

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## THE ORIGIN OF LIBERALISM

David P. Brown

In introducing our study we note that the term *liberalism* is used in various fields of study—political, religious, social, and intellectual. People often employ the term without defining it. We will define the term. However, before we define liberalism, we want to point out the following facts. In the case of religious liberalism there are fundamental principles on which it is based. And, from these foundational principles a new religion emerged. It retained the traditional terminology, but drastically redefined the terms. Liberalism, as we have come to know it, came into existence as a theological system in the sectarian denominational world as a direct result of certain men's efforts to deal with the Enlightenment (Warfield, 591). Later we will investigate the historical development of liberalism among the denominations as well as how it came to influence the Lord's church.

Our definition of liberalism will cover the term as it exists in Protestant sectarian denominational theology. But, it will also include liberalism as it pertains to the church of Christ. The reason being is this, among other things denominationalism itself is a form of liberalism. Thus, what liberalism means and does to and in the denominations is one thing, but what it means and does to the Lord's church is another matter. Some members of the church see liberalism only from the stand point of what it has done and is doing to the denominational world. For the faithful member of the Lord's church that view of liberalism is insufficient—it is too limited. We must see liberalism, not only from the perspective of its attack on the cardinal biblical doctrines that we have in common with some of the denominations, but specifically how it has challenged and made inroads into primitive, pure, New Testament Christianity—the church of Christ.

### LIBERALISM DEFINED

With the previous information of the last paragraph in mind we will now define liberalism. *Liberalism is created by any doctrine that looses men from what the complete, final, authoritative infallible rightly divided Word of God binds upon them (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:17).* In other words a liberal doctrine is any doctrine that allows human beings greater liberty than God permits them in, by and through His Word (Col. 3:17; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 John 9-11). It confuses an *obligation* (the thing that must be done) with an *option* (a way or method for an obligation to be discharged that circumstances and situations may change). Thus, liberalism covers a broad spectrum of doctrines.

*Liberalism and Anti-ism*—In our study on the origins of liberalism we must understand what “anti-ism” is. The reason being is this: liberalism is the direct opposite of “anti-ism” in what it does to the church. Anti-ism is a conservatism that is sinful. It is sinful because it conserves more than the obligations God has bound on us in, by and through His Word. Anti-ism makes optional matters obligatory.

*Obligations and Options*—With every obligation God has placed on us through His Word, there are various options from which we may choose to discharge these obligations. The obligation is always the same for all people, at all times, in every society and culture. However, options whereby the obligation is discharged may change because of advancements in technology, different economic conditions, people's several abilities, circumstances, culture, civil laws, and so on. Human judgment is exercised when it comes to choosing which option one may use to discharge a biblical obligation. The fundamental principle behind, and the motivating factor for, determining the option one selects to discharge a biblical obligation is this: *it is the option that offers the greater advantage in discharging the obligation.* Therefore, an option that *expedites* the discharging of a God-given obligation is an option that offers a greater advantage in discharging the obligation than do other options. Thus, expediency involves advantage. In other words it discharges, in the quickest and best way possible, the obligation God has placed upon the Christian. As stated earlier, whatever the anti doctrine, it restricts one's conduct more than what God does in His

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# Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher  
jbrow@charter.net

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder  
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## EDITORIAL...

### UNITY AND BIBLE AUTHORITY

With little alteration our article beginning on the front page of this issue of *CFTF* originally appeared as one of the chapters in the 2005 Bellview Church of Christ Lecture book, Pensacola, Florida.

The study with which said article is concerned could certainly be expanded. However, the information treated within the article is sufficient to accomplish what we intended—to enlighten brethren regarding the origin, development, and growth of “liberalism” in the Lord’s church.

We have seen the Highland elders, MSOP, and their friends say much about unity. They are picturing themselves as the brethren who are seeking unity while those opposed to them are radicals who desire strife and factionalism. But what we have not heard from these same brethren is this: *Scriptural fellowship and unity are always preceded, governed, and sustained by Biblical authority.*

In an attempt to defend their fellowship of Dave Miller, the Highland church, Dalton, Georgia (sponsoring church of GBN), acting without Bible authority, withdrew fellowship from the Northside Church of Christ elders, Calhoun, Georgia, which “withdrawal” is totally without Biblical authority. Of what were the Northside elders guilty? Answer: With the full support of their preacher, David Smith and the North Side church, said elders were guilty of *advocating and contending for Biblically authorized fellowship and unity.* Would that all churches of Christ were guilty of the same attitude and stand toward Biblically authorized fellowship and unity.

Thus far what we have seen from the Highland church, AP, GBN, MSOP, Shertz congregation, SWSBS, and their “buddyhood” is a willful ignoring of such passages as:

Whosoever transgresseth [goeth onward-ASV, 1901], and abideth not in the doctrine [teaching-ASV, 1901] of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine [teaching-ASV, 1901], receive him not into your house, neither bid him god speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

In their omission of any reference to the necessity of Bible authority for fellowshiping a person, Highland, MSOP, GBN, et al. have chosen the path Rubel Shelly and company started down many years ago. In the future there is no reason for us to expect them to cease acting accordingly when their own self interest demands it. Ever so gradually and incrementally Highland, MSOP, SWSBS, the Schertz church, the *Spiritual Sword*, South Side, GBN, et al. will use their lectureships and like works to influence the church to embrace their false unity and fellowship. In choosing to remain in fellowship with an unrepentant Dave Miller, MSOP, Highland, and friends have crossed their “Rubicon”, and unless they repent they will sadly meet their “Waterloo”. What a shame!

—David P. Brown, Editor

Word by making an optional matter an obligatory one.

## TWO THINGS LIBERALS & ANTIS HAVE IN COMMON

Two things that the “liberal” and the “anti” have in common are: (1) neither one is content with *only* what God through His Word has obligated man to do or not do as the case may be. (2) And, because of their actions noted in the previous number one, the “liberal” along with the “anti” are in rebellion to God.

It must be understood by everyone that no form of “anti-ism” is God’s answer to “liberalism” and no form of “liberalism” is God’s answer to “anti-ism”. One might as well believe that Methodist doctrine is God’s answer to Roman Catholicism, or that Baptist doctrine is God’s answer to Universal-Unitarianism as to believe that anti-ism or liberalism can scripturally substitute one for the other. Anti-ism and liberalism, regardless of the topic, repudiate the inspired directions of the apostle Paul regarding having Bible authority for all we believe and practice (Col. 3:17). *Only the truth on any doctrine can correctly take the place of either liberalism or anti-ism.*

Sometimes people erroneously affirm that the truth on any subject is found between two extremes. The fact of the matter is this: *the truth regarding anything or any idea is just what it is.* Thus, the truth pertaining to anything or any idea will always be the truth regardless of what men think, say or do about it. Anything to the left or right of the Truth is false. And, we sin if we go either direction from the Truth.

To some people the truth itself on any subject is extreme—it binds more than they like it to bind or it looses more than they like it to loose. We must, therefore, realize the truth about truth. “A true proposition is one that corresponds to the facts or correctly describes the facts” and “must be true for all men at all times and all places” (Ruby, 329, 331). Thus, in regard to truth, extremists are those who loose where God in His Word has not loosed or those who bind where God in Word has not bound. Jesus put it this way, **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:31, 32; See 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; John 12:48).

The only possible quality in an anti that places him/her in a little better light than the liberal is this: an anti continues to (1) respect the Bible as the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God and (2) an anti knows he must have the Bible’s approval for whatever he believes and practices. The liberal cares for none of the things mentioned in the preceding sentence. We must also understand that all false doctrines are either liberal or anti. Anti-ism will hinder the work of the church by not allowing her to do all God authorizes her to do. Liberalism destroys every vestige of Bible authority, the Gospel and the church for the reasons previously given in our definition of liberalism. Anti-ism stifles and strangles the work of the church. Liberalism erases the church and all that pertains to it.

### LIBERALISM’S BEGINNING

The first record of liberalism in human history is found in Satan’s false message offered by him to entice Eve to

sin. Through her Satan reached the head of the human race, Adam (Gen. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:14). When Satan began to entice Eve he was headed for Adam—the head of the human race (Rom. 5:12). God had instructed Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warned them of the consequences of violating His prohibitive law (Gen. 2:16, 17). In other words Adam and Eve were authorized by God’s Word to eat the fruit of certain trees and by His Word they were forbidden to eat the fruit from a certain tree. Thus, by God’s authoritative Word Adam and Eve knew of what trees they were at liberty to eat and of what tree they were forbidden to eat.

Satan’s message to Eve was a liberal doctrine—it loosed her from what God in His infallible Word had bound upon her (Gen. 3:4, 5). Thereby Satan lied to Eve. She was seduced, she believed and she obeyed Satan’s lie for the reasons given in verse six. Thereby, Eve sinned (1 John 3:4). Then Adam, without being deceived, partook of the forbidden fruit given to him by Eve and he, too, sinned (1 Tim. 2:14).

The second record of liberalism’s evil work in the human race is found in Cain’s attitude and action toward the obligation God placed on him and his brother Abel regarding their worship of Him (Gen. 4:1-15). Of this event, the writer of the Hebrews epistle declared, **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh”** (Heb. 11:4). Since it is the case that (1) faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17); and, since it is the case that (2) Able offered his sacrifice to God by faith (Heb. 11:4); then it is the case (3) that we must conclude that Able and Cain had received God’s Word instructing them regarding the worship He desired of them. And, therefore, it is the case that (4) Cain did not comply with God’s Will regarding his worship to Him. The divine record says of God’s attitude toward Cain’s unauthorized and, thus, sinful offering, **“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect”** (Gen. 4:5a). Among the things we may conclude from this Old Testament record is that if we want God to respect our beliefs and actions they must be authorized by God’s Word—they must be by faith (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 15:4; ).

While liberalism has invaded the Lord’s church in the same way it has denominationalism, it has reared its ugly head in the church in a way that it could not do in sectarian theology. The reason is this: *the Lord’s church stands alone in her respect for, correct approach to, the ascertaining of and submission to proper Bible authority, apostate brethren notwithstanding* (2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:17; Heb. 5: 8, 9). Indeed, as stated earlier, denominationalism itself is a form of liberalism. If the denominations truly respected Bible authority and honestly knew how to ascertain it, and were fully willing to submit to it, they would not be denominations. Indeed, they would repudiate the whole false system along with its attendant erroneous doctrines that gave birth to, sustains, and has characterized it from its modern day inception in the Reformation to the present. Also, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Armenianism, Wesleyanism, Mormonism, Creedalism, and such like false doctrines that have hindered the proper division of the Word of God for many years would

disappear. Therefore, in the Lord's church liberalism has not only sought (1) to repudiate and destroy those elements of Biblical Truth that exist in denominational theology, which Truths we hold in common with them, but (2) it has attacked the Bible as a divine infallible pattern along with the communicative element of language that serves as the means whereby the Bible communicates God's Will to us and thereby authorizes anyone to do anything.

Furthermore, it has attacked the biblical principle of restoration. Those who imbibe it are blinded to Christianity as it appears on the pages of the New Testament. Thus, there is a liberalism that seeks to make the Lord's church only another denomination among the denominations. And, this is the singular difference in liberalism's attack and evil influence on the Lord's church from that of liberalism's attack and impact on the denominations.

Thus, in our earlier comments about "liberalism" and its contrary evil brother, "anti-ism," we defined liberalism as we did. If we are not willing to see the difference in how liberalism deals with Bible authority, the Gospel, and the church, and so on, from the way it has attacked denominationalism, we simply do not have a correct understanding of what liberalism is, how it works, and what it has done, is doing, and will do to the church, that it never could accomplish in the sectarian denominational churches. Again, *the reason being, Satan knows there is no need to convert denominational churches to denominationalism.*

### **A BRIEF GENERAL HISTORY OF THE FOUNDERS AND FOUNDATION OF MODERN LIBERALISM**

During the eighteenth century an intellectual movement began that was to have far reaching consequences for the western world and the United States in particular. The central core of the movement was that it almost promoted human reason to the level of the divine. It denied supernatural divine revelation and ascribed to the rational powers of human beings the ability to discern truth of all types. This was the period known in history as the Enlightenment. It has been labeled, *The Modern Paganism* (Gay). This was also the time of the formation of German Rationalism and Deism.

*The Enlightenment* produced much that is to this present time described and touted as the "modern mind." Some of these principles of the Enlightenment are:

1. The beginning of scientific history;
2. Any *truth* must justify itself before the bar of reason;
3. Nature is the primary source of answers to the fundamental questions of human existence;
4. Freedom is necessary to advance progress and human welfare;
5. Literary and historical criticism are necessary to determine the legitimacy of our historical legacy;
6. The need for critical philosophy;
7. Ethics is separate and independent from the authority of religion and theology;

8. A suspicion of and hostility to all truth claiming to be grounded in some kind of authority other than reason, e.g., tradition or divine revelation;

9. Raising to the value of science as the avenue by which man can find truth;

10. Toleration as the highest value in matters of religion;

11. A self-conscious continuation and expansion of the humanism first developed during the Renaissance (Ramm, 4, 5).

During this time certain "scholars" began a direct attack on the inspiration of the Bible as it had been defined during the late Reformation—verbal plenary inspiration. These men initiated the development of what became known as Higher Criticism—better defined as "Destructive Criticism." In particular they attacked traditional Protestant reformatory doctrines in general and specifically doctrines of the Lutheran Church. They targeted the supernaturalism of historic Christianity in general and sighted in on the trinity, the Deity of Christ, the atonement, the virgin birth, the resurrection, miracles in the Bible and so on.

As noted earlier concurrent with the movement noted in the last paragraph was the development of Deism. This is the view that affirms the existence of God as the creator of all things. However, once God set all the natural laws in place and working, He took and takes no personal interest in his creation. According to Deism, as one does a clock so did God with his creation—He wound it up and left it to function through natural law without any direct or indirect personal involvement in it by Him. This view of the natural world rules out miracles. This is the case because they violate the function of natural law. The Deist declared that Christianity only re-declared God's revelation of himself in nature; that God himself is separated from and uninvolved in his creation. With these points in mind we now turn to other contributing factors to the formation of liberalism.

### **THREE IMPORTANT PHILOSOPHIES**

In understanding what Liberalism is we must have a familiarity with certain philosophers and their philosophies. Their ideas are seen in three philosophies—Existentialism, Pragmatism and Irrationalism. These philosophies unite to give us the liberalism of our time.

*EXISTENTIALISM* gives emphasis to individual existence, freedom and choice. Thus, while it is somewhat difficult to define, it stresses absolute individual existence and, consequently, on subjectivity, individual freedom and choice. Thus, absolute objective truth is rejected by the existentialist.

*PRAGMATISM* looks at the consequence of an action. According to the consequence, it determines whether the action is right or wrong. Thus, if an action accomplishes one's desired end, it is right. If the action does not accomplish the end desired, it is wrong. Hence, there is no absolute objective standard of right and wrong. If a thing works it is right, if it does not, it is wrong. The pragmatic approach was also applied in determining what is true and what is not.

*IRRATIONALISM* is the result of a number of phi-

losophies, including existentialism and pragmatism. All of these philosophies reject and repudiate the “Law of Rationality”. The “Law of Rationality” is, “We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence” (Ruby, 131).

All three of the previously noted philosophies come to basically the same end—Subjectivism. Although the philosophers we shall next notice in our study differ in certain aspects of their views, the commonality shared by each philosopher and his philosophy is their belief is that truth is subjective. Thus, we ask, what is Subjectivism?

Subjectivism is an epistemological theory. It is a theory of knowledge, and how it is achieved. Subjectivism holds that knowledge is generated from the mind, without reference to reality. It holds that gaining knowledge about the world is done through introspection. It holds that metaphysically, the world is a figment of our imaginations. It holds that because reality is an aspect of our minds, it is affected by them. Like most misbegotten notions, this theory is never held consistently. The effect of trying to hold it consistently would be a complete inability to interact with the world. One would just sit and wish for things to be “better”, confused at why the world isn’t doing its part. No, the practitioners apply it only in certain respects, and to certain degrees. It is an act of evasion. An attempt to ignore the facts of reality. It is the claim that the mind controls particular aspects of reality, or that certain facts of reality don’t exist, and can be whatever your mind wants. A common use of subjectivism is in the field of ethics. A subjectivist evades the objective nature of ethics, and pretends that he may act in any way he chooses, without consequence. Subjectivism is a denial of reality. It is the acceptance of the Primacy of Consciousness. It is a denial of reality, and a denial of the Law of Identity. It states that “anything goes”, and lets desires, whims, and emotions run rampant (Importance of Philosophy).

The late Thomas B. Warren commented concerning certain factors that brought about the rise of liberalism.

There have been at least four other factors which have been highly significant in the rise of modern liberalism: (1) The growing influence of science and its influence over the minds of men, (2) the evolutionary hypothesis of Charles Darwin, (3) the attacks of the higher critics on the Bible itself, and (4) the scientific study of the various so-called “world” religions. These factors, along with factors previously noted, were vital to the rise of the two basic branches of modern liberalism: (1) Moderate liberalism (Modernism) and, (2) Radical liberalism (Humanism) (Warren, 12).

## SOME PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIAN OF LIBERALISM

David Hume was very influential in bringing new viewpoints into religion and science.

“Hume is our Politics, Hume is our Trade, Hume is our Philosophy, Hume is our Religion.” This statement by 19th century British idealist philosopher James Hutchison Stirling reflects a unique position that David Hume holds in intellectual thought. Hume profoundly impacted all of the disciplines noted by Stirling, not only during Hume’s own life, but for generations after and on to our own day. Part of his fame and importance owes to his boldly skeptical approach to a range of philosophical subjects. He questioned common notions of personal identity, and argued that there is no permanent “self” that continues over time. He dismissed standard accounts of causality and argued that our conceptions of cause/effect relations are grounded in habits of thinking, rather than in the perception of causal forces in the external world itself. He argued that it is unreasonable to believe testimonies of alleged miraculous events, and, accordingly, hints that we should reject religions that are founded on miracle testimonies. Against the common belief of the time that God’s existence could be proven through a design or causal argument, Hume offered compelling criticisms of standard theistic proofs. Also, against the common view that God plays an important role in the creation and reinforcement of moral values, Hume offered one of the first purely secular moral theories, which grounded morality in the pleasing and useful consequences that result from our actions (Fieser).

Another highly influential philosopher of the Enlightenment was Immanuel Kant (April 22, 1724 – February 12, 1804). He

... was a German philosopher from Prussia, generally regarded as one of Europe’s most influential thinkers and the last major philosopher of the Enlightenment. He had a major impact on the Romantic and Idealist philosophies of the 19th century, and his work was the starting point for Hegel. Kant is best known for his view—called transcendental idealism—that we bring innate forms and concepts to the raw experience of the world, which would otherwise be unknowable. We perceive the world by means of our senses and innate intuitions, he argued, and therefore the thing-in-itself cannot be known. Our objects of knowledge, filtered by our senses, are simply appearances. His epistemology, or theory of knowledge, was an attempt to solve the conflict between the rationalists, who said that knowledge without experience is possible, and the empiricists, who argued that experience is all there is. Kant bridged the gap between these two positions with the opening statement of his *Critique of*

*Pure Reason*: “But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience” (Wikipedia).

Kant, therefore, opposed the traditional arguments for the existence of God. He contended that we cannot know reality by pure reason and thereby we cannot know that God exists. Only by conclusions drawn from moral law can man know anything about God. Thus, through man’s five senses man cannot prove the existence of God. Therefore, Kant helped to further magnify science. Another influential philosopher was August Comte (1798-1857). He

...developed a secular religion known as positivism, which emphasized reason and logic. He later systematized it as the Religion of Humanity, complete with priests and a calendar of saints. Comte divided the progress of mankind into three historical stages:

1. Theological: relies on supernatural agencies to explain what man can’t explain otherwise.
2. Metaphysical: man attributes effects to abstract but poorly understood causes.
3. “Positive”: because man now understands the scientific laws which control the world.

Comte also founded the social sciences, and it is important to remember in our more cynical times the ideals to which they aspired. Comte and other early social scientists assumed that human behavior must obey laws just as strict as Newton’s laws of motion, and that if we could discover them, we could eliminate moral evils -- in exactly the same way that medical scientists were then discovering how diseases worked and were eliminating much of the physical suffering which had always been an inevitable part of the human condition. In his earlier, less systematic works he influenced such figures as J.S. Mill, T.H. Huxley, George Henry Lewes, and George Eliot; all gradually fell away as his philosophy became more rigidly systematic (Glenn, *The Victorian Web*).

One of the most influential philosophers in all facets of society and culture over the last two hundred years is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)—better known as G. W. F. Hegel. Hegel was greatly influenced by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Along with J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. von Schelling, Hegel (1770-1831) belongs to the period of “German idealism” in the decades following Kant. The most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted, throughout his published writings as well as in his lectures, to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic ontology from a “logical” starting point. He is perhaps most well-known for his teleological account of history, an account which was later taken over by Marx and “inverted” into a materialist theory of an historical development culminating in communism. For most of the twentieth century, the “logical” side of Hegel’s thought had been largely forgotten, but his political and social philosophy continued to find interest and support. However, since the

1970s, a degree of more general philosophical interest in Hegel’s systematic thought has also been revived. Until around 1800, Hegel devoted himself to developing his ideas on religious and social themes, and seemed to have envisaged a future for himself as a type of modernising and reforming educator, in the image of figures of the German Enlightenment such as Lessing and Schiller. Around the turn of the century, however, possibly under the influence of Hölderlin, his interests turned more to the issues in the “critical” philosophy of Immanuel Kant (Redding).

He learned from Kant to classify things in threes; he borrowed from him through the influence of another philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Hegel believed in a dialectical process for all things. While he rarely used the following terms in his logical system, this is the foundation of his own reasoning. He began with the thesis (one fact) which produced the antithesis (and opposing fact). The conflict of these two facts produced another fact—a synthesis of the thesis and antithesis. This process never ceases, but goes on and on ad infinitum. Thus, there is no final truth. Therefore, men can never arrive at final truth on anything.

The Hegelian dialectic has impacted the world in a terrible, thorough and long lasting way. Hitler and the Nazis were strongly influenced by Nietzsche who was greatly influenced by Hegel (*Politics*). The founders of Communism—Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin—were influenced by Hegel (*Economics and Politics*). Thomas J. J. Altizer’s “God is Dead” view was a direct result of Altizer applying Hegel’s dialectic philosophy to his thinking about God, Christ and man (Christian Atheism—Religion). And, when Hegel’s dialectic process is applied to Biology the result is *evolution*.

Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a German theologian and philologist who held pastorates and professorships at Landsberg, University of Halle, and Trinity Church in Berlin. He was influenced by Plato and Kant and believed God to be immanent—one with all creation. The New England Transcendentalists were particularly struck by Schleiermacher’s conception of religious experience as an immediate, eternal, mystical moment when a person becomes aware of the all-surrounding, invasive, incredible presence of God in and through the universe. Believing that man can find the answers to moral laws within himself, he emphasized the contemplation of nature and its ever-present miracles. As the great champion, and a modern prophet, of personal active religious feeling—as opposed to mere passive assent to formal and inherited doctrines—Schleiermacher redefined the basic elements of Christianity in his famous and groundbreaking book *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799). For him, “every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle as soon as the religious view of it can be the dominant” and “every original and new communication of the universe to man is a revelation.” On the issue of belief, Schleiermacher was adamant

on the distinction between firsthand belief and secondhand acceptance of the belief of another, arguing that “to accept what another has said or done, or to wish to think and feel as another has thought and felt, is a hard and base service. . . . It must be rejected by all who would force their way into the sanctuary of religion. To wish to have and hold a faith that is an echo, proves that a man is incapable of religion.” Religion for Schleiermacher, then, always meant individual religious experience, and thus he insisted that “the existing forms should not in themselves hinder any man from developing a religion suitable to his own nature and his own religious sense.” He separated not only church and state, but also church and science as well as church and morality (Amos Bronson Alcott Network).

Schleiermacher sought to avoid the view that the principles of religion must be verified by empirical investigation of the natural world. He contended that propositions (into which truth may be placed) were not in actuality the root and foundation of religion. Thus, he postulated the view that it is wise in religion to be guided by one’s emotions. Of course in his efforts to oppose and repudiate a religion based upon the standard of the intellectual empirical knowledge of natural law (rationalism), he succeeded in establishing another standard—man’s feelings. And, thereby move people further away from the authority of God revealed in the meaning of the words of the Bible.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is considered to be the person who originally brought existentialism into theology. Thus, we need to study his contribution to the development of liberalism.

### Moral Individualism

Most philosophers since Plato have held that the highest ethical good is the same for everyone; insofar as one approaches moral perfection, one resembles other morally perfect individuals. The 19th-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who was the first writer to call himself existential, reacted against this tradition by insisting that the highest good for the individual is to find his or her own unique vocation. As he wrote in his journal, “I must find a truth that is true for me . . . the idea for which I can live or die.” Other existentialist writers have echoed Kierkegaard’s belief that one must choose one’s own way without the aid of universal, objective standards. Against the traditional view that moral choice involves an objective judgment of right and wrong, existentialists have argued that no objective, rational basis can be found for moral decisions. The 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche further contended that the individual must decide which situations are to count as moral situations.

### Subjectivity

All existentialists have followed Kierkegaard in stressing the importance of passionate

individual action in deciding questions of both morality and truth. They have insisted, accordingly, that personal experience and acting on one’s own convictions are essential in arriving at the truth. Thus, the understanding of a situation by someone involved in that situation is superior to that of a detached, objective observer. This emphasis on the perspective of the individual agent has also made existentialists suspicious of systematic reasoning. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and other existentialist writers have been deliberately unsystematic in the exposition of their philosophies, preferring to express themselves in aphorisms, dialogues, parables, and other literary forms. Despite their antirationalist position, however, most existentialists cannot be said to be irrationalists in the sense of denying all validity to rational thought. They have held that rational clarity is desirable wherever possible, but that the most important questions in life are not accessible to reason or science. Furthermore, they have argued that even science is not as rational as is commonly supposed. Nietzsche, for instance, asserted that the scientific assumption of an orderly universe is for the most part a useful fiction. (A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names).

Basically Friedrich Nietzsche (1768-1834) applied Kierkegaard’s view to atheism.

Born the son of a Lutheran pastor in Röcken, Saxony, Friedrich Nietzsche was raised by female relatives after his father’s death in 1849. He quickly abandoned his initial pursuit of theology in order to specialize in philology at Bonn and Leipzig, where he studied with Friedrich Ritschl. . . . Nietzsche sharply criticized the Greek tradition’s over-emphasis on reason in his *Die Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)* (1889). Reliance on abstract concepts in a quest for absolute truth, he supposed, is merely a symptom of the degenerate personalities of philosophers like Socrates. From this Nietzsche concluded that traditional philosophy and religion are both erroneous and harmful for human life; they enervate and degrade our native capacity for achievement. Progress beyond the stultifying influence of philosophy, then, requires a thorough “revaluation of values.” In *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* (1887) Nietzsche bitterly decried the slave morality enforced by social sanctions and religious guilt. Only rare, superior individuals—the noble ones, or *Übermenschen*—can rise above all moral distinctions to achieve a heroic life of truly human worth (A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names).

Two other men of importance to the spread of theological existentialism and contemporary with each other are Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich. Most of their work was done in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884-1976) was born on August 20<sup>th</sup> in Wiefelstede, in (what was then known as) the grand duchy of Oldenburg. His father, Arthur Bultmann, was an Evangelical-Lutheran pastor, his paternal grandfather a missionary to Africa, and his maternal grandfather a pastor of the pietistic tradition. . . . Perhaps Bultmann's most important use of his existentialist methodology is in his interpretation of scripture. Indeed, Bultmann was at least as important a New Testament scholar as a theologian (Amongst other accomplishments, he invented Form Criticism, a method that notices that certain classes of pericopes in the synoptic gospels such as healing stories and exorcism stories often have a formulaic structure. These structures would indicate liturgical use in the church and thus imply a composition date much later than the death of Jesus). To understand what Bultmann meant by an existentialist interpretation of scripture, it is helpful first to see why he thought it was necessary. After all, why not just use the objectifying modes of thinking so successful in the natural sciences? Bultmann's answer is that the approach of the natural sciences is inappropriate to hermeneutics because a person's relation to history, and thus to texts of our history like scripture, is wholly different from her relationship to nature. For Bultmann, humans are right to differentiate themselves from nature and perceive it as truly other. But the case with history is different – humans cannot separate themselves from their historical existence. Unlike the natural scientist, the person engaged in historical studies is considering a living complex of events in which she is essentially involved. Therefore, the history complex cannot be observed "objectively" in the sense used in the natural sciences, for every word spoken about history is at the same time said about the person speaking (Matt McLaughlin, Rob Smid).

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) is highly regarded as a mediate theologian who stands at the boundary between liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, idealism and realism, Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. His indebtedness to the Romantic movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century makes his theology adequately identified as a philosophical theology. For Tillich, theology is designated to satisfy the church's demand; namely, to make "the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation" (*Systematic Theology* 1, 1951, p.3; hereafter *ST*). To this end, Tillich makes use of the Christian message, obtained from the Word of God, to answer philosophical questions that raised out of the cultural realm. Simply, this is the so-called "correlation" methodology rendered for constructing Tillich's Christian systematic theology. Tillich's "correlation" method has

been labeled as one of his major contributions to modern theologians (James Wu).

The men previously studied do not cover all the important voices in their specific disciplines, but they are highly representative of those who greatly influenced much of Western thought in philosophy and theology.

These philosophies and theologies were fed in a practical way into our American educational system—public and private. In the secular educational systems or the world the philosophers operated to alter the thinking in all of the sciences. Through the far reaching influence of great divinity schools and seminaries, the liberal theologians restructured religion.

While over the last 150 years there have been many persons involved in spreading such thinking as previously noted, it was John Dewey (1859-1952) more than any other person, who accomplished getting these pernicious doctrines into higher education and thereby into the main stream American life.

John Dewey, a major figure in American intellectual history, is considered to be one of the few Americans of the twentieth century who ". . . can be acknowledged on a world scale as a spokesman for mankind" (Dykhuisen, 1973, p. xv).

Dewey's areas of work included philosophy, psychology, education, politics, and social thought. At an event in celebration of his 90th birthday, in 1949, Dewey described his life goal as the quest to obtain "a moderately clear and distinct idea of what the problems are that underlie the difficulties and evils which we experience in fact; that is to say, in practical life." This concern with the practical, socially responsible life is a key element of the philosophical concept of pragmatism, which Dewey explicated in many of his writings. Dewey is also considered to be a preeminent voice in American educational philosophy, with emphasis on what is generally called "progressive education." Dewey was just beginning his work in the 1890s, but his lifetime of intellectual accomplishments (40 books and over 700 articles, in addition to countless letters, lectures, and other published works) continue to play an influential role in many fields of knowledge (Ecker).

Dewey was initially Hegelian in thought and approach, but was also greatly influenced by William James, who himself was influenced by Hegel, and is credited with popularizing the term "pragmatism".

For around 70 years, primarily through the auspices of Columbia University, John Dewey and his fellow workers (whom he taught and trained) indoctrinated their students. These students in turn became the teachers and administrators in the departments of education in the state universities. Then, they influenced the local school teachers of the public schools in every state in the Union. In time Dewey's pragmatism and socialism came to dominate the American educational system. Today, Dewey's views in their various and extended forms



along with many others of like persuasion continue to govern and permeate the educational philosophy and methodology of the educational system in the United States (Reese 163, 164, 282, 283, 211-215, 453, 128, 129).

## THE LIBERALS OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHURCH

The attitude and goals of the liberals in the church at present are no different from the liberals of a century ago, that finally evolved into the Christian Church denomination.

Earl West sites three causes for division in the church during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### (1) "The growing use of instrumental music."

...there were two attitudes toward the organ. One insisted that its use was a matter of expediency; the other insisted that it was a human innovation into a divine worship and, therefore, sinful. Between these two positions it was evident that there was no compromising or midway point, a fact that has always permanently stood in the way of reunion between the church of Christ and the Christian Church. Here, then, was the point of departure; the parting of the ways, the instrument giving the impetus to a division which neither the war, slavery, the Ferguson Fiasco, nor even the missionary society had done (West, 234).

### (2) "The trend toward denominationalism."

Regarding this view West pointed out: After the Civil War, a trend set in among many brethren to reduce the church to the status of another denomination. Some openly defended using the word denomination with reference to the churches of Christ. That there were Christians in all denominations now began to be openly advocated. The term, Disciples of Christ, was now elevated to the dignity of a denominational appellation, and the Disciples of Christ denomination, with its "reverends" and "pastors," a royal sect among sects, was now a reality. Some openly declared that a return to the New Testament Church was not desirable if it were practical, as did W. T. Moore, when he spoke before an Indiana Convention in Rushville. W. B. F. Treat openly laid the charge at the door of Isaac Erret of having as his supreme desire the making of the churches of Christ another denomination among denominations. Symptomatic of this trend was the attitude toward the "pious unimmersed," and the growing practice of union meetings with the denominations (West, 240).

West quoted some of David Lipscomb's remarks on the following topic.

### 3) "The silence of the Scriptures"

We do not think anyone has ever claimed authority from the Scriptures to use the organ in worship. They only claim it is not condemned. It is used as an assister of the worship. Its service is part of the worship and very frequently a substitute for a por-

tion of the worship. Our worship to God is regulated by the laws of God. We have no knowledge of what is well-pleasing to God, in worship, save as God has revealed it to us. The New Testament is at once the rule and limit of our faith and worship to God. This is the distinctive difference between us and other religious bodies. Others accept the New Testament as their rule of faith, but do not make it the limit of their faith. They add other things as articles of faith and acts of worship than those contained in the bible. We look for things authorized, they for things not prohibited. Our rule is safe—theirs is loose and latitudinarian. Ours confines us to God's appointments. Theirs opens the worship and service of God to whatever will please men. Our rule limits man's worship to the exercises approved of in the Bible (West, 241).

As far as the colleges operated by the brethren at the time were concerned, Earl West recorded the following:

As L. F. Bittle pointed out as early as 1873 in his letters to Jacob Creath, it had rather been the tendency of colleges to fall in line behind the popular sides of issues in the brotherhood. Colleges, as a general rule, will as a matter of policy pursue for a time a midway "safe" course until it is known which side will be the most popular, and then will jump with full force on that side. ... The reason is clear: colleges must have money to operate and if they get too unpopular, they will not have enough funds to run (West, 461).

The gospel preacher Benjamin Franklin commented on the state of affairs in the colleges of his day. In 1875 he wrote:

We did not and could not foresee that colleges could be made a power for evil as well as for good; that all depends upon whose hands they are in; that infidels could be made professors; that worldly-minded men could become professors; that men who are not sound in the faith, have not the love of the truth, could get control of colleges, and that they could be turned upon the Bible, and made engines to batter down the very thing they were intended to build up; that they could be turned against the very truth they were built up to maintain; ... We did not foresee, and could not, that men could get control of the colleges and vast sums of money, and conceive the idea that it is sectarian to be under the control of Christians and teach the Bible in those colleges; that a College of the Bible could be perverted from its purpose and turned away from it genuine friends ... we must open our eyes and see what has been done and what is being done (West, *Elder Ben Franklin*, 296).

The details are many and the list long that covers the forty or so years wherein liberalism penetrated and wrought its havoc in the church of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. But, for the most part the previously mentioned issues provided the catalysts for the digression that came forth

into its own as the Christian Church denomination.

The attitude of those who stayed with the pure unadulterated Gospel of Christ toward their aggressive brethren is well represented in the following comments from Texan T. R. Burnett. He wrote in his paper, *Burnett's Budget*:

This budget becomes more and more convinced every day that it will become necessary to establish churches of the apostolic order in every town in the state where the so-called "Christian Church" now holds sway. The lawless determination of the society and organ people to rule or ruin every church with which they have connection, and either put in the unscriptural things or put out the brethren who oppose them, makes this plainly evident. The loyal brethren need not waste any valuable time waiting for a reformation, for there is none in prospect. Ephraim is joined to his idols, and he would rather have his society and music idol than any kind of Christian union known to the Bible. Brethren, proceed to re-establish the ancient order of things, just as if there was never a church of Christ in your town. Gather all the brethren together who love Bible order better than modern fads and foolishness, and start the work and worship of the church in the old apostolic way... It is better to have one dozen true disciples in a cheap house, than a thousand apostate pretenders in a palace who love modern innovations better than Bible truth... (West, 437).

### LIBERALISM AND THE LORD'S CHURCH TODAY

We now want to turn our attention to the general history of liberalism as it has come down to the present day church of Christ. Please notice that liberalism always presents itself as fresh, new, relevant, up-to-date, and modern. It purports to breathe fresh and invigorating oxygen into those who have been hindered and stifled by old, tired, and outdated traditions. However, the truth about liberalism we have already seen—it came and comes from Satan and it contradicts or in some way or another alters God's Word in that it allows liberties to people that God does not allow them. Thus, liberalism, regardless of how it presents itself, is nothing more or less than a reversion to rebellion against God—a rebellion that is as old as Satan's own rebellion against Him.

### WARNINGS ABOUT LIBERALISM FROM FORTY YEARS AGO

In commending Ira Y. Rice Junior's first volume of *Axe on the Root*, the late Guy N. Woods wrote to Rice on Nov. 3, 1966. In his letter he revealed how disturbed he was at the inroads liberalism was making in the church of Christ. In part Woods wrote:

...I have been warning of the things of which you write for quite some time, in pulpit and press, and on open forums, and only lately have the brethren generally become alerted to the threat of the pseudo-intellectuals among us. If our brethren do not speedily get back to the principles of the

Restoration era, we are destined, IN OUR DAY, to experience the most massive split the churches of Christ have known. ...

Later in commending Rice's book at the Freed-Hardeman College Lectures (probably the 1967 lectures—DPB) during the Open Forum that Woods conducted, he said concerning Rice, "He is saying things there (in *Axe on the Root*—DPB) that ought to be said; and that everybody ought to know about. And if we don't recognize it and do something about it, the cause we love and the Lord's work, as we know it, will not exist in the next generation. ..." (Rice, 79, 80)

Some four years later the late Thomas B. Warren in his Introduction to the 1970 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book, *The Church Faces Liberalism*, made clear his great and grave concern for the Lord's church regarding liberalism. Warren wrote:

During most of the fifties and the early sixties, God's people were involved in controversy: (1) as to whether the Scriptures authorized one church to assist another church in the preaching of the gospel, and (2) as to whether a church has the right to render benevolent assistance to non-Christians. The negative position relative to such issues has been referred to as "anti-ism." ...

However, since it seems that an erroneous extreme will usually beget another erroneous extreme, it is not surprising that, as a reaction to "anti-ism" (extreme, erroneous "conservatism"), there should arise those who espouse erroneous views at the opposite end of the pole from "anti-ism." Such an opposite error has arisen, and we rightly refer to such error as "liberalism." Under the influence of various materialistic, naturalistic, and hedonistic philosophies, men in many parts of the world are rejecting the view that God exists, that the Bible is his inspired and authoritative revelation to man, and that Jesus Christ is his Son.

Along with the rejection of these views goes the rejection of such basic Christian propositions as: truth is objective and absolute, man can attain to at least some religious knowledge.

The existence of such liberalistic views is disturbing even when such views are held only by those out of the church. It is much more disturbing when some of these views are espoused and propagated by some who at least profess to be followers of Christ. While I personally do not know of any members of the church who reject belief in the existence of God, there are some in the church who are holding views which definitely are in conflict with plain Bible teaching. For example, some hold the view that denominationalists should be recognized as Christians and preachers of the gospel of Christ. Some hold to the view that truth is relative and subjective, *not* absolute and objective. Others hold that even though truth is absolute, man cannot learn

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

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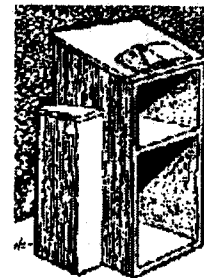
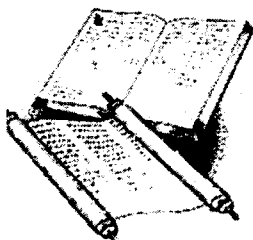
September 28, 29, 30, October 1, 2006

*The Church at a Crossroads*

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**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28**

- 7:00 – *A History of Apostasy from the Time of the Restoration Movement Until the Present Day*.....**Dub McClish**  
 8:00 – *The False Doctrine of Reaffirmation of Elders* .....**David P. Brown**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29**

9:00 – 12:00 – *Open Forum—Subjects to be discussed – Dave Miller, Apologetics Press, The Gospel Journal board, and the current political network in the church. Four men were invited to participate in this forum – Dub McClish, Dave Watson, Curtis Cates, and Dave Miller. Dave Miller and Curtis Cates have refused to participate. The elders in their great attempt to be fair to all and to have a forum allowing equal time and equal access to all issues and questions will not be deterred by the refusal of Dave Miller and Curtis Cates to participate.*

**LUNCH\***

- 1:00 – *Are Those Opposed to the Current Apostasy to be Correctly Labeled “Anti” Because of Their Opposition to it?*.....**Dave Watson**  
 2:00 – *The Effect of Liberalism on the Home*.....**Ed Casteel**  
 6:30 – **SINGING**  
 7:00 – *Does God Join Two People in Marriage Only If They Intend to Remain Married?*.....**Kent Bailey**  
 8:00 – *Re-thinking Christian Education and Preacher Training Institutions Beyond the Acknowledgement of Their Scriptural Right to Exist*.....**Robin Haley**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30**

- 9:00 – *Is the Church of Christ Disaster Relief Agency Scriptural?*.....**James Cossey**  
 10:00 – *Can a Christian Clearly Acknowledge That an Individual is a False Teacher (Teaches Fatal False Doctrine) and at the Same Time Extend Full Fellowship to Him?*.....**Danny Douglas**  
 11:00 – *Christians Must Not Let Current Problems, Isolation, Criticism, and Pressure Discourage Them or Diminish Their Zeal for God*.....**Johnny Burkhart**

**LUNCH\***

- 1:00 – *Can Support of Big Works and Big Schools Lead to the De-emphasis and Relegation of the Importance of the Local Church?*.....**Richard Guill**  
 2:00 – *Using Church Discipline as a Weapon Against One’s Enemies*.....**Dennis Sargent**  
 6:30 – **SINGING**  
 7:00 – *If a Husband and Wife Obtain a Divorce for a Reason Other Than Fornication (on Trivial Grounds), Does the Marriage Bond Still Exist?*.....**Gilbert Gough**  
 8:00 – *The Adverse Effects of Church Politics on the Church*.....**Taylor Hagood**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1**

- 9:00 – *How Can We Save Our Young People?*.....**James Grayson**  
 10:00 – *The Grave Danger of the Moslem Religion*.....**Jay Yeager**  
 11:00 – *The Church at a Crossroads*.....**Rusty Stark**

**LUNCH\***

- 6:00 – *Never Losing Sight of the Importance of Seeking and Saving the Lost*.....**Jay Yeager**

**Lectureship Contacts:** Ed Rose (740) 264-7439 Raymond Hagood (740) 264-6218

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it. These and other anti-Biblical views are currently being espoused and propagated.

Contrary to such contention as just noted, the Bible *is* the criterion of loyalty to Christ. It is *not* the criterion of loyalty to a mere *party*. The fact that men hold differing views as to what the Bible teaches does not detract at all from the fact that testing one's attitudes, beliefs and practices by the light of Bible teaching is the *only* way one can *know* he is loyal to Christ.

The fact that men do differ as to what the Bible teaches does not alter the fact that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, complete, and final revelation of God to man, that the Bible does not contradict itself, and that one must obey Bible teaching in order to be saved.... (Warren, Introduction)

From the liberal camp, and very happy to make the following report of the influence of liberalism in the church of Christ, the late W. Carl Ketcherside, without realizing it, helped corroborate the warnings of Woods and Warren regarding the inroads of liberalism in the church. In 1969 Ketcherside wrote:

A front-rank man in the Bible department at Abilene Christian College recently said that if the instrument was being introduced now, the brethren who oppose it would look at it a long time before they would divide over it. This is a clear-cut admission that the division has cultural overtones and it is now time for the Bible department at Abilene to take a second look at its role in condoning and continuing a division which was sinful in the first place.

A ranking professor at another college told one of his good friends, who is also a good friend of mine (but secretly for fear of the Jews), "Carl is right about fellowship and has been all along, and if he had come up in the right group, he would be headlining every lecture-ship program in the brotherhood." In the face of such an admission I'm not sure it is much of an honor to speak at a lectureship, and I am very grateful to God that I did not "come up in the right group." (Ketcherside, 166).

During the 1970 Pepperdine University Lectures (of all places) the late Glenn L. Wallace (the brother of the late G. K. Wallace) delivered a sermon entitled "The New Face Of The Church." Later Wallace published his sermon in tract form. In that sermon he warned of the growth of liberalism in the Lord's church. As proof of liberalism's inroads into the church via the schools of higher education operated by some of the brethren, Wallace quoted from two speakers in the 1966 Abilene Christian College Lectures. Don H. McGaughey said: "We must not lapse again into the error of putting the Bible ahead of Christ" ("Revelation in Jesus Christ—An Apologetic for Today," *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1962), p. 250). And, from his 1966 lecture, "The Authority of the Bible," p. 14 Ray F. Chester stated "Our religion is not a religion of the book" (Wallace, 3). This sounds as if Ketcherside was on target as to the sentiments of

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8:00 pm *We Can Know That We Know God (2:3-6)*  
Danny Douglas

#### Saturday

9:00 am *Our Advocate With The Father (2:1-2)*  
Lynn Parker

10:00 am *Love Not The World (2:15-17)*  
Paul Vaughn

11:00 am "Sinneth Not" and "Doeth No Sin" (3:6-9)  
Lester Kamp

1:00 pm *Love The Brethren (3:13-18)*  
Michael Hatcher

2:00 pm *False Prophets (4:1-3)*  
David Watson

#### Sunday

9:30 am *Faith Is The Victory (5:4-5)*  
Jon McCormack

10:30 am *Confidence in Christ (5:13-15)*  
Dub McClish

1:15 pm *Summary Of 1st John*  
Russ Hopwood

2:15 pm *Lessons From The Life Of John*  
Bruce Stulting

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some at that time that were connected with the old ACC.

Wallace also quoted from a January 1967 article by Leroy Garrett (the long time protégé of Ketcherside) in Garrett's paper, *Restoration Review*. Garrett was reporting on a meeting of the now long defunct Campus Evangelism organization (that later resurfaced in a new form known as "Crossroadism" that eventually evolved into "The Boston Church" and, we think, finally into "The International Church of Christ"). Garrett wrote:

More than 300 church of Christ young people were there and my immediate impression was that I was beholding the *New Face Of The Church of Christ*. The old church of Christ orthodoxy is dying—a new brotherhood is emerging. The daring young princes among us have crossed their Rubicon—they have set their face toward Antioch rather than Jerusalem (Garrett as quoted by Wallace, 2)

As did Ketcherside, so did Garrett and the speakers at the ACC lectures quoted by Glenn Wallace—each one helped corroborate the warnings of Rice, Woods, and Warren.

Remember, Wood's comments preceded Wallace and Warren's by about four years. And, the first volume of *Axe on the Root* appeared in 1966. Thus, it has been about forty years at this writing since the first major efforts were begun in an attempt to warn brethren of the inroads liberals were making in the church—and, yes, those liberal efforts were primarily coming from certain ones in the colleges operated by the brethren. The rank liberals of forty years ago knew exactly what they were doing and recognized their accomplishments among the college students of that day—they knew where they were heading and how to get there. Further, many members of the Lord's church were blind to what was happening and attacked any criticism of the colleges operated by certain brethren. However, as we have seen, there were men who did see what was happening. As voices in the wilderness of willful ignorance most of their warnings fell on deaf ears—so it is to this very hour. For those who lived through this part of the history of the Lord's church, Woods, Wallace and Warren's words are almost prophetic concerning the terrible destruction liberalism has wrought in the Lord's church from the time these men gave their warning to the present.

The generation of forty years ago does not control the church today. Those "young princes" of whom Leroy Garrett wrote in the late 1960's are in their 50's and 60' today. They are elders, deacons, Bible school teachers, preachers, editors, writers, Preacher training school directors/teachers, and university men and women in today's church. Many of them have no qualms in fellowshiping the denominations and propagating the error that the church of Christ is a denomination or worse.

Church after church continues to succumb to the siren call of the loose living that liberalism offers. And the universities operated by the brethren are either under the complete control of the liberals or headed that way. If the situation regarding liberalism in the church was bad when Rice, Woods, Wallace and Warren wrote, warning the brethren of liberalism forty years ago—and it was—then it is ten times worse to-

day. Therefore, we have the need for our present study.

Because error is so rampant and diverse in today's church one would necessarily be forced to develop this study into a rather large book rather than the chapter it comprises. However we shall briefly note some of the significant changes subjectivism and the "better felt than told" mentality has done to the church of Christ.

We will attempt to explain the New Hermeneutic in common ordinary words and not the theological jargon belched out by the scholastic deadheads produced by the seminaries and divinity schools. The New Hermeneutic does not approach the study of the Scriptures through rules of interpretation. It exists as a result of men believing that truth is relative and subjective. It is more of a "catch-term" to be used in opposition to the true principles of hermeneutics that include: direct statements, example and implication as well as the other principles of Bible interpretation as found in such books as Duncan's book on Hermeneutics. Actually, the only rule in the New Hermeneutic is that each person should be free to interpret the Bible according to his/her own insights. This view sounds good on the surface, because we all should be free to study the Bible for ourselves. However, what the liberal means by being free to interpret the Bible for one's self is basically the application of the old erroneous denominational view that it does not make any difference what one believes as long as one is sincere in the belief of it. That view has been taken and applied to the study of the Bible. It comes out something like this, "It does not make any difference what you think the Bible teaches, just so you sincerely believe the Bible teaches it." This subjectivism is the direct consequence of denying the absolute objective nature of truth in general and Gospel Truth in particular.

According to this false doctrine, the Bible is some sort of "love letter." As Leroy Garrett wrote of the Bible's authority:

We cannot equate the authority of the Bible with the authority of God as we can the authority of Christ and God, for the Bible is an earthen vessel. God is perfect, infallible, and infinite. The Bible as a human product is not....If the Bible was brought to us by

(Continued on page 15)

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Theme:

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7**

9:00 AM: Doyle Partin—*The Biblical Account Of Creation*

10:00 AM: Terry York—*Biblical Distinctions Between Male And Female*

11:00 AM: David B. Smith—*The Incarnation Of The Person Of Christ*

12:00 PM: **LUNCH PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF LENOIR CITY CHURCH.**

1:30 PM: David P. Brown—*The Eternal Kingdom*

2:30 PM: Gary Grizzell—*The Plenary Verbal Inspiration Of The Bible*

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 8**

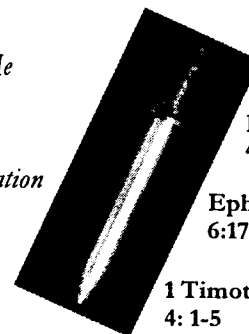
9:30 AM: Brad Green—*None Of These Things Move Me*

10:30 AM: David P. Brown—*The Providence Of God*

6:00 PM: Kent Bailey—*The Biblical Doctrine Of Reconciliation*



Psalms 119:103-106



Hebrews  
4:12

Ephesians  
6:17

1 Timothy  
4: 1-5

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an angel directly from heaven, having been dictated word-for-word by God himself, so that its contents would be nothing less and nothing more than the actual words of God, then we could equate the authority of the Bible and the authority of God. But the Bible is clearly not that kind of book (Garrett, 43).

To these people all the Bible does is make known to mankind that God loves the human race; that one is a sinner in some way or another and, therefore, separated from God. But, Christ loved you as a sinner and died for you. Therefore, if you will mentally affirm that you understand the previously mentioned matters, and acknowledge to God your need of salvation, Christ will save you. That is the "Core Gospel." Once a person does as previously described your "ticket to heaven is punched" and the grace of God will take you to glory. Furthermore, this "Core gospel" is the basis for fellowship. Thus, since about any denominationalist believes what I have previously described as the "Core Gospel" we may fellowship anyone who calls Christ his Savior and God his Father.

To such people speaking of the Bible as an absolute objective standard of Truth is absurd. To declare that it must be approached and interpreted accordingly is to be legalistic and judgmental; it is nothing more or less than one seeking to merit heaven. Thus, one is a legalist; "a commandment keeper," who does not trust in God's grace to save him/her; it is a sectarian in spirit, that is unloving, unkind, and mean spirited; who labels others and is harsh in his labeling of them. *Does anyone not see the inconsistencies and hypocrisy in the mindset that would think and say the things about their brethren as noted in the previous sentence?*

The New Testament is not a divine pattern or blueprint. With this attitude towards the Bible in gear and at full throttle, anything goes. From this "highly enlightened perspective" mechanical instrumental music in worship, humming, sounding like a mechanical instrument of music with one's voice, whistling, clapping, about any kind of racket, and so on are not a problem. Praise teams (minnie choirs) are brought in and the worship becomes a three ring circus. The Lord's Supper may be taken at any time—weddings, funerals—whenever the urge to do it strikes you. Baby dedication in the worship period appears. "Contemporary worship" assemblies are in vogue. All of life is worship and the worship assembly is divided. Entertainment takes the place of worship and dramatics have replaced the preaching of the Truth of the Gospel. The authority of the elders is challenged. The five steps in God's plan of salvation are mocked and repudiated. The mode, the need and the reason for baptism, or whether one is baptized or not, are unimportant. The teaching of the Bible regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage is compromised and some churches are thereby happy to fellowship fornicators (Matt. 5:32; 19:6, 9) Women are made deaconesses and put into positions in the church where only men are to exercise dominion. Repentance is simply saying you are sorry. Denominationalism is neither here nor there as far as right and wrong are concerned and on and on we could go citing the different cases of sin being accepted in the church. And, the church of Christ is con-

sidered just another denomination—and a poor one at that.

Anything goes as long as one believes in the "core gospel." Every thing is subjective and emotional. Holiness and spirituality are turned into "nickels, numbers, and noise" to the glory of God. The people sit down to eat, drink, and rise up to play—all the time loving to have it so. Thus, we see the new face of the Postmodern church. And, God looks down from heaven as the faithful wonder at the longsuffering of God. The aforementioned activities are the result of the postmodern doctrine on the church—but what is Postmodernism?

## POSTMODERNISM

What has invaded the minds of some members of the church of Christ that they would think as just described? We will attempt to answer the preceding question. In doing so, we must first realize the difference in postmodernism and modernism. And we must know the connection between modern and postmodern theology. Then we must see how the Lord's church has been and is being impacted by these false ideas.

In informing us about such matters J. E. Choate wrote:

The best way to attach a handle to *postmodern theology* is to use the common classifications of history over the past 2,000 years. We have in mind the passage of time from the *Ancient* period to the *Middle Ages* and to the *Renaissance*. We move next from the *Modern* to the *Postmodern* period which is our own time. These two time references include and transcend all particular human events which show the flow and inter-connections of the ages in transition. Neither age was necessarily a denial or despair of one age giving way to another.

*Ancient theology:* The development of historical theology dates from the last century to 590 A.D. This general period embraces the apostolic period recorded in the writings of the apostolic fathers through Augustine (4th century).

*Medieval theology:* The medieval period lasted from 590 to 1517 to the beginning of the Reformation. The Renaissance and the Reformation periods were propelled from the vortex of 1000 years of what is sometimes called the "Dark Ages."

*Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation:* This period set up a transition epoch from the end of the Middle Ages to the beginning of the modern period. The *Renaissance* witnessed the emergence of Protestant theology, the emergence of national states and capitalism, the age of discovery, the scientific revolution, and numerous other monumental events.

*Modern theology:* The roots of modern theology are traced back to the 18th century Age of Reason, and to Immanuel Kant, who maintained that man could only know God through reason. It is a long way from Thomas Aquinas to Immanuel Kant, and eventually to Rudolf Bultmann who embodied the spirit of neo-orthodoxy. The roots of Modernism are

supernatural and the inspiration of Scripture, and relies solely on the scientific apparatus.

Many varied forms of modern theology have evolved from the "Old Modernism" which dominated the theological scene in 1900. The old modernism was a syncretism of the late 19th century documentary hypothesis of the Mosaic law, form and source criticism of the New Testament, and which embraced the evolutionary hypothesis. This syncretism took the shape of the Social Gospel which dominated the modern theological scene until the horrors of World War I.

This brings us to 1919 to the birth of *neo-orthodoxy* (also called dialectical theology) where "God talk" and man's theological "human talk" sought common ground for the "divine-I-thou encounter" with God. Bultmann said Scripture is encrusted with millenniums of myth and folk stories. Tillich reduced God to a philosophical "ultimate ground of being."

### **Terminology of Postmodernism as Distinguished from Modernism**

*Postmodern theology:* This movement has not discarded the baggage of modern theology identified in the minds of most students with the theological systems of Barth et al. Their influence as leading spokesman of neo-orthodoxy was buried under the avalanche of the charismatics and "death of God" theologians in the 1960s and 1970s.

Our liberal brethren are now introducing theological expressions into churches of Christ as if they were their own brain children. Nowhere is this more evident than in college lectureships and the Christian Scholars Conference. These new terms, their meaning, and uses are hidden deeply in the dark recesses of postmodern theology. It is imperative that we understand their sources and meanings in order to learn what liberal brethren are not inclined to tell us.

*Paradigms and parameters:* Two of the words most often bandied back and forth are *paradigm* and *parameter*. Thomas Kuhn (1970) introduced the word *paradigm* into the scientific community. A paradigm is a working model of something. A parameter is an unstable circumference around something which keeps shifting.

Kuhn used the working models (paradigms) of Ptolemaic astronomy and Copernican astronomy to show the shifts which take place with the discovery of new knowledge. Each of these paradigms worked as well as the other because each showed the fixed positions of the heavenly bodies to the earth. The first was just a model. The second model showed how the universe actually works. The Copernican model, in turn, gave way to Newtonian astronomy.

Kuhn meant to show that paradigms shift with the discovery of new knowledge. Kuhn's paradigm (model) concept also found

a common acceptance and use in politics, philosophy, theology, and literary criticism. Our liberal brethren should not think us to be so ill informed that we are groping in the darkness of ignorance on these matters.

They tell us of the urgent need for the old hermeneutic (paradigm) to be replaced by a new hermeneutic (model). They tell us the churches of Christ are now in a paradigm shift moving from an outmoded, obsolete old hermeneutic to a fresh and viable form of a new hermeneutic, but never explained.

*Deconstructionism* is another new term about which little is known outside the colleges. The old modernism is dying though its strength is not completely spent. Postmodernism poses even greater dangers because the theology repudiates and undermines all notions of coherent and unitary truth in the Bible.

The philosophy of Jacques Derrida is little known outside academic circles, and not favorably there. His philosophy of ideas is known as poststructuralism or deconstructionism. He maintains that the meaning of language is hidden and elusive. Radical postmodernism says nothing can be known for certain and best to steer clear of all ultimate truth claims. Derrida's suspicion of all literary texts, including the Bible, is an affront to man's intelligence.

The two prime examples of the content of postmodern theology are Elizabeth Fiorenzo-Schussler's theology of the women's liberation movement which calls for a complete radical "deconstruction" of what she terms to be the *androcentric*, or male dominance of the biblical message. And the second example of "deconstructionism" is to be found in the work of the Jesus Seminar best represented by the writings of John Dominic Crossan, and especially in his treatment of the life and crucifixion of Jesus.

### **Summary**

The theme of deconstruction as advanced by our brethren is more or less hidden from the uninitiated. Some of their "destructive" tactics come out in their most publicized writings, e. g., *The Second Incarnation*, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, and *Will the Cycle Be Unbroken*, authored by Rubel Shelly, Carroll Osburn, and Douglas Foster. We think that our liberal brethren will be given cause to regret that they have opened up on these matters (Choate, 10-12).

To the Postmodernist there is no objective reality and therefore, no absolute objective truth. Thus, there is no infallible standard of authority. Truth becomes whatever one desires it to be and each person's own conception of God is what God is to him or her. Language is incapable of expressing anything so that anyone can truly know the mind of the author—that is, except the Postmodernist author. There is no objective right or wrong. Subjectivism reigns supreme and absurdity dominates the masses. Thinking



is no less or more than one's lusts, appetites, or emotions. Truly, their God is their belly (Rom. 16:18; Phil. 3:19).

## AT ALL COSTS WE MUST HOLD TO THE TRUTH

No matter the "ism" troubling the church—our job is to hold to the Truth of God's Word. No matter how many succumb to the enticements of whatever the sin—our task is to hold to the Truth. No matter what names we are called, or jobs we must lose because we will not compromise the Truth, or family and friends leave us, or governments persecute us—our work is to keep on doing good as the Bible defines the word "good". The inspired apostle Paul calls on all of us to **"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"** (1 Cor. 16:13; Also 15:58; Rev. 2:10; Jude 3). "This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong."

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21**

- 9:30 – 10:00 a.m. – *REGISTRATION & COFFEE*
- 10:00 a.m.: **THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT (EPHESIANS 1:13) (PART ONE)**.....Gary L. Grizzell
- 10:45 a.m. – *BREAK WITH COFFEE, TEA, & BISCUITS*
- 11:15 a.m. **DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTLY STRENGTHEN THE CHRISTIAN'S MIND TODAY? (PART ONE)**.....Kent Bailey
- 12:00 p.m. – 1:15 *LUNCH & FELLOWSHIP WITH A FINGER BUFFET, TEA, COFFEE, & FRUIT*
- 1:15 p.m.: **THE SPIRIT IN FOLKLORE, PAGANISM AND EARLY WORLD HISTORY (ROMANS 1:21-23) (PART ONE)**.....Keith Sisman
- 2:00 p.m. – *TEN MINUTE BREAK*
- 2:10 p.m.: **HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELL CHRISTIANS TODAY? (PART ONE)**.....David P. Brown
- 3:00 p.m. – *BREAK WITH COFFEE, TEA, & BISCUITS*
- 3:20 p.m.: **OPEN FORUM**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22**

- 9:30 – 10:00 a.m. – *REGISTRATION & COFFEE*
- 10:00 a.m.: **THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT (EPHESIANS 1:13) (PART TWO)**.....Gary L. Grizzell
- 10:45 a.m. – *BREAK WITH COFFEE, TEA, & BISCUITS PRIOR TO WORSHIP*
- 11:00 a.m.: **WORSHIP**
- 11:30 a.m.: **DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTLY STRENGTHEN THE CHRISTIAN'S MIND TODAY? (PART TWO)**.....Kent Bailey
- 12:15 – 1:15 p.m. – *LUNCH & FELLOWSHIP: FINGER BUFFET, TEA, COFFEE, & FRUIT*
- 1:15 p.m.: **THE SPIRIT IN FOLKLORE, PAGANISM AND EARLY WORLD HISTORY (ROMANS 1:21-23) (PART TWO)**.....Keith Sisman
- 2:00 p.m. – *TEN MINUTE BREAK*
- 2:10 p.m.: **HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELL THE CHRISTIAN TODAY? (PART 2)**.....David P. Brown
- 3:00 p.m. – *BREAK WITH COFFEE, TEA, & BISCUITS*
- 3:20 p.m.: **OPEN FORUM**

**Is The Christian Church**  
**Denomination(s)**  
**From Heaven Or From Men?**

**Robin W. Haley**

This appears to be an odd title, no doubt. However, I have a very good reason for so referring to these groups. That reason is that there are several groups who once were closely related, and have gone separate ways...at least regarding their communion with each other. Yet, they are still very closely related in that they exist without divine authority, and can easily be identified among those “plants” which the Heavenly Father shall root up (Matt. 15.13). These are the Christian Churches, also called the Conservative Christian Churches, the Disciples of Christ, and the Independent Christian Churches.

There are a multitude of differences between those denominations and the Lord’s church, the church of Christ. Now, for those who may read this and conclude, “Well, I *am* a member of the Church of Christ...the *Instrumental* Church of Christ,” I can only say, please read further, as I intend to show how such a thing called “the Instrument Church of Christ” cannot/does not exist with divine authority. It is the essence of denominationalism to speak of the “Instrumental Church of Christ.” It is an extremely unbiblical designation, and is comparable to speaking of the “Islamic Church of Christ,” the “Methodist Church of Christ,” the “Atheistic Church of Christ,” etc. Where in all of God’s Word do we find “brands,” “strains,” or “branches” of the Lord’s church? There is no such thing! Some “Christian Churches” and “Disciples of Christ Churches” accept into their fellowship nearly anyone who claims to be a “Christian.” Those within the ranks of these denominations are not nor have they been born again (John 3:5), to be washed of water with the Word (Eph.5:26), to be obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). Think on this: *one cannot be taught wrongly and baptized correctly!*

The following material was derived from three main sources: my own experience as a former member, interviews with pastors, elders, and members from the Christian Church denominations, and pamphlets and other materials published by “The Division of Christian Education, National Council of Christian Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.” and other Christian Church/United Churches of Christ/Independent Christian Churches in America and Canada.

Generally, most people are ignorant of the vast differences between the New Testament church, and the denominations called “First Christian Church,” “Independent Christian Church,” “Conservative Christian Church” and “Disciples of Christ.” Most people conclude that “the only difference is the music.” Friend, the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is but a small symptom of the real, underlying problems and differences between these groups and the Lord’s church. Since the use of mechanical instruments in worshipping God is not authorized, we see the real difference amounts to an attitude toward the authority of God’s word. There is no respect for the Word nor its authority within the religions of men, and this necessarily includes the so-called “Christian Churches” in their various flavors.

These three groups have their “roots” in what is called “The American Restoration Movement” which had its beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in this country. The church of Christ, however, has its beginning in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost after the

resurrection of Jesus Christ in the first century. That is quite a gap spread in time and place! *(Please be aware, I do not speak of the practice of restoring men and women to the Truth of God's word. "Restoration" is indeed an important, yes vital work of the church. But the church of Christ, about which we read in the Bible, is not a part of any mere movement of men. Neither does it require "restoring" seeing as it has existed for nearly two thousand years. The restoring of the souls of lost men and women back to the fellowship of God through His Christ is truly the "mission" of the Lord's church. This is why I write this treatise.)*

Is their name from Heaven or from men? The word "Christian" is never used in the Bible as an adjective, and certainly not as a description of the Lord's church. It is the divine name given to those who follow Christ. Just so, to speak of "the Christian Church" (of any kind) is to speak where God has not. It does not come from Heaven, but from men. Many of these denominations speak of "the universal Christian church" (borrowed from the Catholics). One will not find such a designation nor concept within the pages of their Bible. One of the more inane designations is found within some of the writings of this denomination. It was written by one of their scholars: "we are a part of the Universal Christian Church; the Disciples of Christ is a body within the Church Universal." That would amount to Christ's body being within His body. Nonsense!

As we noted at the beginning, these groups had their beginning in what was known as the Restoration Movement. Many of these groups proudly note such things as: "we were born and founded on American soil. We began in 1804...." Friends, the various forms of the Christian Church denominations is not from Heaven, but from men from this country from a mere 200 years ago. The Lord's church, the church of Christ, is nearly 2,000 years old!

Is their organization from Heaven or men? By their own writing and practice, one can find that they "elect a board of deacons, deaconesses, and elders. The preacher is many times the Pastor." They will then "send representatives to the regional and general assemblies." Now where do we find such in the Bible? We cannot.

Is their mission from Heaven or from men? Again they will confess "we believe very much in ecumenism. We desire to bring Christians together through national and world councils of churches and consultations on church union." They preach and practice a social gospel. Some have subscribed to a "focus on worship, beliefs, action, education, campaigns, and correction of social disease... and to fight disease, ignorance, poverty, racism, war, oppression with self-help and development programs." One will not find these in the Bible as the church's mission. When they say "the Christian Church needs you to participate in telling others about salvation," they fall woefully short. How will they accomplish this when it is clear that they do not hold to the name, organization, mission, nor worship practices of the New Testament church? The Christian Church denominations are extremely subjective and contradictory, not only to the Bible, but also among themselves and their various branches, whether claiming to be Independent, Conservative, or Instrumental.

As we have said, many conclude that the only difference between these Christian Church denominations and the church of Christ is the use of the instrument in worship to God. But there is another difference that ought to smack us right between the eyes. That is the question of "What must one know before he can be baptized scripturally?" The answer is simple. One must know and understand the Gospel. By this I do not mean the entirety of New Testament doctrine, but that which was preached to those who were baptized in the first century. Obviously, we look to the book of Acts. IF one can be taught all manner of additional things (other than what we find in the conversion accounts), then the Lord, the apostles, and other

NT preachers erred in not including the various doctrines that men have added and expect people to believe and practice... all the while claiming to baptize unto remission of sins. It is either one way or the other. Do we believe and practice what we find in the Book, or what others simply claim? The honest and good hearted readers know the answer (Luke 8:15).

Some claim to teach the "plan of salvation" but whose plan? It may sound exactly like it came from the book, but when all is said and done, is that person a member of the Lord's church, or the church wherein he was being instructed? What do the teachers of this perverse "gospel" think? Do they think "Ah, this person is now a member of the church of Christ"? Or do they think "Good, this person is now ONE OF US, a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church"? (You fill in the blank.) One is either a member of a denomination, or they have obeyed the truth. We cannot have it both ways. To come FROM something into the TRUTH, there must be a change, and conversion. What does it take to be converted? When one answers this, they have answered the question at hand.

We have dealt with many, many people over the years who have struggled over their "baptism" and have found it a very simple matter to show them what the Truth teaches. Most have responded biblically, some have not, choosing rather to go with what they were taught or felt rather than thus saith the Lord. An important question is: "Is it possible that a person can hear that they need to be believe, repent, confess and be baptized to be saved, obey it and yet **not be converted** because it was taught in a denominational setting?" Short answer: yes, they will not be converted to the Lord by this manner. The setting is immaterial. One cannot be taught error and be obedient to the Lord by responding to that error. What are they believing? That there is one church, one way to worship. What are they confessing? Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God? No, but answering 80 questions, adhering to a code, doctrine, manual, discipline, catechism, unity in diversity, "we're just like them only different", or some other doctrine of men like the Mormons, the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses", Christian Churches, Primitive Baptists, and others teach. The unconverted denominational teacher/preacher has no authority to teach the word of God. They can mouth the words, but still be teaching lies. Consider: **"But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, And that thou hast taken my covenant in thy mouth, Seeing thou hatest instruction, And castest my words behind thee? When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him, And hast been partaker with adulterers. THOU GIVEST THEM MOUTH TO EVIL, AND THY TOUNGUE FRAMETH DECEIT"** (Psa.50:16-19). God said that to take His statutes and covenant into the mouth of the unconverted (wicked) is the same as to frame deceit. The devil uses God's words...but they are perverted coming from his mouth.

Another question: If a person submits to a baptism alleging

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that it is “unto remission of sins,” (which some denominations teach) is he an erring brother or an unconverted sinner? Short answer: unconverted sinner. One cannot be taught error and obey the Lord. What baptism is it? How many baptisms are there? The Bible teaches that there is but one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). Can one be new, walk in newness of life, be in Christ where old things are passed away, new things are come, born again, born of the Spirit, and at THE VERY MOMENT they are put into the water where the Lord will do His part and make him a part of HIS church, also make him an erring brother? What did the Lord make of this person at that moment? Did He make him a saint or erring brother? Did He save him or condemn him at that moment? Can we truly conclude that God has a hand in such folly? God forbid! What must one know to become a Christian? Simple answer: Acts 8:12. We find four things: 1-good news—this is the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor.15:1-4). 2-kingdom—this is the church, one church, the church that belongs to Christ, not men (Colossians 1:13). 3-name of Christ-

-Christian, not Baptist, Mormon, Jehovah witness, nor what one claims is a “christian” from “Christian Church denomination.” 4-baptism--plan of salvation. Anything more, less, or other than this does not result in what God demands regardless of what men claim. It is the Lord’s way or no way. Simple.

Are the Christian Church denominations from Heaven or from men. In this article we have only touched the hem of the garment. But this ought to be enough to at least get us to look more closely at those who “claim” to be the church of Christ with a different name, doctrine, practice, mission, and plan for men’s souls. A lamp is either on or off; it is either night or day; one is either a Christian, a member of the church of Christ as that term is defined and used in the New Testament, or one is not.

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## Are You Sidetracked?

Gary L. Grizzell

It is the mission of the Lord’s church to seek and save the lost. When Jesus was physically upon the earth, He stated that His purpose was to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus is not physically here on the face of the earth as He once was (as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). However, He is now sitting at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, He is still seeking and saving the lost today, but He is doing it through His spiritual body, the church (Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:19-20; Col. 1:18). He does this by gospel preaching, which preaching He accomplishes through His body, the church.\* Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the church at Ephesus:

**To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).**

The gospel is that power which saves (Rom. 1:16-17). There is no other message which can save man from his sins. It is this mission and work on which we as the true church of the Lord must focus and perform to the best of our ability as the true church of the Lord.

The dictionary says the verb, “sidetrack,” means: “...To divert from a main issue or course... To delay or block the progress of deliberately... To switch from a main railroad track to a siding...wander from a direct or straight course.<sup>1</sup> When used as a noun, “sidetrack,” refers to: “a short stretch of railroad track used to store rolling stock or enable trains on the same line to pass...”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps many of us have passed a motionless train yard and witnessed numerous trains simply sitting on short stretches of railroad tracks. These cargo cars have intentionally been diverted from the main track. Perhaps in this aforementioned case the diverting, switching and sidetracking was for a good purpose. However, in spiritual matters when the church of Christ is diverted, delayed, blocked, switched or wanders from the straight course of her divinely given mission, it means certain disaster. Simply stated, it spells a head on collision with the loss of souls. Such switching of tracks means disobedience to God’s will and eternal ruin of souls.

Here’s the good news: The Bible teaches us that we need not be ignorant of the devices of Satan (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan’s purpose on earth is to beguile and lead as many souls away from God as possible. He already has the category of the hell bound under his wicked control, thus, he desires to (if possible) destroy even the very elect of God (see the principle in Matt. 24:24). He desires and will try to sift you as wheat! Jesus said to Peter, “**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat**” (Luke 22:31). What does “**that he may sift you as wheat**” mean? It means not to separate the chaff from the wheat, but to make them look like all chaff, by covering the wheat of grace with the chaff of sin and corruption; or to destroy the wheat, ...; or to toss them to and fro as wheat is in a sieve; that is, to afflict and distress them; (see Amos 9:9) by scattering them both from Christ, and one another; by filling them with doubts about Jesus being the Messiah and Redeemer: and by frightening them with the fears of enemies and of death, which end he obtained; (see Matthew 26:56; Luke 24:31; John 20:19).<sup>3</sup> desired to have — rather, “hath obtained you,” properly “asked and obtained”; alluding to Job (Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6), whom he solicited and obtained that he might sift him as wheat, insinuating as, “**the accuser of the brethren**” (Rev. 12:10), that he would find chaff enough in his religion, if indeed there was any wheat at all.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus’ statement after this warning to Peter indicated that He (Jesus) had prayed for Peter that his faith fail not. This reveals that the Lord did not want Peter to allow Satan to sidetrack him from his faithful following of the Lord. Likewise today, Jesus does not want us to allow Satan to divert (sidetrack) us in our faithful following of Him. The wonderful confidence the Lord has in us, that we can overcome Satan’s snares, is seen in Jesus’ instructing Peter to strengthen his brethren after his overcoming Satan’s attempts to destroy his faith. “**But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,**” said the Lord (v. 32). Today, you can be faithful, — Jesus has confidence in you just as He had confidence in Peter, else why was the incident carefully recorded for us to read?!

Since we know that the church must not be sidetracked from

the divinely given mission of seeking and saving the lost and we know we are aware of the tricks of the Devil, let us examine side tracks and diversions of Satan so we may avoid them. Have you parked your box car (your Christian life) in a side track?

### Side Track #1

Are you sidetracked by humanly originated organizations which seek to portray themselves as the churches of Christ? Do you support (financially or otherwise) the CCDR (the so-called Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc. of Nashville, TN)? What business does a humanly originated organization have in sending out preachers (missionaries) and doing benevolence in the name of "The Churches of Christ?" Do they represent all the churches of Christ? Does the New Testament authorize such a concept of the church of our Lord? The CCDR is not the church! Elders, have you been sidetracked? Has your box car of a studious mind switched from the main track onto a dead track? Sending the Lord's money to the CCDR, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee is unscriptural in that it is a human organization which calls itself by the divinely given expression, "Churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16) and serves to sidetrack churches from functioning as the true church of Christ. The following true statements speak to the problem of sending money to the CCDR: When any congregation of the Lord's people misuses the Lord's treasury in that which is unscriptural, it serves as evidence of and a reflection of that leadership's misunderstanding of deity's purpose for the church in a lost and dying world. (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 5:17).<sup>5</sup> The work of the church is to preach the gospel to the whole earth (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). That is the salvation of souls through evangelism. Saving the lost also involves the edifying or perfecting of those who are converted by means of evangelism ... The third thing the church is authorized to do in its work of saving the lost is benevolence... (James 1:27)... A careful search of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament reveals that the church is to be totally absorbed in seeking and saving the lost and that evangelism, edification, and the work of ministry (benevolence) are the only authorized means of so doing (see Eph. 4:12).<sup>6</sup>

### Side Track #2

Are you sidetracked from the work and mission of seeking and saving lost souls to the dead track of church financed recreation and entertainment? Have you contributed to the church getting into the recreation business, giving the impression that when Christians do recreational things together that this is somehow the mission of the church? Brother elder, have you deliberately rolled your box car (your role as an elder) over onto a dead track by agreeing to the building of a church financed gymnasium? If so, you have become sidetracked. Consider the two true statements below, which speak to this faulty thinking and behavior: The Lord's church is not in the entertainment business but we are definitely in the soul-saving business of bringing sinners to Christ to meet their Maker at the Judgment (Matthew 28:18- 20).<sup>7</sup> ... this issue really "boils down to" a discussion of the true, actual, scriptural, God-desired and God-ordained purpose of the Lord's church according to the New Testament (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20).<sup>8</sup>

The two quotations above are from the written, published debate entitled: *Church Financed Gymnasiums: God-Serving or Self-Serving?* May I encourage you to read this discussion due to the fact that it deals with the importance of staying on track concerning the true mission of the church of the Lord. Of this debate concerning Bible authority, which happened to be concerning the problem of church financed recreation, two preachers

who read the debate wrote, saying, This book is the finest discussion of the question of church financed gymnasiums that I have read. I highly recommend it to all. Brother Grizzell has capably defended the truth. It deserves a wide reading."<sup>9</sup>

Great job! I appreciated the way you held brother Brite to the issue of authority for the church getting into the entertainment business. Some brethren ignorantly confuse entertainment with evangelism, and others willfully attempt to "hide" entertainment under the guise of evangelism. Your work has helped clarify the matter for honest Bible students. Thanks!<sup>10</sup>

To find out if these above summaries are true, you will need to read the debate. If you are an elder in the church this booklet will be mailed to you for only the cost of postage (as long as supply lasts). Many elderships have already been sidetracked into becoming like the denominations around them (the Lord's church is not a denomination), just as Israel of old wanted to become like the nations around them. If you have gone along with the carnally minded and spiritually weak in the church with the excuse, "I don't want to be offensive," the problem of your church financed gymnasium is but the visible fruit of your sidetracked attitude concerning:

- 1) a lack of respect for Bible authority,
- 2) the need to ascertain Bible authority by direct statement, example and implication,
- 3) and correct priorities in regard to the mission of the church.

### Side Track #3

Are you sidetracked by a spirit of mediocrity in serving Christ? Sadly, it has happened over and over again through the years in the lives of some. Here's the situation: A sinner develops a love for the truth and then he joyfully learns of his origin (God, Gen. 1:1, 26-27). He happily learns of his purpose of existence (to please God by the doing of God's will, John 14:15). He learns of his eternal destiny (2 Cor. 5:10). Finding himself a sinner due to his having personally committed sin, he is so very grateful to read of the cleansing blood of the lamb of God and he gladly obeys the gospel, becoming a new creature in Christ (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23; Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 5:17). Old things are passed away. Now he is not only a child of God, he is a zealous Christian.

Time passes. While attending every time the doors of the church building are open to the best of his ability, he thrills to hear the word of God boldly proclaimed and taught. He literally tingles from head to toe hearing the facts, commands and promises of the gospel powerfully preached from the pulpit. He assembles faithfully, diligently studies the milk of the word in Bible class and in the privacy of his home. He prays earnestly without ceasing.

Time passes. At this point some tragedy (or seeming tragedy) comes in his life: A problem with his career, his relationships, sickness, persecution or perhaps a death in his family occurs. No one seems to seriously notice that this damaged his faith and that his attendance has become lax. When he does attend worship periods, he feels somewhat on the outside. He doesn't feel as much a part of things as he once did.

Time passes. After a time members of the church seem to want to help, but do not appear to know what to say. His heart is breaking with the burdens life has placed upon him and not knowing how to remain spiritually strong he looks desperately for a way to satisfy his troubled conscience. A light seems to go off in his head—a brilliant idea! So having observed Brother Mediocre in the congregation, he chooses the example of a mediocre "elder" or "deacon" and decides to follow that example. Brother Mediocre is liked and accepted in the congregation (lukewarm congregation) and he reasons that he can make it as a "Christian" and

this is how he can “get by” with his “Christianity” before God.

Time passes and becoming painfully aware his prayer life has slipped, his personal Bible study is nonexistent and his attendance is not what it once was, he assures himself all is well because he has infallibly reasoned that God accepts Brother Mediocre whom he has chosen to imitate. It doesn't matter to him that Brother Mediocre is unfaithful in his attendance, critical of hard preaching against sin and does not seek the kingdom of God first (Heb. 10:25; 2 Tim. 2:2-4; Mat. 6:33). He assures himself that he is pleasing to God while following a hypocrite because his “wonderful” mediocre example of a Christian is accepted by the spiritually shallow in the church.

Now, what has happened to the once joyful, forgiven and carefree child of God? He has cast off his first love. He has become lukewarm. He has been sidetracked by mediocrity. He hasn't learned that people's acceptance does not necessitate God's acceptance. Is his faith acceptable to God? No. Jesus told the first century Christians who were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, that He would spew them out (Rev. 3:16). Hypocrites sometimes slip by among men because of the low standards of men, but God will not save the spiritual, religious play-actor in the Judgment. God refuses to be taken for a fool and one is only fooling himself when he thinks God will save the hypocrite in the last

day. We will reap what we have sown on that day (Gal. 6:7-8).

### **Solution: Get Back On Track**

You say, I am an elder in the church and I have been sidetracked into the unscriptural dead end tracks of fellowshiping a misnamed human organization—the so-called Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort. You say, I am not against church cooperation, but this is something other than that and I realize that now. What can I do? Answer: Get back on track.

Get back into the Word of God! Study God's Word. Respect and rightly divide God's Word by direct statement, example and implication (2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:17). Respect it and determine authority for all you do in word or deed from this point onward.

Perhaps you may be saying, I'm an elder in the congregation and I have foolishly forsaken the Biblical concept of what the church is and what God wants the church to be. I've been a coward by trying to be a manpleaser. I have been afraid of offending some members in the church when I should have been concerned about displeasing my Father in Heaven and my Lord who died to redeem me. You are thinking—what can I do in that I have compromised the mission of seeking and saving the lost which should be only through the authorized works of evangelism, edification and benevolence (which include only authorized expedients)?

(Continued on page 24)

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**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.

**Somerville**-Union Church of Christ, located on Hwy 36, one mile east of Hwy 67, Somerville, Alabama, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tom Larkin, evangelist, (256) 778-8955, (256) 778-8961.

**Tuscaloosa**-East Pointe Church of Christ one block from Exit 76, off I-20, I-59, Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed., 7 p.m. Abiding in God's Word—The Old Paths. U of A student, visitor, or resident? Welcome! (205)556-3062.

## -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](http://www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org). Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or [Keith.Sisman.net](mailto:Keith.Sisman.net). Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; [www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org](http://www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org) and [www.Myth-and-Mystery.org](http://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](mailto:ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com), [www.ocoeecoc.org](http://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.

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**Cartersville**- Church of Christ, 1319 Joe Frank Harris Pkwy NW 30120-4222. 770-382-6775, [www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org](http://www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org). Sun. 10, 11a.m., 6:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Bobby D. Gayton, evangelist- email: [bdgayton@juno.com](mailto:bdgayton@juno.com).

## -Indiana-

**Evansville**-West Side Church of Christ, 3232 Edgewood Dr., Evansville, IN 47712, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 6:30 p.m., Larry Albritton, evangelist.

## -Louisiana-

**Chalmette**-Church of Christ, 200 Delaronde St., Chalmette, LA 70044. Mark Lance, evangelist, (504) 279-9438.

## -Massachusetts-

**Chicopee**-Armory Drive Church of Christ, 26 Armory Drive; Chicopee, MA 01020, in-home, (413) 592-4834, Ken Dion, evangelist.

## -North Carolina-

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

## -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](mailto:lawson@starnetok.net).

## -Tennessee-

**Lenoir City**-Lenoir City Church of Christ, 1280 Simpson Road West, P.O. Box 292 Lenoir City, TN 37771 . Sun. 9:30, 10:30AM, 6:00PM, Wed. 7:00PM., Kent Bailey, Evangelist Tel: 865-986-3223 or 865-986-5698).

**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](http://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](mailto:northpointcoc@hotmail.com). Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; [tgj@charter.net](mailto:tgj@charter.net).

**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](http://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, evangelist; [djgoines@write.com](mailto:djgoines@write.com).

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

**Hurst (Fort Worth area)**-Northeast Church of Christ, 1313 Karla Dr., P.O. Box 85, Hurst, TX 76053. Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m. (817) 282-3239, Toney Smith and Dan Flournoy, evangelists.

**New Braunfels**-1130 Hwy. 306, 1.5 miles west of I-35. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. [www.nbchurchofchrist.com](http://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., 5:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 635-2482. evangelist: Tim Cozad.

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What can I do, since I have allowed Satan to sidetrack me into going along with those in the congregation who have clamored to add a unauthorized fourth work to the work God has given. I have agreed to unscripturally add recreation as a fourth work of the church under the guise of seeking the souls of the lost, when I knew that members who put pressure on me just wanted a place for their children to play. I knew that some parents just wanted someone to entertain their children while they were elsewhere doing their thing. I knew that some sincerely were ignorant of God's plan for influencing and saving non-Christians. What can I do now? Answer: Get back on track. **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"** (Rev. 3:19).

Next, you may be thinking, I've been lukewarm Christian, a phony, and a hypocrite. I am not really living what I know the faithful Christian life entails. I have detested the preacher and the elders just because I did not want to really hear the doctrine of Christ for my life. You know you have switched tracks and are now on the track to hell once again. Frantically, you ask, what can I do?! Answer: Get back on heaven's track! **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"** (Rev. 3:19).

**Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:17-21).**

#### End Notes

\* This does not mean that a truth seeker may not learn the truth by personal Bible study (John 17:7).

1. Dictionary.com.
2. Ibid.
3. John Gill's *Exposition of the Bible*. Crosswalk.com.
4. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Crosswalk.com.
5. Gary Grizzell, Tract entitled: *Seven Reasons The Church And The Christian MUST OPPOSE The So-Called "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc." of Nashville, Tennessee*. Under the caption of "Understanding Deity's Purpose for The Church", Published by TFTN in 2001. 2128 Crystal Ct., Cookeville, TN 38501.
6. *The Restorer*, Gary Workman, Editor, Used by permission, Author: Jim Waldron, 1981. This was quoted in written debate with Thomas Brite in written discussion in 1997 on church financed gyms, p. 79. I used this good quote in refuting opponent's position.
7. From an article in *CFTF*, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Editor, October 1993, Gary, Grizzell, *Is There Bible Authority For Church Support Of Gymnasiums?* Author of article, Quotation borrowed and adapted.
8. Gary Grizzell, Debate book: *Church Financed Gymnasiums: God-Serving or Self-Serving?* From the Introduction. Pillars Publications. Brite/Grizzell. 1997. p. iv.
9. Darrell Conley, by permission this quote was placed on the back cover of the written, published debate booklet.
10. Lynn Parker, by permission this quote was placed on the back cover of the written, published debate booklet.

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