

## GENERIC AUTHORITY

Since the beginning of time the Creator has expressed His will to mankind. Man has not always listened and favorably responded, and in many recorded instances he has removed himself from God through disobedience. But whether obeyed or ignored, God's will remains proper, right, and required.

Sometimes the expression of that will has been very broad and all-encompassing. To the first human couple, God said, "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Gen. 1:28). This expressed will of God provided for continuation and expansion of the human race. Being general in nature, this is referred to as generic authority.

Unless it would conflict with some other will of the heavenly Father, whatever means is used to carry out a generic command is considered both permitted and authorized. There are a number of noteworthy examples of this general authority.

### **Generic Authority to Abram**

Abram was commanded by God, "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:*" (Gen. 12:1) Abram was not required to walk, to ride a donkey, or to use a boat in going northwest along the Euphrates River. He may well have employed all three of these means of transportation, and each would have been in perfect harmony with God's will. God had given Abram generic authority.

### **Generic Authority of Jesus to the Disciples**

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus said to the disciples, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations*" (Mat. 28:19). Here was generic authority for the disciples to fulfill what had been God's purpose from the beginning of time. We note this being beautifully fulfilled as Isaiah 49:6 was in Acts 13:46-47 where Paul and Barnabas said of the Jews' rejection of the gospel message, "*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*".

Because of this generic authority given to and used by the disciples, the truth spread through lands known to us today as Syria and the Middle East, islands of the Mediterranean, Turkey, Greece, Rome and no doubt to other areas south and east of Palestine. On a recent journey, several of us discovered at Bath, in southwest England, evidence that the knowledge of Christianity had reached Britain in the First Century.

It was not by sword as was used by Alexander to extend his empire, nor by swords as was used by the Moslems to spread their false doctrine - but by generic authority for simply teaching the gospel message that the early disciples are spoken of as first having "*filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*" (Acts 5:28) and then having "*turned the world upside down*" (Acts 17:6).

As an extension of this generic authority we today continue to carry that grand message of truth "*unto the ends of the earth.*" Brethren from Georgia to Arizona to Alaska, as did the early Christians, are working in beautiful harmony to support and accomplish this good end.

### **Generic Authority Received Through Words of Inspiration**

Paul writes in his letter to the Romans of those in positions of secular power such as the governor, the sheriff, and the judge. He instructs the Romans (and us through his words to them), "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers*" (Rom. 13:1). He then comments on the advisability of this approach, showing that it is not only right but that it is also God's provision for the protection of His children. Jesus had earlier given the same authority for obeying the laws of the land when He said, "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's*" (Luke 20:25). We find our authority to be law abiding citizens of the land in which we live from such passages as these.

### **But Generic Authority May Also Have Its Limitations**

A sharp knife is an extremely useful tool. With it one may neatly slice a loaf of bread, peel a potato, or cut open a sealed box. With a sharp knife called a scalpel a skilled surgeon may perform a delicate, life-saving operation. But in the hands of a careless user the knife can become a tool of harm and destruction.

One must be extremely careful in using the generic as his authority. While there are many freedoms and privileges allowed

by God with His generic authority, He has often limited them and issued restrictions in their use. It is vital, therefore, that we do not run headlong with assumed permission and fail to observe God's wise limitations which do not always coincide with the preference of social trends.

This phase of our study will be considered in an article next month.

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## IS DANCING SINFUL?

The question is often asked, "Is dancing sinful?" One would think that after many years of discussion on this subject, that it would by now be a topic which no one would seriously consider a wholesome practice. However, it seems that each year, about the time when students go back to school, this subject raises its ugly head once again.

Webster defines dancing as such: "A series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements performed to music."

When two people of the opposite sex come together in the act of dancing, their bodies naturally make movements that are enticing to each other. School dances such as homecoming, prom, and others are no exception.

Some of the well-known psychologists defend the dance on the grounds that it is a partial satisfaction of the sex urge. Such arguments as this should prove that dancing should be avoided. The Bible decries that such is not becoming a Christian, "*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*" (Gal. 5:24).

As one looks at the idea of whether or not dancing is sinful, there are at least three words in the New Testament which must be considered. First, the word "REVELLING" - revelling is defined as "boisterous merrymaking or festivity or festivity with dancing, masking". God's children must not engage in such. Paul said, "*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness,*

*revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:19-21). Paul states that "revelling" is a work of the flesh and that Christians must not be engaged in such activities. Furthermore, those who do CANNOT inherit the kingdom of God.

Second, the word, "WANTONNESS"—this word means "acts or manners such as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females". Once again Paul writes, "*Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*". (Rom. 13:13-14). Those who engage in wantonness are not walking honestly, but rather they are making provision for the flesh and not for the Lord. It must be admitted that dancing is covered by the word "wantonness"; if not, why not? Look also at Peter's use of this word, "*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error*" (II Pet. 2:18).

The third word is "LASCIVIOUSNESS" - which is defined as "conduct and character that is unbecoming, indecent, unrestrained, shameless". Paul used this word in Galatians 5:19 as well as in a letter to the Corinthians, "*And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed*" (II Cor. 12,21).

In all cases where the latter two words are used, they are classified as being sinful. If these words do not prove to your satisfaction that dancing is sinful, then the phrase, "*and such like*" (Gal. 5:21) most certainly would cover dancing and thereby prove beyond any doubt that dancing is sinful.

In Exodus 32:19 Moses could see that dancing was sinful, for it was because of their dancing that they became naked, (Exo. 32:25). John the Baptist lost his head because of a dance (Mat. 14:6; Mar. 6:22-24).

Among so-called heathen people, the modern dance is regarded as very shocking. These people recognize the power of dancing to arouse human passion as a prelude to sexual contact.

Based upon the evidence which has been presented, why would a Christian desire to be involved in any kind of dancing? Think about what Paul said, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I The. 5:22).

JOHNIE SCAGGS, JR.  
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### THE POEM

I knelt to pray but not for long,  
    I had too much to do.  
I had to hurry and get to work  
    For bills would soon be due.  
So I knelt and said a hurried prayer,  
    And jumped up off my knees.  
My Christian duty was now done  
My soul could rest at ease.....  
    All day long I had no time  
    To spread a word of cheer  
No time to speak of Christ to friends,  
    They'd laugh at me I'd fear.  
No time, no time, too much to do,  
    That was my constant cry,  
No time to give to souls in need  
But at last the time, the time to die.  
    I went before the Lord,  
I came, I stood with downcast eyes.  
For in his hands God held a book;  
    It was the book of life.  
God looked into his book and said  
    "Your name I cannot find.  
I once was going to write it down...  
    But never found the time"

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# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE &amp; TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Aug. 5 - 7	New Bethel Church of Christ Cullman, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Aug. 5 - 7	Valley Church of Christ Valley, AL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Aug. 12 - 14 7:30 P.M. Friday & Saturday 10:30 A.M. Sunday 2:00 P.M. Sunday	Mt. Carmel Road Church Gay, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Aug. 12 - 14 7:00 P.M. Friday & Saturday 10:30 A.M. Sunday 2:00 P.M. Sunday Singing	Rainsville Church Rainsville, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Aug. 26 - 28	Ashlock, KY Near Celina, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Aug. 26 - 28	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. When Abram left the land of Ur, he took his nephew with him. What was the nephew's name?
2. According to Isaiah 53, in the prophecy about Christ, why was He pierced?
3. What does Romans 3 say we become conscious of through the law?
4. For what does the writer of the book of Job say man is born?
5. When Hanna asked the Lord for a son, what two things did she vow?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Psalm 90 says the length of our days is how many years normally? SEVENTY (Psalm 90:10)
2. Besides giving them manna to eat, what 2 things does Deut. 8 tell us God did for the Israelites in the wilderness? KEPT THEIR CLOTHING FROM WEARING OUT AND KEPT THEIR FEET FROM SWELLING (Deut. 8:4)
3. What two masters can you not serve at the same time? GOD AND MONEY (Luke 19:2)
4. Name the four metals in the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. GOLD, SILVER, BRASS, IRON (Dan. 2:32-33)
5. What did Reuben find in the field and give to his mother, Leah? MANDRAKES (Gen. 30:14)