

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

I AM A VICTIM

Delbert Goins

Modern selfishness ensnares by oozing needless twists on brethren with an eye toward disarming the unity of the faith. Each of us has expectations that fit our capabilities but we often allow victimization by social settings, that is definitely a misuse of the personality God has provided for our use to His glory, for: **“All things were created by him and for him”** (Col. 1:17). God created the world for our use. But why? It is **“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved”** (Eph. 1:6)! Our purpose is to make known to others **“the manifold wisdom of God”** (Ephesians 3:10). Yet, our lying adversary convinces multitudes of brethren to hinder the spread of Truth by a simple method of deceitful mind contortion called, *“I’m a victim!”*

A most common way we feel victimized is from our family. Yet beyond the coercions of family, one often undergoes a sense of victimization by constraints of vocation, by manipulations, by intimidations, and by feeling completely held in servitude as the chattel of another. Some professionals thrive on making victims seek fellow victims for support, tending to make it easy for weak persons to follow them.

We often victimize ourselves with evil thoughts by saying we have to stay on a job no matter what, else we might not get another job, bringing one right into the victimization philosophy, what the world holds as a dear possession, calling it job security. Government and Union employees use this victimization as a way of life. Preachers too cry victimization, saying: “The church owes me this job, and as such, I feel I should never get fired or terminated for any reason.” When they are asked to leave, they use the “I’m a victim.” They cry, “The elders are at fault. They need to be removed.

You members ought to leave them and join me in starting a new congregation a few blocks from here.”

Sometimes members do not get their way, and it is they who cry the “I’m a victim.” This makes for perilous times because **“holding a form of godliness,”** its power is denied. They hurriedly creep from house to house to **“lead captive”** others of little faith (2Tim. 3:5-6). Like the preacher, they run off, sometimes with the preacher, mouthing the “bad things” the church has done, according to them, and hatefully speaking evil in violation of Titus 3:2. Would you say these are examples of love, tenderness, kindness, goodness, lowliness, long-suffering, forbearing, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? Obviously, these brethren find themselves going out, **“but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”** (1John 2:19). The spirit of *“I’m a victim”* does not allow one **“to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly”** (Micah 6:8).

When I was in Chaing Mai, Thailand, in November 2007, this kind of thing occurred with the American preacher Michael Mayo, son of well known missionary Lawson Mayo. He was asked to leave the congregation in Chaing Mai, but he would not leave, rather he divided the Lord’s church, drawing away disciples after him. I visited his home when I was there in 2008. He has not repented of his action nor of his false teaching *that women must be silent in Bible classes*, citing 1 Cor. 14:34 (a passage referring to a first century church assembly and not a Bible class) arguing that when a woman reads the Scripture amid such an audience

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

THE TOTALITARIAN MIND-SET

The definition of the word *totalitarian* (adjective) is: Of, relating to, being, or imposing a form of government in which the political authority exercises absolute and centralized control over all aspects of life, the individual is subordinated to the state, and opposing political and cultural expression is suppressed.

Used as a noun it means “a person who is in favor of totalitarian policies” (See the definition in the *Free Dictionary* by Farlex on the Internet). Synonyms for totalitarian are: *authoritarian, dictatorial, overbearing, one-party, oppressive, autocratic, despotic* and *tyrannical*. Synonyms for *totalitarian’s* synonyms are:

1. *Authoritarian*: strict, severe, demanding, controlling, rigid and dictatorial;
2. *Dictatorial*: tyrannical, despotic, autocratic, authoritarian overbearing, dogmatic, domineering, arrogant and bossy;
3. *One-Party*: authoritarian, dictatorial, oppressive, autocratic, despotic, tyrannical;
4. *Oppressive*: cruel, harsh, domineering, tyrannical, repressive and unfair;
5. *Autocratic*: despotic, tyrannical, oppressive and repressive;
6. *Despotic*: tyrannical, dictatorial, autocratic, authoritarian, repressive and cruel and
7. *Tyrannical*: oppressive, dictatorial, autocratic, despotic, authoritarian, repressive, cruel, harsh and domineering.

The definition of the word *forum* (noun) is: “a meeting or medium for the open discussion of subjects of public interest” (Ibid, *Free Dictionary*). Synonyms for *forum* are: *meeting, debate, discussion* and *round-table*. Synonyms for *forum’s* synonyms are:

1. *Meeting*: gathering, assembly, conference, convention, summit, get together, reunion and congregation;
2. *Debate*: discuss, argue, deliberate, contest and question;
3. *Discussion*: conversation, debate, argument, dialog, chat and talk and
4. *Round-table*: class, seminar, tutorial, committee, working party and caucus.

In the English language the word *open* is a very general term. Basically it means, “affording unobstructed entrance and exit; not shut or closed” (Ibid, *Free Dictionary*). The word *open*, therefore, is found in many different contexts (environments). It can be used as a noun, adjective or a verb. Used as an adjective *open* means, “free to all to join in, enter, or use,” “ready to consider new ideas,” “honest and frank” (Ibid, *Free Dictionary*). The context in which *open* is found shades, flavors and/or enhances the basic definition of the word. Clearly, then, it is the context in which *open* is found that helps determine the meaning of it. Regardless of the context in which it is employed, it never loses its basic meaning.

When the word *open* is associated with the term *forum*, the idea is that of a gathering, assembly, conference, etc., the convening of the same and the design of which is for the purpose of discussion, deliberation, questions, debate, etc. In that context the word *open* also pertains to the fairness and integrity in the order and conduct of the meeting (Ibid, *Free Dictionary*). Books such as Roberts Rules of Order were developed so that meetings could be conducted decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

The Acts 15 meeting of brethren in Jerusalem is a good example of an *open forum*. Certain brethren had come to Antioch of Syria from Jerusalem teaching the church the false doctrine that “**Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved**” (Acts 15:1). A meeting was convened in Jerusalem for the purpose of determining who originated the false doctrine. It also helped to clarify certain matters pertaining to the same (Acts 15:4-31). However, prior to the Jerusalem forum of Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas had convened their own *open forum* concerning this matter with those who had taught it (Acts. 15:2). Records of meetings convened for religious purposes of different kinds, whether large or small, are found throughout the New Testament and in the history of the church (Acts 6:1-7; 14:27; 20:17-38).

In the September 10, 1973 Memphis meeting (MMHOT stands for the transcribed book of the meeting) with the Herald of Truth (HOT) representatives the late brother Art Haddox, an elder of the Highland Church of Christ that at the time sponsored HOT, was the first speaker to be introduced by brother Garland Elkins. In part Haddox said:

...I want to express my thanks and appreciation to each of you for coming. I know that some of you have driven for miles and miles. Some of you have flown here, at your expense, and this to me speaks well of you because of your concern for the cause of Christ. We are here today because we want to be open, we have nothing to hide, we want to be as open as we possibly can and we want you to feel that you can ask us anything that you dare to ask us and we will do our best to answer those questions (MMHOT, p. 1).

Since the days of the First Century church there have been many meetings of the brethren over a multitude of issues and subjects. Some of them dealt with highly controversial topics. Other meetings did not. Some, such as the Jerusalem meeting of Acts 15 and the 1973 MMHOT, dealt with matters that impacted the universal church. Other gatherings of the brethren did not.

Regarding the Acts 15 meeting and the MMHOT meeting, in the beginning they were *open forums*. As Haddox said of the HOT brethren, “... we want to be open, we have nothing to hide.” From these *open forums* it became clear as to who was actually open and who was not. In the case of the Jerusalem meeting the source of the problem was identified (Acts 15:5). “**Much disputing**” was a part of that long ago meeting of the brethren, with the apostles, James and other leading brethren involved in it “up to the hilt.” And, in the 1973 MMHOT meeting much disputing, discussion and questioning was a necessary part of that meeting. The result of both meetings was that the culprits were “smoked out.”

AND WHAT ABOUT A PRESENT DAY *OPEN FORUM* CONCERNING DAVE MILLER ET AL.?

The totalitarian attitude will not permit anyone who is a part of MSOP, T“N”GJ, GBN, Apologetics Press, et al., whether it is in Jerusalem, Memphis or anywhere else to meet as did those brethren recorded in Acts 15 or those in the 1973 MMHOT! And why? Because they know they do not have any Bible authority, adequate evidence, or credible witnesses to uphold their case any more than the judaizing teachers in the Jerusalem meeting, or the HOT representatives in the Memphis meeting, possessed in order for them to uphold their positions. Thus, they refuse to meet openly because they cannot exercise absolute control over a Jerusalem or MMHOT type of meeting.

What they do is slander others and engage in character assassination, doing it in secret as they declare that they are not about to dirty their hands to meet with their brethren of the lower classes to discuss their differences. Do they have something to hide, something that cannot stand the light of Truth, something that cannot be sustained in an *open forum*? *Indeed they do.* They would not hesitate to meet openly to defend their fellowship of Dave Miller, et al., if they were on the side of right as Elkins and those who stood with him were in the 1973 MMHOT. But in the case of fellowshipping Dave Miller, Stan Crowley and their supporters in their unrepentant state, they well know that their position can never stand the spotlight of Truth in an *open forum* any more than could those First Century judaizing teachers in the Jerusalem meeting, or the HOT representatives could stand it in that 1973 Memphis *open forum*.

In closing out the MMHOT book brother, Alan Highers pointed out: “It is regrettable that such a meeting was necessary at all, but it is good that it was held and that facts were made known.” But then he added,

There was a subsequent meeting held on Tuesday night under the direction of Herald of Truth representatives, but it was a closed meeting with almost no questions permitted and, therefore, no report of that meeting has been made (MMHOT, “A FINAL WORD,” p. 4).

Highers final words in the MMHOT book are:

It has been said, “Give men light, and they will find their own way.” This report has been made available in order that the searchlight of truth might be trained on the conditions at Abilene, and now it is hoped that brethren will seek and find the way that is right and that they will pursue it with faithfulness and determination (Ibid, p. 4).

It is for the reasons set out in the preceding Highers’ quote that MSOP, Gospel Broadcasting Network, *The “New” Gospel Journal*, Apologetics Press, *The Spiritual Sword*, et al., will never agree to an *open forum* of any kind wherein they will be called upon publicly to prove they have New Testament authority for their continued support of Dave Miller, et al., or to prove their slanderous assertions they continue to make about those of us who oppose fellowshipping false teachers and their friends. *Autocratic is as autocratic does!*

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued from page One)

with men present, it is parallel to using mechanical instruments of music in worship periods. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos and “**expounded**” in a Bible class (Acts 18:26). Priscilla did participate in the teaching process.

Secondly, the Chaing Mai brethren found Michael Mayo practicing the victimization philosophy to draw away disciples after him, convincing a dozen “offended victims” from the Chaing Mai congregation to run after him. In 2009, he continues to recruit “victimized” brethren from congregations throughout northern Thailand, and in turn they rehash every incident in memory of situations properly dealt with by the Chaing Mai brethren in earlier times. In the last decade the devil has thrown many false teachers at the Chaing Mai brethren who scripturally rebuffed each one. Now the devil through Micahel Mayo is using the “I’m a victim” approach against the faithful brethren in Chaing Mai. None of the “victims” will repent; therefore, in 2008 the brethren withdrew fellowship from those who have followed Michael Mayo.

Michael’s father, Lawson, writes in his newsletters of the great joy to preach and encourage this divisive group. Should these men be praised for walking disorderly? No!

Obviously, they care little for the Truth as they continue to spread unauthorized division and false doctrine throughout the region.

Also, the Macland church of Marietta, GA, believes it correct to sponsor this division and false teaching. They are violating 2 John 9-11 and have become guilty of the evil by association and contribution. All people who give encouragement and financial support for this divided false group also stand guilty before the Lord by their association with error.

We encourage our readers to disassociate with any of these erroneous persons, lest ye also be guilty of giving Godspeed to division and error.

God hates unauthorized division. He loves New Testament unity, always within the boundaries of love and Truth, but He hates the deceitful tactics of victimization. Let us look into the mirror of self to see if we are practicing this evil craft of the devil. Let us lay hold to accountability for what we do and say.

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RECOMMENDED READING:

RELIGION AND MORALITY—FROM GOD OR MAN?

Gary W. Summers

Each year the Spring Church of Christ, Spring, Texas, a suburb of Houston, TX, hosts an excellent lectureship, and this year’s (held in February) was no different. Both the book and the oral lectures contain outstanding material on a variety of subjects relating to morality.

The first chapter, “Christians Must Be Militant,” provides the tone for all that follows. Those who belong to Jesus cannot remain passive in the challenging areas presented here. The Bible gives us many passages that call for us to be militant. Four quotations by Alexander Campbell are cited to remind us that controversy has long been a part of Christianity—from Jesus on.

“The Nature of Truth” is fundamental in nature and a must-read section. Some of its interesting features include “The Cult of Unreason” and “Advice to Preachers” (42). Among the 21 works cited at the end of the chapter is one by James W. Sire, *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?* This chapter answers exactly that question. In addition to those references mentioned, the writer also recommends 18 other works for further research.

Next is the essay on *Postmodernism*, which is a concept that brethren need to grasp in order to understand what is happening both in and out of the church. A defense of the rejection of logic is examined (52), as well as what this kind

of thinking means in daily living. An honest advertisement for recruits to *Postmodernism* is provided on page 64.

“Atheism—True or False?” recounts recent atheistic endeavors, including a list of current best-selling books by atheistic authors (71). This material is truly thought-provoking, and it ranges from the use of a chart from brother Warren’s debate against an atheist (75) to a discussion of accidental versus planned creation to an examination of Darwin’s Black Box (96-97). The works cited total 44.

Logic is applied to the topic of “Atheist Ethics,” and three if-then statements are used to bring out the full meaning of the atheistic position. The first of these begins with, “If it is the case that all material things are only the accidental product of lifeless matter (dead rocks and dirt) over millions of years of organic evolution...” (117). The reader will profit from this study that exposes the doctrine of atheism for what it really is.

“Agnosticism: Can We Know Anything?” continues to examine this subject as it heads in a different direction. On page 134 is a picture of the advertisement being used on British buses; it reads:

**THERE PROBABLY IS NO GOD.
NOW STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY YOUR LIFE.**

Probably? That's not exactly reassuring. One wonders what the probability is. "Enjoy your life"? How does one do that without knowing where it came from? And what about Jesus' statement: "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)? The writer of this chapter defines *agnosticism*, lists a few prominent agnostics, and then discusses examples of agnosticism in the Lord's church. All in all, there are 18 works cited.

The next chapter defines *Humanism* and *Pluralism* and explains how those philosophies are applied in society, along with explaining the harm that they continually promote. It is followed by "The Bible: Inspired by God or Man?" Just one of the interesting sections is "Jesus' View of the Bible" (176-78).

One of the attacks that people frequently make concerning the Bible is the Flood as described in Genesis. They argue that the ark was not big enough to accommodate all of the animals that we have on the earth today; they also cite various logistic problems. These alleged "insurmountable" problems are examined fully; the material here is both valuable to know and to use with others. Fifteen sources are cited, from which much of this information was drawn. The section on the "Geological Implications of the Flood" (198-202) is well worth reading.

"The Age of the Earth" has always been another point of contention, and an actual geologist put together the material for the discussion, citing 14 sources and recommending eleven others. One of the quotes about Darwin involves an interesting admission—particularly since it was made as recently as 1987 (210). Both the creation and the evolutionary models are given a thorough examination (212ff).

Continuing with this theme is "Darwinian Evolution: Is Man Only an Improved Ape?" Several of the "missing links" are discussed, such as Piltdown Man, Java Man, Peking Man, Neanderthal Man, Cro-Magnon Man, and "Lucy."

Always a necessity when studying Atheism and Evolution is an examination of the doctrine of Theistic Evolution. Among other features of this essay are "The Riddle of Ferdinand Magellan" (249-50), "Basic Evolutionary Assumptions Inherent in Theistic Evolution," "So What of the First 11 Chapters of Genesis?" "The Day-Age Theory," "The Gap Theory," and "Ten Dangers of Theistic Evolution" (272-77). 25 works are cited, and 7 more are recommended.

Also worthy of a careful reading is "The Historical Jesus: Is Christ a Mythological Being?" This is a good solid study of the way the mythological view of Jesus developed. Christians are occasionally confronted with such views, and it is good to have excellent material such as this available to respond with. Then the historical evidence for Jesus is presented. Thirty three sources are referenced.

The next two chapters deal with "The Humanity of Christ" and "The Deity of Christ." The first of these contains a wonderful illustration by G. C. Brewer of the significance of Jesus becoming a human being (322-23); the latter contains some of the names used of Jesus to prove His Deity. A

separate chapter that also proves the Deity of Jesus is "The Miracles of Christ." Add to the indisputable evidences already presented "The Resurrection of Christ." Various false theories are examined, and their shortcomings are exposed. A chart of Jesus' appearances after His resurrection appears on page 379.

The book next moves into another area—one that takes a look at the way the truth concerning God, Jesus, and the Word affects morality. The first of these involves a Biblical look at "Modesty," which features descriptions of swimsuits that are calculated to entice, such as "Inspired by lingerie..." (390). And that one is from the Sears catalog! Most religious denominations do not emphasize modesty any more, and only a few brethren appropriately apply God's principles of holiness. Church leaders would do well to consider this subject carefully.

An excellent study is presented on "Marriage," including a relevant section on marriage and civil law (414-16). These ideas are followed by more material on "Marriage and Divorce," which contains unsettling statistics on the subject from recent years (420). Before resuming with other moral issues, a chapter on "The Social Gospel" is appropriately inserted, since it is generally the cause of people ignoring what the Scriptures teach on those always-relevant topics. The emphasis of the gospel under discussion is physical, concerns mainly the present, emphasizes the community over individual spirituality, and relies more upon sociology than the Scriptures. It is important for Christians to understand the differences in emphasis between the two.

"Medical Doctors: Killers or Healers?" is the provocative title of the next chapter. "Hippocratic Oaths," ancient and modern, are mentioned, along with a discussion of medical ethics as applied to in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, stem cell research, cloning, genetic counseling, and euthanasia. Ten sources are cited; brethren need all of the reliable, fundamental information we can get on these topics.

The next three chapters covered are all related: "Abortion," "The Sexual Revolution," and "Homosexuality." The first of these refutes arguments made to justify abortion and provides a summary of the important details of *Roe v. Wade*. The second contains an emphasis on pornography and entertainment (is that redundant?). The third provides a thorough look at the Bible passages related to the subject. There follow some excellent quotes by Patrick Henry and other founding fathers (500-501) on the importance of following Christian principles. Fourteen points are listed from the *Homosexual Agenda* (506), and the reader can decide how successful they have been since they first devised them in 1987.

The next two chapters turn the focus of attention to ourselves with "Preacher Training Schools: Are They Living Up to the Reason They Were Begun?" and "Higher 'Christian' Education: What Should You Expect Your Child to be Taught?" The first of these provides a look at what the Scriptures say about the training of men to preach the gospel; then it looks at one school as an example. As part

of the Supplemental Material, it includes a letter from Terry Hightower to one particular school, asking why they cannot answer three simple true–false questions concerning their beliefs (523-29). One wonders if there are *any* schools that are willing to answer simple questions about their beliefs any more. Surely, this has not always been the case. Can anyone imagine Paul, Timothy, or Titus being fearful of taking a stand on fundamental doctrine? Should not young men be taught to teach the whole counsel of God publicly and privately? Many have become quite silent in declaring their beliefs—in public, at least. Are we being true to our original purposes?

“Christian” schools are seldom any better. The 66 pages that treat this subject are well worth having and are carefully researched. It begins by looking at purpose statements of various “Christian” colleges when they were founded. Not many have remained true to those purposes. The second section declares what parents have a right to expect in the way of education for young people. Only three institutions still in operation are considered for analysis. There is a brief look at Pepperdine (555-58), followed by a lengthier consideration of Abilene Christian University (558-72), but the bulk of the material centers on Freed-Hardeman University (572-92). Many brethren may be unaware of the information contained herein, but we would all do well to be informed.

The book closes with a look at “Higher Secular Education,” which includes a letter to the editor in which the father of a second-grader was pleased that his daughter recognized that natural processes upon the earth did not take millions of years to form mountains (601-602). The final chapter consists of material that was presented to women on “The Feminist Movement.” It provides a history of what has occurred in America and also presents a Biblical view of the role of women with a look at several mentioned in the Scriptures.

This book contains material that is current and helpful for all brethren. The 2009 book costs \$20, plus \$3.00 postage and handling. *Also, for the first time this year all 15 lecture-ship books are available on a researchable CD for \$50.00.* All may be ordered from *Contending for the Faith*, P.O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas, 77383-2357, or you may phone your order in at (281) 350-5516. You may also leave a voice order on the *CFTF* box on call-notes.

A set of DVDs may be ordered for \$40 from Jim Green, 2711 Spring Meade Blvd., Columbia, TN 38401.

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WHAT IS HEAVEN WORTH TO US?

Lavonne McClish

INTRODUCTION

God was willing to send His only Son to earth, to bear the sins of all mankind for all time in a horrible death on a Roman cross. Jesus was willing to give up His glory with the Father in Heaven, come to earth to be born as a human being, live a life of poverty and deprivation, suffer persecution, and then endure the shameful treatment He received from the Romans at the instigation of the Jews. We know that He shrank from this ordeal (Mat. 26:36–45; Heb. 7–9) with **“strong crying and tears,”** and the Father heard Him. But God did not spare Him this painful (physically and spiritually) experience. He **could** not, if we were to be saved. Jesus accepted it meekly: **“Thy will be done”** (Mat. 26: 39, 42, 44). Only in this way could Jesus be made perfect and become the Savior of all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8–9). What if He had decided it was just too hard? What if He had concluded that we just weren’t worth it, and He wanted to go back to Heaven? What if standing up for Christ leads **us** before hostile courts and juries? For some reason, the Father and the Son do not seem to think they are asking too much of us that we live for them and give up something for them.

“Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price”
(1 Cor. 6:19–10).

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit; we are not our own, we are bought with a price. We are to present our bodies a **living** sacrifice, as opposed to the **dead** sacrifices of the law of Moses (Rom. 12:1–2), never allowing ourselves to be conformed to the world. What we have presented to God as a sacrifice no longer belongs to us. The Christians in Macedonia first gave themselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), and their possessions just naturally followed.

Jehovah once tested Abraham’s faith. He told Abraham to take his only son Isaac, the child of promise whom he loved, and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham obeyed without question, through the point of drawing back the knife to kill Isaac, whereupon God stopped him (Gen. 22). Abraham’s faith was unwavering because “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). When we forget where our permanent home is, we become worldly and sensual.

God will not share first place in our hearts. **“No man can serve two masters; For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the**

other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). Jesus said the greatest commandment is this: **“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”** (22:37–38, emph. LJM). That doesn’t leave any heart, soul, or mind for anyone else.

There comes a time in a Christian’s life when he should have grown and developed into a mature saint. We grow by first drinking the milk of the Word, and then graduating to strong meat as we exercise our senses in discerning good and evil (Heb. 5:12–14). We don’t “absorb” knowledge by osmosis. We have to work at it. If we don’t, we will not be prepared to withstand persecution when it comes. If we crumble at the disapproval of friends or family, what will we do when **real** threats arise?

“And it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). We must live every day of our lives with those facts in mind. Does it seem difficult today to take a stand for the Truth? Perhaps it will seem easier if we picture ourselves dying and then standing before God at the Judgment. Our **death** is real (unless Christ returns first); **Christ’s return** is real; the **Judgment** is real. Our suffering here on earth will be as nothing in view of those things (2 Cor. 4:16–18)..

Hebrews 11, the “faith” chapter, relates the experiences of that **“great cloud of witnesses”** (12:1). God rewards those who **diligently seek Him** (11:6). This is no half-hearted, be-faithful-when-it-doesn’t-require-any-effort-or-sacrifice seeking. The recipients of this letter had already undergone severe trials and afflictions (10:32–34).

These examples of faith under trial are given to encourage us.

Peter reminds us that this world and everything in it will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10). All the things we valued so highly will vanish in an instant. Only the eternal will remain. We, as did Abraham, must look for new heavens and a new earth (vv. 12–13), where there will be only righteousness. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

The little book of Jude tells us to **“contend earnestly for the faith which was once [for all] delivered to the saints”** (v. 3, emph. LJM). *Earnestly* implies that we are to make a diligent effort, which in turn implies that we must be prepared at all times.

“Behold their threatenings” (Acts 4:29).

Jesus said, **“Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.... Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”** (Mat. 5:10–12). He told His disciples, **“Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him”** (Luke 12:4–5). **“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s**

sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved....The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (Mat. 10:22, 24).

Jesus challenged us: **“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven”** (Mat. 10:32–33). In this context, Jesus’ statement does not refer primarily to the confession we make before baptism, but to the confessions we must be willing to make publicly even if it proves very costly.

John the Baptist was killed because he dared tell Herod it was not lawful for him to have his brother Philip’s wife (Mat. 14:1–12). Why couldn’t he have just kept his mouth shut? He didn’t have to confront Herod that way. He could have ignored what the king was doing—but he didn’t. Stephen (Acts 7) could have simply looked the other way, rather than confronting those angry Jews. Because he defended his Lord, he thereby became the first Christian to pay the ultimate price for his faith. Jesus told the apostles that the world would hate them, since it hated Him. The time would come when those who killed Christ’s messengers would think they were doing God a service (John 15:18; 16:2)!

The Lord further demanded,

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:24–26).

Peter sincerely thought he was strong enough to go with his Master and stand by Him, even unto death. He confidently affirmed, **“Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.... Though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee”** (Matt. 26:33). We know the sad story of how Peter hotly denied that he even knew Jesus at all. Now, we ought to be extremely careful not to judge Peter too harshly. We can’t possibly know how we will react under pressure until it comes to us. We should pray

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for the strength and courage to confess Jesus, under fire, and never, never deny Him.

The Sanhedrin court in Jerusalem arrested Peter and John and commanded them not to speak any more nor teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). It could not have been easy for Peter to reply, **“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”** (vv. 19–20). Peter and John did not pray—nor did they ask others to pray—that they might be spared persecution. No, they said, **“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word”** (v. 29). Their prayer was answered shortly thereafter, and this time all of the apostles found themselves before the Jewish court again (5:25–28). Again, Peter answered, **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (v. 29).

Paul wrote to the Galatians, **“For do I now persuade men, or God? For if I yet pleased men, then should I not be the servant of Christ”** (1:10). And neither can we be servants of Christ if we are more eager to please man—**any** man—than we are to please Christ. We are to “crucify” ourselves so that we no longer live, but Christ lives in us (2:20).

We know that Saul of Tarsus had to give up much in order to become a Christian and preach Christ to the world. But maybe we haven’t thought about the expanded descriptions of his sacrifices, related in bits and pieces throughout Acts and Paul’s letters, putting the accounts together. He said that he gloried in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience or endurance (Rom. 5:3). Should not we also look at tribulation and trial in that way?

Paul reckoned that **“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”** (Rom. 8:18). From verses 31 through 39 Paul, beginning with the rhetorical question, **“If God be for us, who can be against us?”** recites a list of forces that cannot separate us from the love of God. In this list he includes being killed for the name of Christ, but then says we are “more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Even if we must die for Christ, we haven’t lost—we live with Him. Paul admonished the Philippians not to be terrified by their adversaries, because it was given them to suffer on behalf of Christ (4:28–29). From a Roman prison he wrote, **“I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me”** (v. 13).

Paul told Timothy to fight the good fight of faith so that he could lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12), reminding him that **“God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and a sound mind”** (2 Tim. 1:7). He also told Timothy to endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ: **“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”** (2:3–4). Most of us in this affluent age and in this wonderful country have been guilty of this entanglement. Paul was bound in prison as if he were an evildoer (v.

9). **“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us”** (v. 12).

After recounting some of the mistreatment he received at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, Paul says, **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Tim. 3:12). If we have never suffered persecution, maybe we should search for the reason. Paul charged Timothy to endure affliction (4:5). The Christian’s life was not intended to be all sweetness and light nor a bed of roses—it is a **fight** (v. 7). He often stood alone, as we sometimes may have to stand alone.

Jesus was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10). Since He has suffered, and since He was tempted in the same ways we are tempted, He knows how to sympathize with us (2:18; 3:15). We must be steadfast until the end, sharing in Christ’s sufferings when we are called upon to do so (v. 14).

Some of the unnamed heroes of faith **“were tortured, not accepting deliverance”**; others were mocked and scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, or killed with the sword. Others wandered about with only skins for clothing, destitute, afflicted, and tormented (Heb. 11:35–37). They, like Abraham, looked for the promise, but did not receive it in their lifetimes.

We should say, **“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”** (Heb. 13:6). We must bear the reproach of Jesus (vv. 12–13). As Abraham, we must remember that this world is not our home; we have no permanent dwelling on earth, but we look for an eternal city (v. 14).

James tells us that the trying of our faith works patience (endurance) (1:3). Certainly all of those mentioned in Hebrews 11 had their faith tried! Why would we expect ours not to be tried? The prophets are our example in suffering, affliction, and patience (Jam. 5:10). God will reward those who endure and are faithful **to the end**, not just part of the way.

Peter’s epistles exhort us to be patient in hope, even though we must endure severe trials and temptations (1 Pet. 1: 3–7), never taking our eyes off our inheritance which will never fade away. **“For what glory is it if ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is accept-**

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able with God” (2:20).

We should not think it strange that we may be facing a fiery trial, but we should view it as our sharing in Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet. 4:12–13). It is a privilege to be reproached for the name of Christ (v. 14): **“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf”** (v. 16). The afflictions that beset us are the same as those plaguing our brethren all over the world (5:9). Suffering will make us perfect (mature, complete), if we are faithful and refuse to compromise (v. 10).

As has been stated repeatedly throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Truth will be evil spoken of (2 Pet. 2:2). The world does not know us, because it did not know the Christ (1 John 3:1). We should not be surprised if the world hates us (v. 13). **“Whatever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”** (5:4, emph. LJM): the “overcoming” theme again.

Christ said to the church at Ephesus, **“I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love”** (Rev. 2:4). We might think that, after all they had suffered, and all they had done for the cause of Christ, they were pretty good folks. But we often don’t think the way the Father and the Son think. They had fallen and they needed to repent. The fire of their love had gone out. We can never relax or let down our guard. The Christian’s fight is a day-in, day-out lifetime commitment. No vacations, no holidays.

“To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7, emph. LJM). That is a wonderful promise, but it doesn’t come cheaply. We must overcome. **“Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”** (v. 10). That means, “Be faithful to the point of giving your life for Christ if need be.” **“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”** (v. 11, emph. LJM). If we would escape the second death, we must overcome.

There will be no reward unless we remain faithful through whatever trials Satan sends our way. **“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”** (Rev. 20:15). Isn’t it worth whatever we have to go through in order to have our names written there and not be cast into the lake of fire?

“God shall wipe away all tears” (Rev. 21:6).

The most beautiful description of Heaven in the entire Bible is found in Revelation 21 and 22.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son (21:6–7, emph. LJM).

The dark side of this picture is that

the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death (v. 8).

There are some pretty bad characters in that list. But did you notice that **“the fearful”** have a place in it? How many of us does that describe? We must overcome a cowardly fear that shrinks from persecution for righteousness’ sake. And how about **“all liars?”** There is no classification of “little white lies” and “big bad lies”; it’s “all liars.” Might we want to do some self-examination here, particularly when we are thinking up excuses for not obeying God?

The remainder of Revelation 21 (from v. 9) and the whole of chapter 22 are given over to a description of Heaven. Doubtless this description does not do justice to what we will see when we get there, since John’s words were limited to what human minds could express and comprehend. **“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”** (22:14). While many of those left on the outside will be most unsavory characters, there will also be people who **almost** overcame, but whose faith wavered, who lost courage, and who turned back. Read this description of Heaven and then tell me it won’t be worth whatever we have to give up, whatever we have to endure, whatever obstacles we have to overcome, so that we can be there with God and His Son forever.

CONCLUSION

Paul wrote, **“But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”** (1 Cor. 9:27). Lest I be misunderstood, I have researched and written this material for myself as much as for anyone else. I do not deceive myself that I have attained the level of strength and maturity that my age and opportunities would suggest I should have. I need these admonitions and reminders. I believe we **all** need them. None of us knows what the future holds, but the direction in which our country is heading is ominous. We know the climate is hostile to God, the Bible, and to Christians, and growing more so by the day. We must be preparing **now** for the time when we will have to make some difficult choices and take some very unpopular stands. If we fail to be faithful in easy times, how shall we react in the hard times? We must begin **acting** rather than **reacting**.

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CHANGES IN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT*

Paul Vaughn

Shortly after men of courage stood up to proclaim New Testament Christianity, a new generation of men began to disregard the Restoration Plea. Barton W. Stone saw a change in attitude coming in August, 1844. He warned of pending digression with Denominationalism. He said,

My dear brethren, we have advanced, and become a great people. Now is the time of danger—now there is need of humility, watchfulness and prayer We may be so captivated by the doctrines, forms, popularity, and respectability of the sects around us, that we may try to accommodate the truth of God in order to gain their favor.¹

The first step away from the Bible was the American Christian Missionary Society of 1849. This was a change, that divided congregations and would lead to an organization, known today as the “Disciples of Christ.” The Disciples of Christ have advanced to the point that they no longer believe in the Bible as being inspired of God or that one needs to believe in Jesus to be saved. The change came one step at time over a period of about one hundred years.

The second move away from the New Testament pattern was the introduction of mechanical instrumental music in the worship. The first congregation to use mechanical instrumental music was at Midway, Kentucky, in 1859. Those who favored the use of mechanical music divided a multitude of congregations. They used two methods to introduce mechanical music. When a church had a majority of members who desired mechanical music, it would be voted in and those who rejected it had no choice but to leave and establish a new congregation. The second method was more effective in keeping the congregation from dividing, but the ultimate end was the use of mechanical music.

Congregations that desired to change the music of the church, but did not want a serious controversy would introduce the subject gradually. It would start in the Sunday school and, in time, be used in the worship of the church. An example of this method is the Maysville Christian Church, Maysville, Kentucky. In 1883, organs were gaining favor in many of the churches, so the Maysville church wanted one also. It was at this time that their:

Sunday school was granted permission to procure and use an organ in its service. Two or three of the older members of the congregation were opposed to using the organ in the actual church service, however, on the

grounds that such use was not scriptural. In deference to their wishes, the church delayed this step for a few years, after which time the organ was adopted for use in the church service. Because the congregation had been willing to introduce the subject of the organ gradually, a serious controversy over a matter that disturbed many Christian churches was avoided.²

In 1909, a new organ was installed in the worship service of the Maysville church. It took twenty-six years from 1883 to 1909, for those who desired mechanical instrumental music to gradually change the thinking of the congregation. It started with the Sunday school, and when that generation was grown, they brought it into the worship, as was noted, without “controversy.” Today, the Maysville church that desired the organ because it was used by other churches is just like the other churches around them and have gradually changed the Truth of God into the doctrines and teachings of men. They are part of the Disciples of Christ with an open commitment to liberalism. They reaped the changes that were set in action in 1883.

The changes in the church from 1849 to 1906, were brought about by those who compromised with error. The church in Maysville had no authority for the use of the organ in their Sunday school class, but it opened the door for mechanical music in the worship. They chose to compromise the truth to achieve the desire of their heart. There was no attempt to look to the Scriptures for authority to use the organ. They only worked out a plan to avoid controversy.

Because many churches were willing to compromise with error, a division resulted. The Christian Church chose the broad way of liberalism and the churches of Christ chose to adhere to the word of God. The road

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of liberalism did not stop with the Missionary Society or mechanical instruments of music. They were only the first steps away from the Scriptures. Today the Christian Church has open membership, women elders, women deacons, women preachers and they consider themselves to be a denomination. Each change they made took them farther away from the New Testament and the Restoration Plea to restore the church that Jesus built.

EFFECTS OF CHANGES

As stated previously, when one changes anything, it goes through a transformation. It becomes different from the original; substitutions are made, and one has a transmutation of character. This is what happened to those congregations that changed the worship and function of the church between 1849 and 1906.

Christians who once spoke as “the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), were speaking and teaching the doctrines of men. The EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES can be easily seen today. In Kentucky and Ohio, once a strong-hold for New Testament Christianity, there are many places that are mission points. Brown County, Ohio, is about forty miles east of Cincinnati. There were eleven churches of Christ located in the county. They ALL went by the way of the Christian Church. In Mason County, Kentucky, which is located sixty miles northeast of Lexington, and across the Ohio River from Brown County, Ohio, there were ten churches of Christ. They ALL went into apostasy and abandoned their plea to speak as the oracles of God. Scott County, Kentucky, which was home to Barton W. Stone, John T. Johnson, John Allen Gano and had eight congregations of the body of Christ, is a mission point today. They ALL went the way of the Christian Church or the Disciples of Christ.

The above are but three locations that show the effects of changing one’s attitude toward the Scriptures. Although many of those who took the first step away from the Restoration Plea to speak as the “oracles of God” would not have advanced to the various teachings in the Christian Church or the disciples of Christ today, they did open the door to the numerous strange doctrines being taught by introducing the Missionary Society and mechanical instrumental music. Each step one takes away from the Scriptures leads to another until they reach the point of no return

NEW TIME RELIGION

In many ways the church today is paralleling the course of the church in the nineteenth century. There were those in the nineteenth century who wanted to modernize the church as there are some today with the same attitude.

People are crying out for a NEW TIME RELIGION, one that will attract the baby boomers, the movers and

shakers in society. To do this, they reach to high-tech entertainment and stop quoting the Bible.

Like the church in Maysville, Kentucky, that used its Bible class to effect change without controversy, there are some churches doing the same thing today. It is called “Children’s Church,” where young people are taken to be entertained. Once a generation is taught that they come to church to be entertained, it will not be long until they have high-tech entertainment in the worship service. This can be seen in many congregations with the use of choirs and solos in the worship service. There is no scriptural authority to divide a congregation and establish a children’s church. It is a step away from the pattern set forth in the Scriptures. History will one day show where the step will lead. It certainly is NEW TIME RELIGION. It cannot be found in the gospel that was preached in the first century.

The history of change in the church of Christ from the first century to the present is full of mistakes. It is a history of man making mistake after mistake in turning from God’s way. Once truth is compromised and error is allowed to be taught, it is not long until a congregation or a whole region of churches is swept away into the darkness of sin. Digression leads to apostasy and apostasy is death!

Today we must heed the warning of Jude and, “**earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (Jude 3) because there are many mockers who desire to change the faith unto their own ungodliness. We must learn from history or else be prepared to rebuild the church in areas where it flourishes today!

End Notes

* Bobby Liddell, Editor, *Changes In The Church of Christ*, 19th Bellview Lectures, Austin McGary & Company, Pensacola, FL, 1994, pp. 22-26.

1. Barton W. Stone, “A Letter to the Church of Christ, Scattered Abroad Throughout the United States of America,” *The Christian Messenger*, Vol. 14, Jacksonville, Star Bible Pub., 1844, p. 117

2. Gayle Braden and Coralie Runyon, *A History of the Christian Church, Maysville, Kentucky*, Maysville Christian Church Pub., 1948, p. 97.

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ELDERS: Who Are These Men?

Relationship Among Themselves (5)

W. N. “Bill” Jackson

“The elders ... I exhort, who am also an elder..” — 1 Peter 5:1

A Grand Co-Working In The Kingdom

All of those in the Lord’s kingdom should have that sense of being, belonging, sharing and joyfully participating in the work of God on this earth. And when we think of elders over a congregation, we think of a grand partnership in the most spiritual work in this world. God has decreed, against the one-man Diotrephes (3 John 9-10), that His congregations be served by a plurality of elders. These are men especially selected, as we have seen, to serve as shepherds and directly under the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), the Christ. Of all who make up the kingdom, these men – the most spiritual to be found – should be examples of *getting along*. They have work, and they have burdens, common to themselves, but not shared to the same extent with any others in the congregation. All such should make for a great oneness and harmony. And if it is there, the congregation can sense it, and know it, and they are the better and happier people for it!

The Authority Does Not Rest In One!

Expediting their goodwill and spirit of cooperation should be the reminder that authority is not said to rest in one elder rather, in the eldership, in the group of elders, be it two or twenty. This does not mean that one man cannot act, but his acting should be within the areas wherein by discussion the determination has been made that he can thus act for all, and with their consent. A great deal of discord can result when one man acts, supposedly for the group of elders, but in an area and in a manner surprising to them and unknown to them through previous discussions. Hence, the need for their periodic meetings, and their very thorough discussion of the Kingdom’s business.

The work of God is wonderfully blessed when a full and frank discussion is held between the elders, but then, when all have been heard, and when the decision has been made, all speak WITH ONE VOICE! The men we speak of are to be spiritually big enough to venture a view, have it laid alongside other views, and then (since it involves matters of judgment and expediency) to have the will of the body to prevail and to take it in good spirit. Nothing will promote disharmony any more than to hear an elder state to the members, “I wasn’t for it, but they didn’t listen to me.” Why utter any such statement, to the detriment of the church of the Lord? ONE VOICE should come out of the elders’ meeting and every one

should labor in the carrying through of the plans made without a hint that any other opinion was held by any!

In this regard, let us state again that elders should have some schedule of regular meetings. The Father’s business (Luke 2:49) is surely that important, and the church foyer or parking lot is a horrible place to do business for the Lord! It is extremely difficult to spiritually examine a problem and reach a decision *on the fly* between the building and the automobiles! *Remember, we earlier pointed out that IT TAKES TIME!*

There Are No “Senior” Or “Apprentice” Elders

One may indeed be *senior* in terms of years, in terms of time in the Kingdom, and yes, in terms of years he has served in the eldership. But, such will not give him *Senior elder* status so that he has senior authority! Likewise, one does not enter the eldership, then to begin serving an *apprenticeship* for a time until he can be then recognized as a *full-status elder*. One of the most flagrant and non-spiritual examples of this type of thing happened when one was added to an eldership, then to be told by the existing elders that he could attend the meetings, participate in the discussions, etc., but would

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have no *voting power* until after a year's time! May it be borne in mind that the very day one is added to the eldership of a congregation, he is as much an elder as the rest, regardless of the time they have served. and shares equally in the authority possessed by the rest! The very qualifications God has set forth, and the examination rendered by the congregation, would see that a man of utmost caliber would be chosen, and a man of such caliber may begin serving immediately upon appointment.

Some Suggestions As Elders Work Together

(1) Hold regular meetings, and make them frequent enough that the matters needing attention do not *stack up*, then either to be ignored completely or to be rushed through in a hurried *catch-up* fashion wherein the time. study and prayer needed is not done!

(2) Inform the congregation of the meeting times, with an invitation to any who wish to see them that they stand ready at those times, or upon other arrangements, to counsel and study with them. It surely helps the congregation to know that their elders do meet regularly, and are attending to the business of the Kingdom. When members who need counseling are to meet with the elders, every effort should be made that all elders be present. If the matter is important enough for such a meeting, it will be important enough for all the elders to be present, that all will have knowledge of the matter, but more, that all may add their own wisdom and spiritual judgment to a proper solving of the problem or crisis.

(3) Since elders will deal primarily with routine matters of judgment and expediency, when an elder or perhaps more than one, is to be absent, there should be sufficient trust and confidence in the work of the group that the absent elder will stand in agreement with decisions made while he was away. Meetings can be re-scheduled, and sometimes need to be done, but one man being absent should not bring the work of the Kingdom to a halt. The group should be able to operate when one of the number is absent, and the one absent must have the attitude that he will abide by the consensus of the group!

There should be an equal sharing of the "chairing" of the meeting, be it a rotation monthly or quarterly, with that elder responsible for the gathering of materials or notes he has made, of materials from the elders' box (mail, etc.), and then to be in charge of the meeting, leading from point to point and making notes of matters discussed and decisions reached. Sometimes matters must be handled that will involve strict confidence, and such should not be taken outside the elders' meetings, no, not even to their wives!

(4) There can be a dividing up of the work for certain periods of time. Some works are large enough, and varied enough, that at any time on any day some

routine decisions may need to be made, and some division of the work expedites this. We have in mind such as (1) An elder responsible for overall supervision of things pertaining to BUILDINGS, GROUNDS AND MAINTENANCE, (2) Another responsible for things pertaining to the TEACHING PROGRAM of the church – classes, pulpit work, vacation Bible school, literature, etc., (3) Another responsible for FINANCIAL matters, and (4) Another responsible for matters pertaining to EVANGELISM, MISSIONARY ENDEAVORS, PERSONAL WORK programs, etc. as well as some other such areas.

Be it remembered that the divisions of responsibility for brief times is merely an expedient device to facilitate the work, but the elders as a group remain responsible for the work of the congregation—ALL OF IT. In other meetings, there should be full and complete discussion of what has transpired, and what action has been taken, in all of these areas since the last meeting. All should be thus informed, ALWAYS. We mentioned that these divisions of the work should be for brief times, be it three months, or six months, etc., and with good reason. Severe illness or death can, in short order, take one of the elders, and if he has had certain responsibilities over a long period of time, and if he has not been open and frank in covering all that has transpired in his area of concern, he is then gone and the others are virtually novices as to that part of the work! *ALL should be knowledgeable as to ALL aspects of the work!*

There is, then, every reason to vary the areas of concern with frequency, giving all experience in all areas. and keeping all informed as to every matter within the life, service, worship and work of the congregation! Spiritual concern for the Kingdom, and acting always in the best interest of the Kingdom, would demand such!

(5) Finally, it surely goes without saying that each and every elder should be on guard lest there be any element – one person or a group – seeking to use him

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as an instrument to guide the eldership as a body or to seek to gain approval of a pet project through using one as a goad to the body. We certainly are not stating that a member should not approach an elder with a suggestion or recommendation, but merely warning that a divisive and troublesome element will often seek to reach the *ear* of one elder that he might be, they hope, their access to the body in some divisive matter. Again, men of such spiritual qualities as we have noted, and who seek the best interests of the Kingdom always, will be on guard against

any who seek to “**sow discord among the brethren**” (Prov. 6: 19), and will not allow themselves to be so used as their instrument!

Those who serve as elders share with the rest of us in the entire work of the Kingdom of God, but they, together, have some concerns, interests and a common-bond in Christ and in the work of being His elders, that should bring from them the very best in dedication and godly effort!

—Deceased



THE BIRTH OF DIGRESSION

E. R. Harper

The church is in danger of another digression. The “innocent things” being practiced today by loyal members of the body of Christ, because they do not think of the harm, are alarming to those of us who have been in the battle line for years.

The same cause that took us away in the century just closed (the 19th Century—**Editor, CFTF**) will lead us into apostasy today; people not familiar with the Truth of the Bible do not know the issues that are troubling the church today. The modern pulpit does not discuss problems.

Church members do not have conviction against certain practices, as they once had. We are trying too much to be like the world around us. Too much show and not enough teaching. Too many churches are saying, “We are not bothered with this or that. Why preach on such things? Preach on subjects that will build the church.”

Too many people are coming into the fold not converted from their errors due to soft, compromising preaching. We have no conception of what it means and takes to be spiritual. The list could be multiplied, but this is enough. Let us look at straws showing which way the wind blows and show the laxity, on our part, to watch every corner lest we fall from our steadfastness. Digression looks innocent at first, and deceives honest people. It does not look as if it will do much harm. In the beginning of digression few people see its flower.

When the mechanical instrument was introduced, it was brought into the Bible School Classes with the promise that it would never be brought into worship. Innocent people, rather than to have trouble in the church, agreed to this. It was not long until the instrument was in the church.

The digressives slowly broke down the convictions of the people against the instrument, especially the young people. The story is known. Digression swept the church and took meeting houses and members. The instrument, brought in for “non-worship” activities, soon became common in worship.

MY PREDICTION: The time will come when the mechanical instrument will be used in Sunday morning public worship in congregations that now oppose it. Easter observance with sectarian bodies will be observed. Special holy days will be promoted. Bringing the instrument into the building for weddings, funerals, the young folk activities is a step toward digression. It is coming, and those of us who pointed it out are hated.

Brethren, think of me as you may. Unless the church undergoes some old fashioned indoctrination, it is in for a ride. The future of the church is at the turning point. It is now time for men who know the Truth, love the church, and are not afraid to step forward, raise the banner of Truth, unsheath the sword of the Spirit, and attack the enemy while the church is still the church.

—Deceased

[The previous article came from Roelf L. Ruffner, faithful preacher for the High Plains Church of Christ in Cheyenne, WY (See church advertisement on the last page of CFTF). It appeared in “The Communicator,” the bulletin of the Fifth & Grape congregation in Abilene, July 25, 1999 while Royce Williamson was their preacher. In it he stated: “This article was first published in November 1957.” Obviously Harper’s wise warnings were ignored to the church’s great hurt. Bro. Harper went to his reward on June 15, 1986 just short of his 90th birthday. Following Harper’s article Ruffner appended the following words. —Editor, CFTF]

Brother Harper was a true soldier of the cross. He exposed the errors in the Herald of Truth program and, later, the false doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit being taught at the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas.

Brother Harper wrote this article in 1957 and it is certainly prophetic. Many congregations have fallen into the pit of apostasy and digression. Recently the new 2009 edition of the “Churches of Christ in the United States” directory was released. Twenty-one congregations were omitted by the editor because they had started using mechanical instruments of music in their worship. Most were large urban congregations. Let us pray for our apostasized brethren and that we may be spiritually alert. —RLR

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Alton W. Fonville

A few years back it was very common to hear the words: “we must have a thus sayeth the Lord for it” for what we believe and practice. In the more recent years, the saying has developed: “I know what the Bible tells us, but, I think this or that—I don’t believe God would want this or that.” Can you not see that we are elevating our wisdom above that of our Creator? Instead of trying to lead ourselves, we need to be saying, “what did God say about that topic.” Then, we need to believe what he said, and obey it and let it determine our course of actions. We need to let the Bible define the terms of our having fellowship with God. Do you recall that God is light and in him is no darkness at all? And, when we step out of the light of his word, we are in the “twilight zone” at best, or in the total darkness. And, if we say we have fellowship with God and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1).

Maybe we need to see just what walking in darkness entails. First and foremost, it is trying to out guess God and what he said for us to do, and letting our desires lead us. It is not having the reverence for what he said. When we do not keep his commands, we do not know the lord and are walking in darkness. **“He that sayeth I know him and walks in darkness is a liar and the truth is not in him”** (1 John 2:4). All liars will have their place in torment and cannot have fellowship with God, nor call him “our Father.” Paul asked the question: **“what communion hath light with darkness?”** Also, **“what part hath a believer with an unbeliever?”** He told us to **“be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers”** because there could be no concord, just as Christ and the Devil can have none, nor can God and idols. Keep in mind that God dwells in the faithful Christian through the Spirit. (2 Cor. 6:14).

The concluding command given by Paul was for the faithful Christian to **“come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”** (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Did you notice what was called, **“the unclean thing”**? Trying to have fellowship with “unbelievers, idols, and Satan” will not please God. They are lumped in the same category. To have fellowship with God, we must make a break from them. The implication is clear: *we cannot have fellowship with God, being his heir and joint heir with Christ as long as we continue to walk in darkness.* The faithful Christian must be separate from the world before he is entitled to call God his Father, and to be considered his sons and daughters.

We cannot claim “sinless perfection.” All mankind is under the curse of sin and must be forgiven through the grace which God extended through his Son. The sinner must come to realize that his sins will forever separate him from God unless that cleansing agent is applied to his soul. The blood of Christ was shed for that very purpose, so we could be reconciled to God and have fellowship with him. *After the initial obedience to God by believing that Jesus*

Christ is the Son of God, repenting of our sins, confessing of our faith in Jesus Christ and the application of the cleansing blood of Jesus to our souls by water baptism, we can have fellowship with God (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24, Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38, Acts 10:47, 48; Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Peter 3:21).

Following one’s baptism if one sins, godly sorrow must act on our hearts causing one to repent of that sin(s), confess it and pray to God for forgiveness (1 John 2:1; 2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 8:22-24; James 5:16; Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3). Repentance is more than just being sorry for getting caught in sin. We must be sorry toward God that we violated His law and thereby stand condemned, having no fellowship with God as long as we remain separated from Him by that sin(s) (*Repentance is our own breaking down of our stubborn will, the seat of all sin and rebellion against God.* – Editor). The fruit of true repentance should be very evident to the world around us, showing that we are now cleared of that sin. This is the very thing which Paul commended the Corinthian church for doing and it is a good example for us to follow. I want to walk in the commands of God, letting him direct my steps and to know that by so living, I have fellowship with him and can truthfully call him, “my Father who art in heaven,” don’t you?

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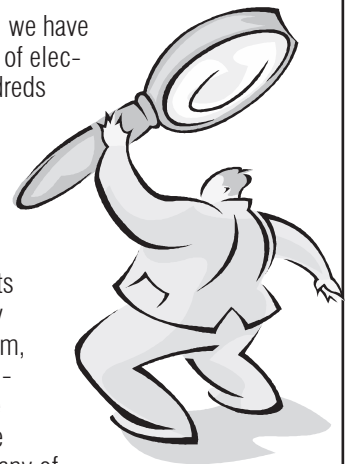
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—Dub and Lavonne McClish



Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org. Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or Keith Sisman.net. Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org and www.Myth-and-Mystery.org.

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com, www.ocoeecoc.org.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803) 279-8663.

-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

- Tennessee-

Murfreesboro—Church of Christ, 837 Esther Lane, Murfreesboro, TN, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org. evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; tgjoriginal@verizon.net.

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Hubbard—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; DJGoines@Valornet.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

New Braunfels—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

-Wyoming-

Cheyenne—High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 514-3394, evangelist: Roelf L. Ruffner