



N.T. Wright speaks at Houston Baptist University.

MICHAEL TIMS/Houston Baptist University

‘Theologian-writer-intellectual’ defends Christianity’s

CORE VALUES

By RICK COUSINS
Correspondent

It's not often a former member of the UK's House of Lords visits Houston Baptist University. But this week, Professor N.T. Wright spoke here at a conference focused on the Apostle Paul.

The man that Time Magazine characterized as “one of the most formidable figures in the world of Christian thought” is currently research professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Brett McCracken, writing in Christianity Today, referred to Wright as, “perhaps the world’s leading Christian theologian-writer-intellectual,” but a shorter description for him might simply be “defender of the faith.” That’s because Wright has staunchly defended what he sees as Christianity’s core doctrines concerning the resurrection and the authenticity of the New Testament.

He set aside some time for a question-and-answer session with Faith.

Q: The church at large and especially the church in America has rarely experienced such rapid and profound changes in shared values and visions as it has in recent years. What advice do you have for American clergy in dealing with the radical shifts on marriage, sexuality and truth?

A: It is hard for anyone, old or young, clergy or lay, to keep their balance. Clergy in particular need to be very firmly anchored in the scriptures, in prayer, in the sacramental life and in ministry to the poor. These four things keep clergy (and anyone else) close to Jesus himself, and he alone is the true anchor in these or any storms. There is a lot of confusion and a lot of confident-sounding, but in fact, confused talk on marriage and sexuality. We urgently need serious work in these areas rather than simply going with a political flow of whatever sort.

As for truth — well, there is a brittle, modernist kind of ‘truth,’ which is a kind of rationalistic reduction of the Christian message. The challenge is to grow out

Next week

Explore traditional hymns and choral music with a local legend who passionately values these genres

of that bad habit into a more biblical, and hence more supple and narrational truth, without losing hold of the Truth in Person, Jesus himself.

Q: Popular anti-theists rail against the New Testament and its claims. Where should a believer turn for assurance that it is reliable?

A: The more we know about the Jewish world of the ancient Middle East, the more sense the New Testament’s picture of Jesus makes. The popular anti-theists regularly quote a very small and skeptical sample of scholars when they try to dismiss it. But any historian has to ask, “What caused the sudden and steep rise of early Christian-

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Faith Focus



Rick Cousins’ Faith Focus column appears each Saturday. Have a

unique or unusual event? Email details to rick.cousins@galvnews.com at least two weeks in advance.

Shackles, chains and a chorus

Texas A&M Women’s Chorus will perform at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at Galveston’s First Baptist Church, 822 23rd St.

“The chorus strives to promote excellence in the fine arts and to encourage cultural expansion at Texas A&M,” said Mathen Samuel, a deacon at First.

“They travel throughout Texas and internationally performing a varied repertoire of sacred and secular classical selections.

“Not only are they amazing vocalists, but also you will feel their sense of Aggie spirit and pride. You are sure to leave with a heart filled with music as you experience their musical serenade.”

Call 409-763-1840.

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The Shelia B. Ministries STAND conference, which is traditionally held in Dallas, is coming to Galveston County this year beginning at 6 p.m. March 28 at Hitchcock’s Greater St. Matthews Baptist Church, 6333 state Highway 6.

“This conference encourages all women to reflect on the shackles that have plagued them for what seems like an eternity and learn to see those shackles as wounds that can be healed with God’s touch, embracing the strength and determination that we can stand in freedom and loose the shackles,” conference Director Deborah Ellis said.

“This is really not a GSM conference, it is a Galveston County conference housed at GSM,” spokesperson Regenia Randall said. “Our desire is to have every church in the county participate in this conference.

“It is for all women who are seeking inspiration, motivation and a fresh experience with God.”

Registration is \$40 at www.shelilab.org. Call 409-986-5453.

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FAITH EVENTS

» **Grace Episcopal Church** is inviting the public to its **Quiet Morning event** from 9 a.m. to noon today at 1115 36th St. in Galveston. They will discuss Praying in Color in preparation for Lent and Easter. Call 409-762-9676.

» **Calvary Crossroad Church** will have their **annual barbecue and garage sale fundraiser** from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. today

at 3810 FM 646 in Santa Fe. Visit <http://calvarycrossroad.com>, or contact Diane Trahan, diane021409@gmail.com or 409-789-6043.

» There will be a **parade and carnival celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Rev. A.S. Johnson of the Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church** beginning at 10 a.m. today from Wright Cuney Recreation Center, 718 41st St., and then proceeding down Avenue H,

and will end at 28th Street and Ave. H in Galveston. The church also will have the close out services for the anniversary at 10:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday at 2717 Ball St. in Galveston. The Rev. Nathan Johnson, and the Rev. Kerry W. Tillmon, will speak respectively. Call 409-763-1748.

» **Restoring Hope International Fellowship Church** is inviting the public to its **Stay on T.R.A.C.C.**

(Transition, Rehabilitation and Course Change) class, which is at 9:30 a.m. Sundays at 1801 W. NASA Road 1 in Webster. Call Tony Scott, 601-918-5762, or the church, 281-557-9151.

» **Congregation Shaar Hashalom and Temple Beth Tikvah** will **celebrate Purim with its annual carnival** from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday at 16020 El Camino Real in

Clear Lake. Ticket information can be obtained by calling, 281-488-5861 between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. weekdays.

» **The gospel group, Exodus**, will present the **2014 Gospel Celebration** at 3 p.m. Sunday at Greater Macedonia Baptist Church, 401 Third Ave. N., in Texas City. The event will feature Unity, Sweet Singing Southern Travelers, Voices of the Mainland, the Jeru-

salem Gospelaires, Massive Praise the Next Level, and more. Call Tammy Davis Lee, 409-621-6871, if you would like to participate.

» **The Mission Department of Little Rock Missionary Baptist Church** will have its **100 Women in Black program** at 3 p.m. Sunday at 207 Fulton St. in Texas City. The program will feature speakers

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FAITH

EVENTS

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from various churches. Call 409-938-3739.

» The **Galveston District Courts of Calanthe** will have its **annual Thanksgiving service** at 3 p.m. Sunday at McKinney Memorial United Methodist Church, 1607 Nashby St., in La Marque. Dorothy Maxey will give the Calanthe Address, and the Rev. Carlos Phillips will deliver the message. Members should be present at 2:30 p.m. Call Grace N. Ellis, Worthy Counselor, 409-935-6802.

» **The Word of Faith Christian Life Center** will offer the **Internet Victory Broadcast** at 6 a.m., 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Mondays at www.radiopanam.com/listen. Email Jackie Lynch, info@wordoffaithchristianlifecenter.org.

» The **International Autism Ministry group** will meet from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday in the McCullough Room of Rosenberg Library, 2310 Sealy Ave., in Galveston. Children are welcome. Email info@internationalautismministry.com or call 512-876-9418.

» **St. Christopher Episcopal Church** will offer **Dave Ramsey's Financial Pace University class** at 7 p.m. Monday at 2508 St. Christopher Ave. in League City. The class will meet for 9-weeks. To register, visit http://www.daveramsey.com/fpu/locations/org/44546/class/253923 or call 281-332-5553.

» **Congregation Shaar Hashalom** will offer Israeli Folk Dancing classes from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Mondays through March 31st at 16020 El Camino Real in Clear Lake. Sessions are \$4 for members and \$5 for all others. Call 281-488-5861.

» **St. John's United Methodist Church** will offer the **DivorceCare seminar/support group** from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays through April 15 at 8200 25th Ave. N. in Texas City. The cost is \$15 per person (includes workbook). Scholarships are available. To register, visit www.stjohnsumct.org. Contact Cindy

Riddick, c.riddick@juno.com or 409-655-5348.

» **Kingdom Training School of Ministry** will be offering **free ministry classes** at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 716 25th St. in Galveston. Space is limited. To sign-up, contact Bishop Marie Pines, hazakpines@aol.com or 409-763-6093.

» **The Diamond Way Buddhist Center** will offer meditation classes at 7:15 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1609 Dakota St. in League City. Advance meditation will be available at 9 a.m. Sundays. Call 281-686-6821, or visit www.diamondway.org/clearlake.

» **Grace of God Ministries** will be offering a Bible Academy for all interested people at 7 p.m. Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 1531 Bayou Road in La Marque. The classes will be taught by Wesley and Ofelia Fulton. Call 409-766-0835, 713-427-3954 or email graceofgodinc@yahoo.com.

» **Greater Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church** will have a **shoe drive through June 14** at 3506 Ave. N½ in Galveston. Gently used shoes can be dropped off anytime at the church. Call 409-763-5586.

» **The Voices of Judah** will present a **night of praise and worship** at 7 p.m. Friday at Compton Memorial Church of God in Christ, 2628 Ball Ave., in Galveston. "Youth in Action" is the theme. Call Pamela Hennigan, 409-256-1004, or Carroll McChristian, 409-762-0085.

» **Wild Wild West Cowboy Church** will present a **musical concert featuring Annette Herndon** at 7 p.m. Friday at 7402 Stewart Road in Galveston. A love offering will be taken. Call Susan Adams, 615-516-8054.

» The **Your Origins Matter conference** will be at 6 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. March 29 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 18220 Upper Bay Road, in Nassau Bay. Registration begins at 8 a.m. March 29. The cost is \$25 per person. To register and find out the speakers

and itinerary, visit www.gdmc.org or call 281-333-4535.

» **Women of the Lamb** will meet at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 2440 Gulf Freeway, in Texas City. All women are invited. Call Rosetta Cooper, 832-887-3222.

» **Church of True Faith** will present a **gospel musical** at 5 p.m. March 29 at 832 Fifth Ave. N. in Texas City. The Original Soul Invaders, of Brenham, will be the featured guests. The Texas City Joyful Messengers and Alfred Edwards also will be on program. Call Melvin Earls, 409-682-1182, or the Rev. Edgar Dickey, 409-996-8230.

» **Greater Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church** will have a **preaching bowl featuring various preachers from Galveston County** at 6 p.m. March 29 at 3506 Ave. N½ in Galveston. Call 409-763-5586.

» **God's Rainbow Baptist Church** will present its **Ministry of Music program** at 6 p.m. March 29 at 6402 O'Brien St. in Hitchcock. All are welcome.

» **First Union Baptist Church** will have a **Sweet Shop Fair** at 11 a.m. March 30 at 1027 Ave. K in Galveston. To pre-order, call Brenda Matthews or Brenda Woods, 409-370-8705. Proceeds will go toward the pastor's anniversary.

» **The Rev. A.S. Johnson** will **preach his last sermon** at noon March 30 at Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, 2717 Ave. H, in Galveston. All are welcome. Call 409-763-1748.

» **Internationally known author, storyteller and healer, Matt Linn, will be teaching about forgiveness** from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. March 31 at St. George's Episcopal Church, 510 13th Ave. N., in Texas City. The event is free and open to the public. To learn more about Linn's ministry, visit www.linnministries.org. Call 832-922-7022.

» **Yancy Ministries** will present its **First Friday Fellowship event for women ages 18 and older** at 7 p.m. April 4 at New Vision Baptist Church, 2311 24th St., in Dickinson. Contact Kim Yancy, kimjyancy@gmail.com or 409-939-9908.

» **Gospel singers are invited to audition for a gospel show event** at 6 p.m. April 12 at Faith United Methodist Church, 2205 Ave. G, in Dickinson. The deadline to register is by April 9. Cash prizes will be awarded at the showcase event set for May 24. Call George Taylor, 713-553-8021, or Tim McKensie, 281-337-3194.

» **NASA Aglow** will meet at 9:30 a.m. April 10 at Praise Chapel, 18516 state Highway 3, in Webster. Mary Bostrom will be the speaker. All women of all faiths are welcome. Call 281-910-1971.

» **The Emulating the King Revival and Concert** will be at 7 p.m. April 17-18 and at 3 p.m. April 19 at God's Household of Faith, 2308 22nd St., in Dickinson. Call 832-472-0085 or 281-614-1081.

Send church announcements by noon Wednesdays to angela.taylor@galvnews.com.

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ity, and why did it take the shape it did?"

It is ultimately impossible to answer that question without giving an account of Jesus and his kingdom-preaching on the one hand and his death and resurrection on the other, which will point us back to the New Testament as being basically reliable. The manuscripts on which it is based are far more numerous and ancient than those we have for any other classical work.

Q: You have been quoted as saying, "(Arguments about God are) like pointing a flashlight toward the sky to see if the sun is shin-

ing." Could you unpack this for us?

A: There is a danger that we try to stand somewhere 'neutral' and, starting from there, work up to 'proving' something about God (including his existence). In fact, if God is God, he isn't an object in our world; we are objects in his world. Trying to 'prove' God in terms of something else always ends up making that 'something else' the real fixed point. I think I first met the analogy of the flashlight and the sunrise as a variant on something C.S. Lewis said, 'I believe in God as I believe the sun has risen; not because I can see it but because by it I can see everything else.'

FAITH FOCUS

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La Marque's McKinney Memorial United Methodist Church will hold a prayer rally for women from 10 a.m. to noon March 29 at 1607 Nashby St.

Why women and why prayer? Carol Johnson, a member of the church's prayer team explained.

"It is no doubt that today, many heads of household are single women," Johnson said. "I am reminded how my mother prayed daily when raising nine children on a \$40 a week salary.

"My mother would sit in a rocking chair with her Bible and pray daily. I could hear her cry out to Jesus so many times

and then I would hear her just say 'thank you, Jesus.' That taught me at an early age that prayer does work."

Come join us and break the chains of poverty, broken marriages, generational illness and all generational curses." Call 409-935-5797.

Faith Focus is looking to hear about your bishop of barbecue, your cleric of the cook-off or that special deacon you entrust with the (holy) smoking of brisket and ribs.

A number of local churches have volunteers who barbecue, some even sell their products at church fundraisers. Share your experiences and let me know about your experts by email.

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