and emotional problems that should have barred him from having access to sensitive material,” the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported.

Indeed, as the Culture and Media Institute points out, Manning’s defense attorneys essentially argued that he leaked the critical intelligence because he was a gay soldier serving in the age of “don’t ask, don’t tell” and because he felt like a woman trapped in a man’s body. Nevertheless, the mainstream media downplayed his homosexuality, with only 6.4 percent of stories connecting the dots.

Glory in some sins, and sweep others under the rug. If that’s not a double standard, what is?

But what’s more disturbing is how **radical gay activists** showed their support of Manning at gay pride parades across the country on June 30. The agenda: to bring attention to his plight and to advocate for his release from prison.

“Bradley is a hero of the queer community, and we want him free,” explains Elias Holtz of the Freedom Socialist Party and a lead organizer of the New York contingent of gay pride parades.

In Chicago, Gay Liberation Network founder Andy Thayer credits Manning with contributing “more to human rights than probably any other American LGBT activist organizing today.”

The treatment of Manning as an LGBT hero demonstrates just how radical the **radical gay agenda** really is. Think about it for a minute. Even the mainstream media shied away from making a strong connection between Manning and gay rights. Yet the radical gay agenda is celebrating Manning as courageous and inspiring. Manning has effectively become a homosexual martyr who is facing oppression and abuse from the state.

Can you see the distorted thinking? Manning was found guilty of violating parts of the Espionage Act of 1917. Although Manning was acquitted of “aiding the enemy,” he confessed to leaking sensitive government files that put national security at risk in the name of sparking a debate about foreign policy.

Again, keep in mind his defense. According to the *Washington Post*, defense attorney David Coombs “portrayed Manning as a ‘young, naive but good-intentioned’ soldier who was in emotional turmoil, partly because he was a gay service member at a time when homosexuals were barred from serving openly in the U.S. military.”

Are we heading toward a day when homosexuals who feel oppressed can get away with breaching national security or worse? If the radical gay agenda has its way, we certainly are.

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*on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.*

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# **National Pro-Life Group Drops Local Chapter Over Traditional Marriage Support**

A pro-life group in Cleveland, Ohio, has distanced itself from the national organization it was affiliated with because of its stance on same-sex marriage.

Cleveland Right to Life (CRTL) recently added fighting for traditional marriage and family to its mission statement and is critical of Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who announced he will support same-sex marriage.

The National Right to Life Committee (NRTL) has chosen to support Portman and withdrew from CRTL.

“The right to life is the first and foremost of all human rights,” National Right to Life Committee President Carol Tobias said in a statement sent to Charisma News. “It affects all other issues and without it, a person never gets the opportunity to exercise any other right. Simply put, without life all other rights and issues are meaningless.”

“From time to time,” she continued, “people or organizations come along that encourage the right-to-life movement to take up the mantle of other issues by equating these issues with the paramount right to life.”

Tobias sent CRTL President Molly Smith a letter, dated July 17, stating that the Ohio group would no longer be considered an affiliate of NRTL.

"This letter, which was received well after the date on the letter, came without even a phone call or email from the NRTL organization," Smith says. "In fact, we have become aware that copies of the letter were forwarded to Ohio pro-life organizations from Sen. Portman's office before I had the opportunity to read it myself."

The letter directed the local chapter to remove any mention of its connection with the national organization from its website.

"I don't know that they've ever done this with anybody else," Smith told OneNewsNow, commenting that she believes homosexual lobbyists played a part.

According to OneNewsNow, Tobias said in the letter that CRTL "issued public criticisms of and implicit political threats against a U.S. senator who has supported the right to life position on every vote."

"This is about supporting the family in America and any politician, including Portman, who supports the breakup of the American family and supports the denial of a mother and father for children has forfeited the right of support and endorsement of the pro-life movement," says CRTL board member Jerry C. Cirino.

Smith notes that since the group's announcement, it has received tremendous grass-roots support and new financial contributions.

"We have had expressions of support from politicians around Ohio, many of whom have shown an interest in running against Republicans who do not steadfastly support the family and traditional marriage," she says.

She says the reference to NRTL is no longer part of CRTL's website, but the group will continue to be affiliated with Ohio Right to Life.

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# Pastor Prosecuted for Reading Bible Out Loud in Public Goes to Trial

The case of two men arrested while reading the Bible—out loud and in public—went to trial on Monday, over a year after the events transpired.

The men were arrested when they went to their local DMV in Hemet, Calif., and read from the Bible aloud as people stood in line for the DMV to open. When the first California Highway Patrol (CHP) officer arrived on the scene, he grabbed the Bible away from the man reading it and said he could not “preach to a captive audience.”

There is no penal code that says such a thing, so the officer later cited them for violating California Penal Code Section 602.1(b), which provides:

“Any person who intentionally interferes with any lawful business carried on by the employees of a public agency open to the public, by obstructing or intimidating those attempting to carry on business, or those persons there to transact business with the public agency ... is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for up to 90 days, or by a fine of up to four hundred dollars (\$400), or by both that imprisonment and fine.”

This penal code is meant to protect businesses from protesters who intimidate patrons and block entrances. In this case, the DMV was not yet open at the time the men were there, and they were standing approximately 40 feet away from the entrance of the building.

After Advocates for Faith and Freedom filed a federal lawsuit against the California Highway Patrol for unlawful arrest, Riverside County district attorney Paul Zellerbach decided to charge the men with trespassing on state property, a misdemeanor offense under Title 13 of the California Administrative Code, Section 1860(a), which says, "No person shall hold or conduct any demonstration or gathering in or upon any state buildings or grounds unless a permit has been issued by the Department."

The trial began Monday at the Riverside County Superior Court in Murrieta, Calif., and is expected to last approximately four to five days. Criminal defense attorney Nic Cocis of Murrieta and Robert Tyler, general counsel of Advocates for Faith and Freedom, will be defending pastor Bret Coronado and Mark Mackey.

Tyler remarked, "These men were exercising their First Amendment right of free speech. They were simply sharing their faith on public property, and we will defend their constitutional right to do so. This prosecution amounts to nothing more than retaliation for our filing a federal lawsuit."

The defense contends that the regulation being enforced is unconstitutional because it violates the First Amendment right to free speech and is unconstitutionally vague and overbroad in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause. Additionally, the defense contends that the permit requirement does not apply because the men were not engaged in a demonstration or gathering.

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# Aussie Invasion Continues in US With Musical Missionaries

What's happening Down Under? It's a revolution invading the globe, as Australia's Planetshakers and Hillsong ministries continue to shake up Christian music, evangelism and church-planting models. Yet what began more than two decades ago with globally recognized worship songs such as "Shout to the Lord" and "Power of Your Love" has now become a full-fledged "Aussie invasion." But how is the world's smallest continent still making such spiritual waves?

"It's a paradox of the nature of God to use us from so far away to be a voice to the nations," says Joel Houston, leader of the Sydney-based Hillsong UNITED band and co-pastor of Hillsong Church NYC in Manhattan. "It's also our culture—Australian wanderlust—to get out and travel much further."

Planetshakers, co-founded by pastors Russell Evans and his wife, Sam, also cuts a wide swath internationally with conferences, speaking engagements and band tours. Evans attributes his global vision to his grandparents and parents, who were missionaries to Southeast Asia.

"It was inevitable that I would want to play a part in bringing Jesus to the world," he says. "If a part of Planetshakers' ministry can bless someone in another part of the world, great! We see that as a great honor, that a bunch of Aussies can help a brother or sister in another country. We want to share what God has blessed us with."

## **Shaking America**

Planetshakers has experienced exploding growth since its first Awakening conference in 1997 in Adelaide, South Australia, attended by 300 delegates. In 2004, the Evans' planted a

church in Melbourne with 12 believers that has since soared to more than 8,000 members.

“The church has grown and the ministry has been blessed because we believe Jesus gives us authority to go into all the world and make disciples,” Evans says. “In the early days of Planetshakers Awakenings, we would hear stories of young people returning to their churches and, as a result of the encounter they had with God at the Awakening, their youth group would double and sometimes triple over the next few months.”

These conferences have attracted about 25,000 young people, Evans reports, and major events are planned for 2014 in Melbourne, the U.S. and Asia.

The ministry’s worship band has released 20 albums and supports two teams touring globally. In the U.S. this year, it performed in January to a packed house at The Rock Church in San Diego and organized summer concerts in Hawaii, Los Angeles and Seattle.

### **Partners in Song**

While Planetshakers and Hillsong minister along similar paths, they don’t compete but rather complement one another in spreading the gospel. Brian Houston, founder and senior pastor of Hillsong Church in Sydney, has spoken at Planetshakers Awakening conferences and at the church, and Evans has reciprocated at Hillsong.

“Australia has been blessed by Hillsong music,” Evans says. “What Brian Houston, Geoff Bullock, Darlene Zschech and Youth Alive pioneered back in the day has blazed a great path. I think our differences are based on the different DNA of our respective churches. [Hillsong] is a lot older and more established than us. We are still evolving and learning things as we go.”

Evans emphasizes that he is not interested in planting lots of churches but rather in supporting and encouraging existing ministries through music, conferences, speaking and books.

On the other hand, Hillsong's 25,000-member mother church in Australia builds a different model, planting churches in London, Cape Town, Paris, Kiev, Moscow, Stockholm and, more recently, New York. Since late 2011, Hillsong Church NYC has grown to 4,000 members, reports Joel Houston. "God blesses, and it doesn't make a lot of sense," he says.

Hillsong UNITED just completed its Welcome Zion tour in 12 cities in the U.S., attracting upward of 90,000 attendees. The band's new album, *Zion*, zoomed to No. 1 on the iTunes chart in March.

"The reaction to the tour was very encouraging," Joel Houston says. "People were energetic and engaged in worship for three hours. It was awesome. There were hundreds of decisions to accept Jesus."

Amid the success, megaministries such as Planetshakers and Hillsong have been hit in recent years by increasingly negative stories in secular media. Evangelicals aren't held in the highest esteem in Australia, where only about 7.5 percent of the population attends church regularly. And Christianity is not considered part of the country's free-spirited and laid-back lifestyle.

Nevertheless, God is overcoming cultural obstacles and moving in power.

"We are starting to see the Holy Spirit move like never before in our church," Evans says. "We want the church to represent the church in the book of Acts—that is, with miracles, salvations, feeding the poor and building the community."

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# A-Rod's Suspension, American Morality and Sex Before Marriage

As Major League Baseball's steroid scandal has been in the news, have you noticed how many people are saying it's critical we abide by the rules of the game? Former MLB Commissioner Fay Vincent said this: "It's important that he [Bud Selig, the current commissioner] articulates and explains that baseball is doing this to be protective of the sport. ... If you don't have rules, you don't have a game."

Does this same logic apply to morality and sexuality? How about people moving in together and simply "playing house" as newlyweds without tying the knot in holy matrimony?

In case you're not aware, here's the current stats and trends on marriage:

- Two-thirds of first marriages are now preceded by cohabitation.
- Three-fourths of women have lived with a partner by age 30.
- One-fourth of married young adults have bought their first home with their partner before marriage.
- 23 percent of births today are to women who cohabit.
- Among women under 45, twice as many move in with someone as get married first.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and *Glamour* magazine provided the above information, and in *Glamour's* recent survey, nearly 50 percent of women called marriage "outdated." The new term is *nearlyweds*—think Kourtney Kardashian or

Brangelina.

Helping prepare young ladies for this avant-garde, progressive approach to sexuality, schools and governments are increasingly launching free sex apps for teens that will educate them about birth control, sexuality, homosexuality, abortion and beyond. The New York City health department launched its free sex app for teens covering the following: clinics offering free birth control, including plan B; Planned Parenthood clinics; instruction alerts, such as the fact that in New York, you don't need parental consent; and links to websites. One link takes users to a "Dating and Friends" section that spotlights *Samantha's Story*, a seven-minute video detailing Samantha's sexual relationship with her boyfriend plus her desires toward another girl. "She's pretty. ... She's hot. ... I think about her that way," Samantha says. "I like sex with Richie but ... Alicia is beautiful. ... I want to kiss her or go even further." And when Samantha goes to an LGBT clinic, she's told, "Feelings like that are totally normal."

And we wonder why young people are confused about morality today! Why not just go the next step when you "love" somebody and move in together? It's the logical next step, right?

Not so fast! Here are three things that are critical to consider:

### **1. Why Wait Until Marriage? Our Creator Commands It.**

As stated earlier, rules are essential. Laws are essential in every area of life in order to maintain order and harmony. In the area of sex, God has put limitations on the display of physical affection prior to marriage because He wants us to experience a maximum marriage with a maximum sex life.

What are God's directions regarding sexuality? I'll say it with charity and clarity: God explicitly condemns all forms of premarital sex. Engaging in sexual foreplay, fondling, stroking, touching, caressing the more intimate parts of

another's body—either through the clothing or by direct contact—is forbidden outside the bonds of marriage. It is sin. This will never change. “Loving by Braille” is not okay in God's kingdom.

God's plan is chastity (purity) before marriage and fidelity (loyalty) after marriage. It is keeping sex in the right place for the right person at the right time.

Here is just one of the multitude of passages in the Bible regarding sex: “You will remember the instructions we gave you then in the name of the Lord Jesus. God's plan is to make you holy and that entails first of all a clean cut sexual immorality. Every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect” (1 Thess. 4:2-3, JB).

## **2. You Reap What You Sow in the Present.**

The God who created this universe ordained that it be governed by a vast number of physical laws. Fighting these laws is futile, for whether one believes in them or not, they continue to operate. Think of the law of gravity!

The spiritual law that is probably the most important one in dealing with morality and sexuality is the law of sowing and reaping. Scripture says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7, NKJV).

In the physical realm, it works like this: Sow corn, and you reap corn—not onions. Sow carrots, and you reap carrots—not bananas. Simple enough, isn't it?

In the spiritual realm, it works like this: Sow obedience to the laws of God, and you reap the benefits. Sow disobedience to the laws of God, and you'll reap the consequences.

While sowing obedience to the Word of God in the realm of

sexuality brings untold blessings both now and for the rest of one's life, sowing disobedience brings consequences from which one cannot escape. They may not all occur, but some will occur. They may not happen immediately, but they will happen eventually.

Here's the deal: The generation of so-called "liberation" and "progressive morality" has brought an astronomical increase in sexual addiction and dysfunction, sexually transmitted diseases, adultery, divorce, medication, illegitimate childbirths, teenage pregnancy, homosexuality, pornography and suicide, not to mention shattered families and over 55 million babies aborted.

The CDC stated recently that there is a severe epidemic of STDs sweeping America. Twenty million yearly are being added, and this now costs U.S. taxpayers \$16 billion annually! More than half affects 15- to 24-year-olds. Chlamydia, HPV, herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B, HIV and AIDS are epidemic. There are currently 110,197,000 venereal diseases in America. That is a catastrophe!

Premarital sex, living together and disregarding God's standards for love, sex and marriage bring consequences in the present. Consider the following consequences:

- Sexually-transmitted diseases
- Ever-present guilt and condemnation for a hypocritical lifestyle
- Loss of reputation and virginity
- Illegitimate children
- Abortion, with its resultant shame and regret
- Depression
- Sexual addictions
- Detrimental effects on children

Not only are cohabitating couples with a child more than twice as likely to break up as married parents, but children living with their mother and a live-in boyfriend are over 30 times more likely to be abused than those living with their

biological married parents. It should be common sense that children benefit from the structure and identity that come with a lasting marriage between parents.

Editor Rich Lowry in the *National Review* labeled the current trend a “cohabitation revolution” and stated, “Children in cohabitating households tend to lag children in intact married families on key social indicators and are not much better off than children in single-parent families.”

Author Glenn Stanton, in his excellent book *The Ring Makes All the Difference: The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation and the Strong Benefits of Marriage*, says the idea of “test driving” relationships before committing may seem correct but that research strongly dispels this: “Lack of commitment is seen in the high degree of breakups and people being less committed to future relationships. There’s always a pattern of holding back.”

### **3. You Reap What You Sow in the Future.**

At present, my wife of 37 years and I are reaping the benefits we sowed prior to our marriage. Her parents have been married 67 years and have over 60 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and, to God’s glory, there are absolutely no divorces!

The above is not stated to boast or make any reader feel guilty or condemned. But isn’t it time we refurbish our marriage culture in the church and our culture? If you’ve already blown it, then it’s time to repent and get on the right track so you can experience the “abundant life” God promises when we play by the rules.

What are just some of the consequences reaped in the future for sowing disobedience today?

- **Marrying the wrong person.** If you want to know God’s choice, you must be able to hear God’s voice!
- **Sexual dysfunction in marriage.** Here’s the deception: “Good sexual adjustment makes for a good marriage.

Therefore, live together before marriage, and try everything out!" Actually this is a boldfaced lie that misleads multitudes. It is not "good sexual adjustment" that makes for a good marriage but rather a good marriage that makes for good sexual adjustment.

- **Elimination of perfect trust in marriage.** If someone jumps the fence prior to marriage by disregarding God's laws, who's to say you or your partner won't do the same thing after you're married? What you do today lays a foundation of trust or distrust that continues after the wedding. No one wants to live their life every day wondering, "If he cheated before, will he do it again?"
- **Problems related to self-control.** Do you know the No. 1 reason marriages break up? Sexual problems? Financial problems? No. The primary reason is simply a lack of self-control. If a person can't control himself, sexual problems arise. If a person can't control himself, financial problems arise. Same thing with a person's temper. With overeating. With alcohol. On and on it goes. Culture tells you, "Indulge yourself!" God says, "Control yourself!"

"A man without self control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (Prov. 25:28, ESV).

Often in marriage, one must forego sexual activity because of sickness, pregnancy, travel or other situations. A self-controlled individual has the character to be at peace and not be selfish, demanding or resentful when this happens.

Our culture endorses promiscuity, cohabitation and homosexuality. We are reaping what we sow as we see the meltdown of our society. Isn't it time we face the realities of disregarding God's moral laws and turn to embrace our loving Creator's ways? Will you embrace biblical standards and reject the phony counterfeits of this world system? Let's see a restoration and rebuilding of covenant marriage in our day. It all starts with you and me.

**Larry Tomczak** is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today's cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.