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FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

TULSA'S LIBERALISM TOO MUCH FOR LIBERALS

Gary W. Summers

The information upon which this article is based is derived from the June, 2008, issue of *News and Notes*, a publication of Olan and Barbara Hicks. Several references found throughout this article are from said *News and Notes*. Three years ago (June 12-15, 2005), Olan Hicks and I debated the topic of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in North Carolina, just across the border from Danville, Virginia. After he published some comments concerning the debate, I wrote seven consecutive articles concerning the event (beginning October 9th, 2005), including how the debate came about and the substance of the discussion; all of these are on our Web site.

That first article also gave the reason that Hicks left after the fourth night of the debate instead of completing the week the following night. He had been challenged by a 15-year-old boy on comments he made concerning instrumental music, and he could not Scripturally defend himself. He spoke the following evening and then departed. The reason for recalling these facts is to point out that Hicks himself is a liberal. He does not believe in the use of what he calls the “**authority of inferences**,” although Jesus did (Matt. 22:23-33). Therefore, he believes that one can use instrumental music in worship; the fact that the New Testament gives no authority for its use (Col. 3:17) means nothing to him, since that is an “inference” (it is more correctly termed *implication*). He also believes that a man might divorce and remarry as many times as he desires, so long as he “repents” of the marriage *ceremony* each time.

To understand his disdain for Biblical authority and adhering to the Word, one need only read what he says in the June 2008 *News and Notes*. Summarizing 1950 through 1980, he comments that it was dominated by a strong “legalistic ele-

ment, Spiritual sword [sic], Ira Rice, Tom Warren, and others” (Hicks, p. 1). Are brethren supposed to agree with this statement? Ira Rice was not a legalist; he actually fought against it. He adhered to the Scriptures, one evidence of which is his tremendous efforts on behalf of World Evangelism. The other evidence is that he warned brethren about false teachers.

What is legalistic about doing what God says to do? Rice was no more legalistic than Noah. Like the rest of us, however, he did know that Olan Hicks was a false teacher. The *Spiritual Sword*, which Hicks did not even describe as a publication was begun in its current form in October, 1969 by the Getwell Church of Christ, and the late Thomas B. Warren was the editor. In the opening article, “Our Aim,” brother Warren wrote the following:

This journal is launched both in determined opposition to skepticism, liberalism, and relativism and in strong affirmation that the Bible is the infallibly inspired Word of God and that men can learn and obey the truth (S.S., p. 2).

Now precisely what is at fault with Warren’s purpose statement here? The three *isms* he names were and are threats to true Christianity. Furthermore, Jesus taught that men could “**know the truth**” (John 8: 32). If Hicks wants to charge brethren with legalism, he should offer proof, which should not be difficult, considering that Rice and Warren were prolific writers. Where are the samples of their legalism?

Hicks also writes that “a strong backlash” occurred against the “distasteful attitude of judgmentalism” that had developed. He adds: “Resentment against authoritarian attitudes became resentment against the whole idea that ab-

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

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

Purging Out the Old Leaven

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth saying, **“Purge¹ out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”** (1 Cor. 5:7). This verse is located in a context that severely rebukes and censures the church because of its continued fellowship with one of its members who was fornicating with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:1). Paul said the church was **“puffed up”** when they should have been in mourning—**“that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you”** (1 Cor. 5:2). The apostle goes on to inform the church of its responsibility to withdraw fellowship from any sinning church member who refuses to repent of any and all sin, saying to them and through them to us, **“put away from among yourselves that wicked person”** (1 Cor. 5:13). Of course, the church in its failure to withdraw fellowship from such a sinner was itself committing sin—a sin of omission (James 4:17).

Paul was writing in the same vein as he wrote to the Corinthian brethren in First Corinthians chapter Five, when he wrote to the Thessalonians saying, **“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly² and not after the tradition which he received of us”** (2 Thess. 5:6). Taking the totality of what the New Testament teaches concerning the ultimate and final end in her corrective discipline (purging the church of unrepentant sinners), it is clear that any and all church members who refuse to repent of any and all sins must be purged from the church. If Paul did not mean as much in the preceding passages and like Scriptures, what would he have to write to say it?

With the previous Bible Truths in mind, let us now turn to the book of Revelation to examine our Lord’s letters to the seven churches of Asia. Among other things, in these letters it is made clear that the Lord hates the works of erring brethren. The implication being that Christians must hate what Jesus hates as well as love what He loves. Though they may claim to love the Lord, brethren do not love Jesus if they refuse to live according to his authoritative Word (Col. 3:17; John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:2, 3; 2 John 6). Our loving Lord has even forbidden the faithful to pray for a church member’s forgiveness if such a one refuses to repent of his/her sins (1 John 5:16; See Jer. 7:16). Furthermore, regarding those church members who teach and practice error, who are void of brotherly love, while all the time refusing to repent of their sins, Jesus demands that they be purged

from the church (Titus 3:10, 11).

Christ complimented the church in Ephesus for doing what many churches would never do—*put the claims of seemingly pious brethren (some who claimed to be apostles of Christ) to the test*. These pretenders to the apostolic office failed the test and, therefore, were correctly judged liars (Rev. 2:2, 3). Never the less, the Ephesian brethren were lacking in one area—they *had left their first love* (Rev. 2:4). Jesus clearly announced, therefore, that they could either correct the things that were lacking or cease to exist as His church (Rev. 2:5). How easy it is to comprehend what the Lord (1) commends, (2) what He condemns and (3) His remedy for sin. Is there not a lesson in the economy of words employed by Christ to show us how we should state God’s commendations, condemnations, and remedies?

Christ reprovved the church in Pergamos for tolerating false teachers. Church members were lax in dealing with the errorists among them. Though many brethren have not learned, or refuse to learn it, tolerating sin is nothing but “false kindness.” Thus the Lord declared, **“Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth”** (Rev. 2:16).

While the church in Thyatira was demonstrating their love and faith to the Lord by benevolent acts (Rev.

2:19), she was lacking in zeal and courage to exercise corrective discipline on a prominent woman whom the Lord called “Jezebel” (See 1 Kings 16:31; 21:25). She was influencing (seducing) the church to engage in immorality. No doubt, in the process of her wicked actions, she was teaching the church in some way or another that God was actually pleased with their sinful conduct (Rev. 2:20-23). In today’s church we have a number of “Jezebels”, along with their male counterparts, who routinely work to get brethren to believe that one can engage in sinful actions and at the same time be acceptable to God.

Concerning the sins of certain church members in the city of Sardis, Jesus said, **“I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest. And art dead”** (Rev. 3:1b). Men may and do declare some churches to be alive and well, but the Lord pronounces them to be dead. This church was no active agent for good as the Bible defines the good. Thus, she suffered no persecution. And, why should she be persecuted by unbelievers? After all she was no threat to the devil’s crowd. Hence, she was admonished to **“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee”** (Rev. 3:3). A doctrinally sound



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Al Maxey

The New Covenant writings ARE the divine pattern which must be followed for both fellowship and salvation.

Affirm—Darrell Broking

Deny— Al Maxey

The Debate Began With Darrell Broking’s First Affirmative Posted on July 3, 2008.

1st Affirmative: Darrell Broking
1st Rebuttal: Al Maxey
2nd Affirmative: Darrell Broking
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3rd Rebuttal: Al Maxey
4th Affirmative: Darrell Broking
4th Rebuttal: Al Maxey

The New Covenant writings CONTAIN specific requirements and expectations of our God, few in quantity, that are essential for both fellowship and salvation.

Affirm—Al Maxey

Deny—Darrell Broking

1st Affirmative: Al Maxey
1st Rebuttal: Darrell Broking
2nd Affirmative: Al Maxey
2nd Rebuttal: Darrell Broking
3rd Affirmative: Al Maxey
3rd Rebuttal: Darrell Broking
4th Affirmative: Al Maxey
4th Rebuttal: Darrell Broking

and morally clean church may be lifeless. Many such churches exist today. They do not present a challenge to those who are enslaved to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride or vain glory of life (1 John 2:15-17; Eph. 5:11; Luke 17:3). They are no threat to the devil. *But they think themselves righteous because they are harmless.* Hence, in their blindness they plunge into the spiritual ditch (Matt. 15:14). The Lord warned them that in silence, and when least expected, He would come upon them to exact His terrifying and awful vengeance because they were spiritually dead (Rev. 3:2, 3).

The church in Laodicea made the Lord sick to His stomach (Rev. 3:15, 16). He was made nauseous by lukewarm church members then, and there is every reason to believe He continues to be sickened by the same type of characters today. Indeed, the spiritually dead alien sinner is preferred by Jesus to the sickening lukewarm church member (Rev. 3:15, 16). The Laodicean brethren considered themselves on a high spiritual plane, but the Lord had a totally different view of them—they were wretched, miserable (pitiable), poor, blind and naked. Thus, he promised them, **“As many as I love, I rebuke, and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”** (Rev. 3:20). Over the years in our work as a gospel preacher, we have found not a few with this bloated view of their spirituality. They were and are moved to evaluate their spiritual progress on the basis of what they *do not do* that is evil, rather than by what *they do that is good*. It is good to be helping the orphans and widows—children of God are not going to heaven unless such benevolence is forthcoming from them (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10). However, when the situation demands that error and those who teach and/or practice it be exposed, opposed and refuted, a church member’s benevolent work will not take the place of one’s standing up for the Truth and against those who oppose it (Jude 3)—and vice versa. A shepherd may be excellent in the care of sick or straying sheep and weak lambs, but if he forsakes the flock when the lion, bear or wolves attack the sheep, he is no real shepherd, but in actuality a detestable, repugnant and

cowardly hireling. It is extremely sad to note the preachers and elders who fall into this stinking category.

All but two of the seven churches of Asia were warned to repent of their sins or perish. *First*, if they did not repent they would cease to exist. *Secondly*, following this life, they would suffer the eternal consequences in a devil’s hell because of their rebellion against God while they were on earth.

Regarding these timeless and important truths previously studied and emphasized, there are some brethren who will conduct themselves in accordance with the Truth taught concerning the necessity of purging the church of unrepentant sinners. But, in the great majority of cases, even these brethren will forsake the New Testament’s teaching regarding corrective discipline when it comes to purging the church of their sinning and unrepentant family members, especially withdrawing fellowship from their own children. Thus, the message sent to the Lord by their disobedience is his—*“I love my child or children more than I love the Lord and keeping His church pure.”* In other words, that cross is too heavy for them to bear. They, thus, turn their back on God, His Christ, the Lord’s blood-bought church—their own brethren in the Lord. In most cases they do so while all the time attempting to blame someone else for their family member’s sins and/or also trying to find something that says someone else is guilty of some sin that they consider to be as bad as the one(s) they are guilty of committing. Where there is no repentance on the part of the sinner, I have never seen it fail that the sinner, and those who seek to defend such an unrepentant person, will attempt to point a finger at some other church member, saying, “You are as guilty of transgressing God’s law in one area as I am in transgressing His law in another area.” And, with that statement they seemingly think that if the other church member will confess that the accusation made by the unrepentant sinner is true, that all should be happy to continue in their respective sins as they travel the broad way through the wide gate that leads to eternal damnation.

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I will grant that it is true at times that some brethren who are guilty of sin will be blind to their own sin as they focus in on someone else's sin of a different kind. But the effort on the part of one correctly charged with sin to attempt to justify one's own sin by finding sin in the accuser's life and thus refuse to repent of one's own sin, is nothing less than compounding sin; it is ludicrous and absurd on the face of such an effort.

Assuming that such a counter charge on behalf of the one charged with sin against the person who placed the original charge is true, it should be the case that both sinners, upon recognition of their sins, repent of them, confess them and pray to God for their forgiveness. Instead, such is usually done in an attempt by the first party accused of sin to seek justification in his/her sin by getting others to admit they too are guilty of sins of which they have not repented. The idea being that we should leave each other alone and never point out one another's sin. It is though the one accused of sinning is saying to his/her accuser: *"Yes, I am guilty of the sin of which you have charged me, but you know that you are also guilty of sin of which you have not repented either. That being the case, let us shake hands on the fact that we are both guilty of sins of which neither one of us will repent and, let us agree to leave each other alone to do as we please."*

In Logic this is a fallacy of distraction called "Tu quoque." Rendered from Latin into English it means: "You also." This fallacy is kin to the "ad hominem" fallacy. It is committed when a person attempts to defend himself by pointing out that his opponent is doing the same thing he is. Although it may be disconcerting for person A to have his opponent, person B, point out to him(A) that he(A) is as guilty of the same kind of wrong action as is person B, the "You also" defense person B has made to person A is in actuality no defense for person

B's wrong action at all. But this is the way unrepentent sinners think and act. It is the way of those enslaved to sin and, thus, in rebellion to God.

END NOTES

¹ **Ekkathairo**: "to cleanse out, cleanse thoroughly," is said of "purging" out leaven, 1 Cor 5:7; in 2 Tim. 2:21, of "purging" oneself from those who utter "profane babblings," 2 Tim. 2:16-18" (**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, <http://cf.blb.org/Search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?TopicList=13815,50177,50178,50179,50180,50181&Topic=Purge&DictID=#Vines>).

² **Ataktos**: "signifies "not keeping order" (a, negative, tasso, "to put in order, arrange"); it was especially a military term, denoting "not keeping rank, insubordinate;" it is used in 1 Thess. 5:14, describing certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit, whether by excitability or officiousness or idleness. See UNRULY Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, <http://cf.blb.org/Search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?TopicList=9379,46478,46479,46480&Topic=Disorderly&DictID=#Vines>.

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(Continued From Page One)

solute truth even exists” (Hicks, page 1, column 3). It was not resentment against any authoritarian attitude to which some objected, but (as is the case with most liberals) it was authority itself that was despised.

Liberals do not like God’s boundaries. They want to argue (as one article did) that God would have saved Noah and his family if the ark had been 301 cubits long instead of 300. They regard the insistence of exactly 300 cubits as legalism. What they ignore is that, if God says 300 cubits, why would one who respects Him desire to test Him by making it shorter or longer?

It is neither an authoritarian attitude that is the problem here nor one of legalism; the problem is one of rebellion: “God said this, but why can’t I do that?” One can envision Cain thinking, “I know that God said to bring a blood sacrifice, but I grew these vegetables myself, and I feel this is a more personal and intimate offering than getting some animal to offer to Him.” Most people share this attitude today. They show little interest in what God commands; they just want to worship as they desire. They want to define religion on their own terms rather than submit to God’s commands.

The Bible teaches or authorizes in three ways—by direct statements of which a command is one kind of direct statement (Matt 28:18-20), by implication (Heb. 7:14), and by example. Yet Hicks affirms: “The ‘**authority of inferences**’ idea was a false notion” (Ibid, page 1, column 3, emphasis his). Really? I suppose seeing some proof of this assertion would be too much to ask. The New Testament teaches the validity of “inferences” (Matt. 22; Heb. 7). [We are to *infer* only what the Bible *implies*—EDITOR]

All of these comments of Hicks are cited to show that he is a liberal and has been for years. His self-appointed mission is to promote liberalism both morally and doctrinally. He assures people that they can remain in their unscriptural marriages and worship with those who use instrumental music, which is not authorized in the New Testament.

The Direct Influence of the Holy Spirit

Nevertheless, even Olan Hicks felt compelled to take a mild stand against what was taught at the Tulsa Workshop this year. This event has been liberal for years, and its promoters invite liberals to speak. Like Hicks, most of them do not oppose instrumental music. Some speakers this year, however, affirmed the *direct influence* of the Holy Spirit “in evangelism and in daily life.” Consider this crucial paragraph.

It is no longer a settled matter among us that the “progressive revelation” theory is error. Edward Fudge has preached it at Pepperdine, at Tulsa, and in many churches. In a church of Christ here in Searcy I heard it preached that the supernatural gifts the apostles were given are available to us today. This was also said on the ACU lectures in 06 (Hicks, page 1, column 1).

In column three of page one, Hicks adds that “the theory of ‘**progressive revelation**’ is equally false.” It is heartening

to know that Hicks would actually classify something as *error*. In the end, however, he advises people to continue to support the Tulsa Workshop while they try to improve this situation (2). He then made this valid observation:

When men say, “God may speak to us today in any number of ways. It might be a dream, or in a vision, or even in an audible voice” (Web site: *Edward Fudge.com*), they are out of touch with clear Bible statements (Hicks, page 1, column 3).

Hebrews 1:1-2 comes to mind. God once spoke in diverse ways in time past, but now He speaks to us through His Son. Who is this Edward Fudge? Well, he is the one who wrote *The Fire That Consumes*, in which he argues that hell is not eternal—a book recommended by John Clayton, who is scheduled to speak at this year’s Spiritual Growth Seminar (Spiritual Death Seminar would be more appropriate). Fudge is an elder in the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. This congregation was on the cutting edge of appointing women in roles of leadership and also uses instrumental music in worship.

Apparently, these errors were not sufficient; so Fudge has now added false doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit to his resume for the position of Chief Heretic of the Age (the competition is fierce).

What is meant by *progressive revelation*? It is the idea that inspiration never ceased—that God is still revealing Himself in every age, whether in a dream, a vision, or an audible voice. Of course, the New Testament denies this doctrine. Jesus, for example, told His apostles that the Holy

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Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:12-13). Peter said that what Jesus promised had indeed occurred; God had given them “**all things that pertain to life and godliness**” (2 Peter 1: 3). If Christians had ALL things in the first century, there cannot be anything further. Furthermore, Paul said that prophecies would soon cease (1 Cor. 13:8-10). The prophet Zechariah foretold the termination of the prophets, also (Zech. 13:1-4).

Progressive revelation clearly contradicts all of these Scriptures, but there is another problem for those who argue in favor of it—reality. If God has been revealing additional truth since the first century, we ought to have an additional volume at least the size of the New Testament by now. In fact, since all of the New Testament was written by the end of the first century, 19 centuries later would theoretically give us several more volumes. *Where are they?*

Who are the ones who have claimed to be prophets since the first century? Joseph Smith and a few others have tried, but they only contradict themselves. Smith records in the Book of Mormon that polygamy is wrong but then teaches that it is acceptable in Doctrines and Covenants. Then the Mormon Church had to oppose the practice again in order to achieve statehood. When the United States gets through tinkering with marriage laws so as to accommodate homosexuals, they will find that they have also authorized polygamy, and the Mormon Church will reverse itself again.

A false prophet is defined as one who contradicts the Lord (Deut. 13:1-5). Of course, if he contradicts himself, it is apparent that the Lord is not speaking through him. If he makes predictions that fail to occur (as Smith did), then he is not a true prophet of God (Deut. 1:20-22). Therefore, men have been reluctant to write down modern-day “Scripture,” since everyone would be able to scrutinize it and compare it with the Word of God. Yet those at Pepperdine and at least some at Tulsa are prepared to receive this false doctrine—as well as the one claiming that spiritual gifts are still available. Of course, the spiritual gifts include direct revelation from

God and prophecies (1 Cor. 12).

MAC DEAVER

In 1995 Mac Deaver debated Olan Hicks on the marriage, divorce, and remarriage issues; and he did very well on that occasion in upholding the truth. But since that time Mac has taken up a new doctrine that involves the Holy Spirit. Although Deaver would undoubtedly regard Hicks as a liberal on MDR and on instrumental music, Hicks could now rightly regard Deaver as too liberal for him as it pertains to his current doctrine on the Holy Spirit.

Below is what Mac Deaver himself argued in his debate with Bill Lockwood. Goebel Music quotes him in his reference volume on the Holy Spirit. Regarding the phrase *direct influence*, Deaver says he means:

- (a) It is as direct as the influence of a demon upon the human spirit possessed by it. (b) It is as direct as the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit of an “inspired man.” (c) It is as direct as the influence of the human spirit upon the human body in which it exists (Music, p. 710)

Of course, Mac would deny that he believes in progressive revelation, but he cannot divorce himself from it. The facts are these.

- 1) If the Holy Spirit exerts influence upon the Christian as directly as Mac defines it above, and
- 2) If the Spirit grants the Christian wisdom *directly* when he prays and asks God for it (James 1:5), which Deaver has argued for elsewhere,
- 3) Then the wisdom the Christian receives from God directly is inspired of the Holy Spirit.
- 4) The wisdom given directly by the Holy Spirit today to the Christian does not differ from “the word of wisdom” given directly by the Holy Spirit to the Christian in the first century—by definition of *direct influence*.
- 5) Therefore, the Christian today has access to at least one of the spiritual gifts discussed in 1 Corinthians 12 (see

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verse 8).

- 6) If one spiritual gift is available for the Christian today, then why cannot others be available? How often would the discerning of spirits be of value today—especially with benevolence requests?
- 7) If all the spiritual gifts are available today, then upon what basis could anyone deny progressive revelation? Thus, Mac's own position on the *direct influence* of the Holy Spirit puts him in the unenviable position of being too liberal for Olan Hicks.

THE SPIRIT OPERATES ON US THROUGH THE WORD

Although many people claim that God speaks to them directly, they can offer no proof. They cannot do a miracle as Jesus did publicly. They cannot give a prophecy which comes true or, in short, provide any evidence why they should be believed.

On the other hand, Jesus and His apostles worked miracles that all the people saw (Acts 2:22). Furthermore, the prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem all came to pass in A.D. 70. The Bible does not teach that prophets in the Lord's church would continue. In fact, as already shown, it indicates the exact opposite. The Holy Spirit is not revealing anything new today because He has already revealed to us everything that pertains to life and godliness.

Since the Spirit revealed the Bible, it is sufficient **“for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This Word is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32). It is able to produce growth in us (1 Peter 2:2). We LIVE by the Word of God (Matt. 4:4).

“Well, does that mean that the Spirit is idle today?” We

do not know what God's daily activities are. The Spirit may be involved in the carrying out of something providential, whether it is of an evangelistic nature, an answer to a prayer, or providing comfort to the saints. We do not know how God accomplishes certain things, but we do know that He uses His Word to carry out many of His goals. The New Testament, however, does not teach that, after the age of miracles, He would be using *direct influence* upon the Christian to cause anything to happen. Providence does not demand it, and the Word is sufficient for everything He designed it to do.

OBJECTIVE INFORMATION

God revealed His Word to us and confirmed it with miracles, signs, and wonders (John 20:30-31; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4). At least one purpose for doing so was so that we would have an objective standard to go by. Without the doctrine that the early church continued steadfastly in (Acts 2:42), we would not know the Truth. With it we are able to test any man's teaching, to see whether or not it is from God (Acts 17:11). If God was going to continue to reveal things to each generation, we either would not need the New Testament, or we would need *everything* revealed since that time.

To subject ourselves to latter-day revelation is to make us a slave to subjectivism. In other words, whatever anyone *feels* that God told him, we would be bound to believe and practice. Worst of all, none of these with “messages from God” today possess any evidence of validity. There is no compelling case against 2 Peter 1:3 or Jude 3-4 that Christians should depart those verses merely upon someone else's say-so. Regardless of Tulsa, Fudge, or Deaver, let us stand firm in the Truth.

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AFTER “MUCH STUDY, PRAYER AND FASTING,” WE’VE DECIDED TO SIN!

Jimmie Z. Gribble

The Christian Chronicle, December 21, 2007, had an article written by Bobby Ross, Jr., titled, “Nation’s largest Church of Christ adding instrumental service.” The Church of Christ referenced in the article is the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Texas. The church claims 6,400 members, with 17 elders. According to the article, “Two of the congregation’s 17 elders resigned as a result of the decision.” The elders, according to Jon Jones, “fully and completely” approved and supported the decision to add the instrument service on Saturday night, along with communion. Several reasons were given by Rick Atchley, senior Minister, as to why the church decided to add the instrument service, two of which were to “ease crowding” of their two morning services on Sunday and to “reach more people who need Christ.”

There are several interesting points made in the article in regards to the change, the justification for the change, and anticipated result of the change. *First*, we will notice the change. According to Churches of Christ in the United States, 2003, Richland Hills began in 1956. Not knowing for sure, but one would guess that when this congregation began there was no idea at all of having a Saturday service with the communion. In like manner, there was probably no thought that some day they would add an instrumental service. Not becoming a member of the church until 1962, this writer would not know for sure. However, one could imagine that for almost 50 years, the Richland Hills congregation had not used the instrument on Saturday or in any other worship or study time. Why, for almost 50 years, did this large congregation not use the instrument? Why now, almost 50 years later, did they come to use the instrument in an “instrumental worship assembly”?

To be sure there are those that are pleased that this, the “Nation’s largest Church of Christ,” has added a service where the instrument is used. According to the same article, Atchley said, “My e-mail is flooded with messages from elders and preachers across the country encouraging this church and praising us for the decisions we have made.” Another that is pleased that this, the “Nation’s largest Church of Christ” has added a service where the instrument is used, is Leroy Garrett. Leroy Garrett, on his website has an article on Instrumental Music in Churches of Christ. Garrett says that this announcement and action are significant “not only because Richland Hills is one of our largest congregations, if not the largest, but also because it is one of our most influential churches, if not the most influential.” He continues by saying, “Now that Richland Hills is among that number (congregations going instrumental for one or more services) the pace could accelerate.” One would need to ask, not if man is pleased, but is God pleased! Will God accept worship that He has not

authorized?

Second, we will notice the justification for the change as set forth in the *Chronicle* article. Senior minister Atchley said, “This has been part of about a three-year journey that the leadership has been on.” He also said, “We didn’t make this decision on a Tuesday and announce it on a Sunday.” Therefore, the first justification for the change was time, about a “three-year” timeframe. Were they expecting God to change His mind in that “three-year” period? Were they, like Balaam, expecting a different message from God after a certain amount of time had passed? God came to Balaam and asked about the men that were with him. Balaam responded,

“...Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out” (Numbers 22:10-11).

Balaam asked God permission to curse this “**people come out of Egypt.**” Also, from the text, Balaam had the expectation of going with the men to curse this people. God said to Balaam, “**...Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed**” (Num. 22:12). Balaam told the men “the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you” (Num. 22:13b). However, Balak sent more princes and honorable people, desiring Balaam to curse this people. Balaam, “**...answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more**” (Num. 22:18). Balaam should have stopped right there, for God had already spoken, and Balaam knew what God had told him. However, the text reads, “**Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more**” (Num. 22:19). The Lord did say something else, He said go, but “**...God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him**” (Num. 22:22). During this “three-year journey,” did God add something to His Word? Did He take away something from His Word? Since 1956, when Richland Hills was started, has not God’s Word remained the same? Did the Holy Spirit add something more to the Bibles that are at Richland Hills? Did the “leadership” in this “three-year journey” receive an added revelation from heaven?

A second justification for the change is “much study...by the elders.” One needs to rightly ask, “What were they studying?” Were they studying the Bible? There is a denomination that emphasized the phrase “God is still speaking.” Were they studying that Bible that keeps on expanding? More time

studying God's Word is needed in every congregation. Paul instructed Timothy,

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:13, 15, 16).

Bible study is to be commended; diligent Bible study is a must. The only passage in the article is Acts 15:19. The article reads,

But the Dec. 3 study dealt with the nature of churches making tough choices. Too often, Atchley said, churches have looked at decisions as "either/or" — either Christians can worship God with instruments or vocal praise alone is acceptable to God, for example. But many times, questions are "both/and" — meaning Christians can worship God with instruments or with their voices only, Atchley said.

Atchley drew a biblical parallel to Acts 15 and the early church's debate over whether circumcision should be a requirement for Gentiles to accept the gospel.

While circumcision was a longtime tradition of the Jews, the mission of the gospel required allowing Gentiles freedom in that regard, he said. He pointed to Acts 15:19, where James said, "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

There is something very important that Atchley left out in his use of Acts 15. The text reads, **"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things"** (Acts 15:28). One question might be asked of the "leadership" at Richland Hills, "Where was the Holy Ghost during this study?" Has not the Holy Ghost finished His work of revelation? Or, is He revealing more of God's Word than what was written back in 1956?

A *third* justification for the change is "prayer." Since the word "much" is before study, this writer would add to prayer the word "much" also. Were they praying unto God as Balaam did, to **"know more what the Lord will say unto me more"**? Were they praying, *"Lord, help us find instrumental music in thy word?"* Were they praying to get help understanding what the word "sing" means? There were times when Jesus was asked questions and He responded, "Have ye not read?" If one wanted to know God's Word, one should read and study God's Word. The apostle Paul wrote about the mystery in the book of Ephesians. He also wrote about one being able to understand the mystery. He wrote,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:2-6). (emp. – JZG)

Prayer is a privilege that children of God have; we ought to **"Pray without ceasing"** (1 Thess. 5:17). If one wants to know who the true worshipper is and what is true worship,

one should go to the Bible, and there he will find the answers. By the way, the answers have been there since 1956, yea, that have been there for almost 2000 years, and the answers have not changed in all that time.

A *fourth* justification for the change is much "fasting." One of the things that the Bible says about fasting is, **"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly"** (Matt.6:16-18).

Does fasting bring about a change in the Word of God? Does fasting find something in the Bible that was not there in 1956? Does fasting find something in the New Testament that was not in it when it was completed? Study, prayer, and fasting are biblical subjects, but they are not justification for sin. God's Word has been settled in heaven, and no man, no matter how much study, prayer, and fasting one does, can change one word with God's approval. Jesus taught, **"...Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"** (Matt. 18:18). You are encouraged to do a word study on this passage, and on Matthew 16:19. These passages emphasize that what would be bound or loosed here, had already been bound or loosed in heaven. The **"whatsoever"** would not originate with man, but **"holy men of God spake [would speak] as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"** (2 Peter 1:21).

The *last* interesting point that we will notice is the anticipated result of the change. According to the article, "...Richland Hills must put the kingdom of God and Christ's mission above concerns that the change might hurt the congregation's standing or influence among Churches of Christ." Yet, it is this "standing or influence" that is desired as one continues to read the *Chronicle* article. Atchley suggested that this "decision might 'inspire many other Churches of Christ to be courageous in their kingdom effort.'" Atchley also said, "If our fellowship stays on the course we're on, our future looks bleak. Someone has got to be a leader." Leroy Garrett, in his article on Instrumental Music in Churches of Christ, said that Richland Hills "is something of an exemplary congregation." Therefore, in these few words we have the anticipated result — being a leader, having influence and standing, and hoping to inspire others.

This brings to mind several questions. One would be, "Do we not already have a Leader?" Is not Jesus Christ to be our Leader? Should we follow Christ or Rick Atchley and Richland Hills? The apostle Paul wrote, **"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"** (1 Cor. 11:1). We can follow man, but only as man follows Christ. Christ was the Leader in the life of Paul. We could follow Rick Atchley, if he followed Christ. However, since Atchley is departing from the Word of God, no one can follow him in his departure and be pleasing to God. Here is a leader who is going where others have gone, but not in the steps of Christ. The apostle Peter wrote, **"For even hereunto were ye called: because**

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus, in teaching what was necessary to be one of His disciples said, **"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Matt. 16:24). We have a Leader, Jesus Christ, Who will not lead us into sin. Can one say the same about Rick Atchley and Richland Hills?

Another question might be, "If one is departing from the Word of God, as Richland Hills is doing, what are they hoping to inspire others to do?" Richland Hills is hoping to "inspire many other Churches of Christ to be courageous in their kingdom efforts." Since they are going away from the kingdom, are they not then inspiring others to go away from the kingdom? They have added what God has not authorized, are they not then hoping to inspire others to do the same? The apostle Paul wrote, **"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"** (Col. 3:17). The Lord Jesus Christ has not authorized instrumental music. Richland Hills, by their action, is inspiring others to do what Jesus has not authorized to do. Is this really what churches and individuals should be inspired to do?

The Hebrew writer, speaking of the change of priesthood, spoke concerning what is "not" written. He wrote,

"For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:4-5).

Christ could not have been a priest on earth, for the priests that were authorized were of the tribe of Levi. To emphasize this more, the writer pens,

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7:11-14).

Moses spake nothing of the tribe of Judah concerning the priesthood; Christ could not be a priest on earth. There were priests from the tribe Moses spoke of, the tribe of Levi. Richland Hills, Rick Atchley, and those that have been inspired by them to follow this departure, need to know that Christ **"spake nothing concerning"** the use of instrumental music. Since Christ has not authorized it, we have no authority from Him to use it. Therefore, the question Jesus asked one time is most important at this time. Matthew wrote,

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe

him?" (Matt. 21:24-25).

The question, "from heaven, or of men?" needs to be asked. Now, if instrumental music were from heaven, why, when having the opportunity to discuss this monumental addition to the Word of God, did not Rick Atchley and the eldership give book, chapter, and verse, for this addition? Why did they not tell us that this addition was from heaven? The reason they did not tell us it was from heaven is that it is not; it is from men. The article emphasizes who made this addition. The article states that, "we," "leadership," "eldership," and "Rick Atchley" made this decision to add what God has not authorized.

Atchley, when talking about the possibility of losing some members because of this addition, said, "We've already lost too many over a question that's way too unimportant." *Let this sink in!* Even talking about adding to the Word of God is way too unimportant. Yes, even thinking about doing what God has not authorized is way too unimportant. One might ask Nadab and Abihu how unimportant it was to use fire that God had not authorized (Lev. 10:1-2). One might ask Moses how unimportant it was when he hit the rock rather than speaking to it (Num. 20:7-13). One might ask Uzza how unimportant it was to stop the ark from falling and getting damaged (1 Chron. 13:9-10).

God has three (at least) stop signs in His Word about adding to, subtracting from, and/or changing it. Toward the beginning of God's Word Moses wrote,

"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. 2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:1-2).

Toward the middle of God's Word, Agur wrote, **"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"** (Prov. 30:5-6). Then, at the end of God's Word, the apostle of love, John, wrote,

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19).

God does not want His word added to, subtracted from, and/or changed in any fashion! No matter how "much study, prayer and fasting" men may do, it will not change one letter of what God has already written. What is so hard to understand about this? Oh, that's right. Man must be pleased, not God. Now I get it.

—Jimmie Z. Gribble
jzgribble@juno.com
Newport News, VA 23608

ANATOMY OF A FALSE TEACHER

David L. Miller

When a person's heart, for whatever reason, becomes hardened and unreceptive to God's Words (Luke 8:12-14; John 12:40; Rom. 1:21,24,28; 1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 3:7-15), his/her behavior and teaching will reflect that condition of heart (Matt. 7:15-20). The individual will hold convictions and beliefs that are out of harmony with Scripture and will, consequently, seek to justify those ideas by promoting them and encouraging others to agree to the same conceptions. Consider some of the behaviors which often characterize one who promotes false teaching:

(1) He is bold to advance his ideas in some settings, but is strangely silent or evasive in others. At a recent preachers' seminar, after hotly defending a current false doctrine, the advocate noted, "I don't preach this from the pulpit at my congregation." Such a statement raises serious doubt about that person's integrity.

(2) He was once easily understood and known for the certainty and clarity with which he taught truth. But then he begins to speak vaguely and unclearly. Hearers raise their eyebrows and appear bewildered, wanting to think the best but unable to integrate these uncertain sounds into the biblical framework. They're not sure he intended to say what they think they heard. They think, "surely he's not saying what he seems to be saying." As discussion is generated by the teacher's remarks, he is quick to claim that he has been misrepresented—that he has not changed in his thinking. In the meantime, he wants to be left alone, unimpeded in his efforts to spread his ideas and gain followers.

(3) As it gradually becomes clear that the false teacher is really saying what faithful brethren feared he was saying from the beginning, he begins to be more overt in his efforts to gain agreement and support for his ideas. Suddenly, he is found to be identifying with those whom he previously perceived as enemies (Phil. 3:18) of the faith. Now these enemies don't seem so bad. They are not as "off base" as he once thought. Individuals widely recognized to be obvious apostates begin hailing him as an ally. They now promote his writings! "Politics makes strange bedfellows." One is reminded of the day when Herod and Pilate became friends (Luke 32:12).

(4) With time, more and more faithful souls rise up in an effort to turn the false teacher from the error of his way, while seeking to minimize the chances of his "smooth and fair speech" deceiving "the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16: 8; cf., Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:4; Titus 1: 11; 2 Pet. 2:3). In response, he begins depicting them as unreliable barometers of the spiritual situation. He charges them with being too narrow, paranoid, tradition-bound, legalistic, unloving, witch-hunting, stagnant and static. He claims they have "circled the wagons" and are "stifling healthy investigation." They have "crystalized" into a "fortress mentality." The faithful have often been portrayed as wild-eyed, fanatical, trouble-

makers (e.g., 1 Kings 18:17; Acts 16:20; 17:6).

Brethren, dangerous trends are underway in our midst. Where once false teachers were quickly and firmly stopped and their influence and impact minimized, now broad segments of the brotherhood continue to offer themselves as prey to men who are given free course to spread their false ideas. They no longer are described as "false teachers" who promote "false doctrine." Now they simply "challenge our thinking" or "broaden our horizons." Rather than being duly noted and avoided (Rom. 16:17), they continue to operate freely and even function in influential capacities (e.g., staff writers for publishing companies and magazines). They are given latitude to voice their false ideas through major brotherhood publications. They continue to be used as guest speakers in pulpits and on lectureship platforms. We no longer call for repentance as did John (Matt. 3:7-8). Now we "negotiate merger" and "reconciliation" or "seek unity."

If we expect to please God; if we desire the church to survive these Satanic assaults from within, we simply must adhere to God's guidelines for dealing with false teachers (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:14-15; 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Titus 3:10-11; James 5:19, 20; 2 Pet. 2:1-2; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11)!

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers ... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:10, 11, 13).

[**EDITORIAL COMMENT**—As far as we can tell the previous article appeared in *The Restorer* (no longer published) and in the *Firm Foundation* in 1987. It presently is available on the Apologetics Press web site. Thus, the author of the article, David L. Miller is, no doubt, brother Dave Miller, the present Director of Apologetics Press.

In the intervening 21 years since the article was printed, Miller has taken on the identifying marks he so well sets out and describes in his article. Regarding his false belief about the reaffirmation/re-evaluation of elders, his erroneous so-called "marriage intent doctrine" and his appearances in liberal pulpits without exposing their errors, Miller: 1) is "bold to advance his ideas in some settings, but is strangely silent or evasive in others;" 2) "was once easily understood and known for the certainty and clarity with which he taught truth. But then [began] to speak vaguely and unclearly;" (3) has some who once opposed him are now "hailing him as an ally... 'Politics makes strange bedfellows';" and (4) charges those who oppose him "with being too narrow, paranoid, tradition-bound, legalistic, unloving, witchhunting, stagnant and static," etc. As Miller himself wrote, "Now we "negotiate merger" and "reconciliation" or "seek unity." *How many have undergone Miller's spiritual digression, all the time telling themselves that they have never changed?* —**DPB.**]

A REQUEST FOR HELP FROM THE OCKLAWAHA CHURCH OF CHRIST

Wayne Paulk

Dear Brethren,

I write to you today about what we at the Ocklawaha Church of Christ consider an urgent matter. Our song leader and youth teacher, Justin Paulk, a husband and father of three girls ages 15, 8 and 3, is having serious health issues. His health problems began as a result of a lightning strike he suffered a few years ago. He has undergone numerous blood tests, cat scans and an MRI in an attempt to determine the cause of his extreme headaches, blurred vision and dizziness, but the doctors have not made a definite diagnosis of what is causing his health problems.

Justin is self employed in the housing market and does not have health insurance. This, of course, makes his medical bills difficult to pay.

Some time ago Justin and his family moved into a new home after renting a home for several years. The rental property turned out to have serious mold problems.

At about the same time his health problems developed, the housing construction business took a nosedive. Coupling his health problems, that have made it difficult for him to work regularly, with the downturn in the housing construction business, he is in serious danger of losing his house. His medical costs have completely depleted his financial capabilities, and as his father, I have used up the finances that I have had available in helping him.

We here at the Ocklawaha Church of Christ are doing what we can to assist him but we need help in doing so. We are requesting that you consider helping us in assisting Justin. If you know of anyone who can help would you please put them in contact with us. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me, Wayne Paulk, the evangelist with the church and Justin's father.

Our address and phone numbers are:

The Ocklawaha Church of Church

2641 S. E. 48th St.

Ocala, FL 34480

Phone Numbers

Home: (352) 207-1063

Or

Cell: (352) 732-8317

In Christian Love,
/s/ Wayne Paulk
evangelist

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10)

Elders That Inquire

Lynn Parker

One of the gravest of responsibilities placed upon elders by the Chief Shepherd is found in in the following verse:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account (emphasis mine-LP); that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

To watch, to be alert and vigilant on our behalf, in our interest, for our spiritual welfare is the burden placed upon God's overseers. The men who faithfully do the work of elders will one day answer for the discharge of their weighty responsibilities. This all points to the fact that there are times when elders, not out of a desire to be "busy-bodies," but by necessity, considering the charge laid upon them, must make inquiries. Of *what* should elders inquire? Of *whom* should inquiries be made? For what *purpose* should inquiries be made? Please consider these questions briefly.

Elders should make inquiries into any situation which affects the spiritual well-being of the congregation that they superintend. They need to inquire into an unresolved dispute between brethren that threatens to harm, even divide the church unnecessarily. They need to inquire into a questionable marriage before extending "the right hand of fellowship" to newcomers. Certainly elders would want to know the religious stance of any persons being considered to teach Bible classes or preach to the congregation. Elders should not be bashful in finding out the doctrinal stance of men who are being considered to preach in a Gospel meeting before the congregation and the community. Certainly elders would want to know who is speaking to the young people, and what is being taught at such meetings and youth rallies, devotionals, and such like. Occasions may arise where elders should speak with brethren concerning business practices that are questionable or downright wrong. Elders need to inquire concerning family attendance, and perhaps priorities when they begin to absent themselves from the Bible study and worship assemblies. Elders need to know where the Lord's money is going when they agree to help various works, and it goes without saying that elders ought to know what their preachers (local and foreign) are teaching. Elders need to know how their benevolent dollars are being spent. To do this may demand checking into the administration, house parents and the teaching done at children's homes and other like institutions.

You would not think it strange at all that a doctor would ask you health questions in order to better care for your physical welfare. Are not souls and spiritual matters of far greater importance? Faithful elders must and will inquire into matters that directly and indirectly affect the congregation they superintend. Easy and comfortable? No, but in view of a coming judgment, can God's elders afford to be slack and indifferent-when souls hang in the balance?

—1650 Gander Slough Road
Kingsbury, TX 78638

MAY ONE CONGREGATION WITHDRAW FROM ANOTHER?

W.N. "BILL" JACKSON

This question is certainly appropriate today, for in observing discussions on discipline, and noting what is covered in question-and-answer sessions over the brotherhood, this comes up. While it is encouraging that men are interested in the discipline the Lord teaches, it is discouraging to note that many men very quickly answer the question, "No, one congregation cannot withdraw from another." Let us look at this for a brief time.

Really, the question is not basically centered on "congregational action" as revealed in the New Testament, but it centers on "discipline" and "fellowship" as the Lord reveals it. The rule of God is that we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11); other information is given by John in telling us that we cannot fellowship, bid Godspeed, to any who bring not the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). The works of darkness in Ephesians 5:11 are not specified as works done by one man, by several men, or by a host of men. The number involved in the darkness does not matter; we are not to fellowship such. *And, in 2 John, do we really think that we are forbidden fellowship when one man teaches error, or six men, but somehow if they form a congregation of 150 men, the rules do not apply??*

Brethren surely do not think before they speak, oftentimes. Imagine the case in 1 Corinthians 5, and the fornicator at Corinth. Fellowship was to be withdrawn from this man. Suppose he persisted in his sins, and found 15 other couples also living in adultery, and they founded a congregation. In that congregation's work the people lived in adultery, glorified in their adultery, taught adultery as an acceptable lifestyle, etc. But a neighboring congregation in the same community could not withdraw fellowship from these adulterers; the supposition is that fellowship may be continued

with them. Amazing! You cannot, then, maintain fellowship with an individual fornicator, but you can keep fellowship with 200 of them! Who can believe it?

Once more we see where Satan is going with this. A rebellious and disobedient child of God can flee from one congregation and escape the applied discipline there, and he can find refuge in some other congregation. In that last congregation, he and others can be as sinful and ungodly as they wish, and escape all discipline in this life, for a faithful congregation in that same community—say two blocks away—cannot withdraw from them because of their sinfulness! We do not believe the Lord authorized such a system. He tells us that our fellowship is restricted, and it is so whether we are speaking of one man, 6 men, 60 men, or 600 men! We would ask, and await an answer: "Why will not the Lord's will apply broadly and yea, even worldwide?"

—Deceased



The greatest gift that God in His bounty made in creation, and the most conformable to His goodness, and that which He prizes the most, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures with intelligence, they all and they alone, were and are endowed (Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321: The Divine Comedy. Paradiso, V. l. 19).

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“When Ye Read”

Martha Bentley

Paul expected the Ephesians to read what he wrote, “...how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5).

After the destruction of Ai, Joshua read to the people the laws of Moses (Josh. 8:34-35). Ezra read the law at the completion of building the wall “**from morning until mid-day before the men and women and those that could understand and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law**” (Neh. 8:3).

Isaiah prophesied of God’s judgments and said, “**Seek ye out of the book of the law and read**” (Isa. 34:16). People then respected the reading of the Law and it was often read.

God expected His Law to be read and understood in Old Testament times and he expects no less of us today. We are to be judged from “**Those things which were written in the books, according to their works**” (Rev. 20:12).

In the New Testament we find “**have ye not read,**” or its equivalent many times (Matt. 12:3; 19:4; 21:16; 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10; 12:26; Luke 6:3). Philip explained to the Ethiopian eunuch the scriptures (Acts 8:32-35). Paul wrote the Colossians to read his epistle among them (Col. 4:16), and he also charged the Thessalonians that “**this epistle be read unto all the brethren**” (1 Thess. 5:27). He told Timothy “**Till I come give attendance to reading**” (1 Tim. 4:13).

Today there are few who read the Scriptures on a daily basis, some not at all. If it’s not on TV (much of it false

teaching) or from the local pulpit (much just to satisfy hearers) there is little to challenge our thinking. Many TV programs sound good and may present the truth but are supported by and in full fellowship with false teachers. There are good sound scriptural publications we need to be reading in order to be informed as to what is being promoted and accepted throughout the brotherhood. We need to check all writings and broadcasts to “**prove all things**” (1 Thess. 5:21). We are warned, “**believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God**” (1 John. 4:1). Read the entire book of first John, “**that ye may know.**” We read in 2 John 9-11 that we cannot be in fellowship with God and the unrighteous at the same time. Sometimes it even becomes necessary to, “**come ye out from among them, and be ye separate**” (2 Cor. 6:17). How can we distinguish those congregations who are not in fellowship with God if we do not read God’s admonitions? Many today are espousing the false teaching of reaffirmation and re-evaluation of elders, thus putting the members in direct opposition of Heb. 13:17 in violation of God’s plain commands. Women are more and more in control of congregations though in underhanded ways rather than public worship. Much discord is being sown in violation of Prov. 6:19. Have you read these verses lately?

These are serious matters and our failure to read and heed may cost us our souls. Since Rev. 20:12 tells us we will be judged “**out of those things which were written in the books,**” should we not be diligent to read what is written! Think about it.

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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.

-England-

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

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, ocoechurchofchrist@yahoo.com, www.ocoeccoc.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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Rocky Mount—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sunday: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803) 279-8663

-Oklahoma-

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

- Tennessee-

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

-Texas-

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

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

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

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

New Braunfels—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

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

-Wyoming-

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

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