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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

“HE HAS SINNED WITH THE FIRST DRINK”

Don Tarbet

A brother and noted scholar among us, has surprised us with a shocking statement to the effect that “the first drink” of alcoholic beverages is not sinful. Dr. Earl Edwards stated in a message to the audience at the most recent Freed-Hardeman University lectures to the effect that one drink is not sinful, though dangerous. Here is his quote.

Wishing to be perfectly candid, I would not tell a Christian who decides to go against my advice and drink small amounts of alcohol, maybe in his own home, that he has sinned with the first drink, though I would tell him he runs a greater risk of sinning.

Brother Edwards suggests a contrast between his “advice” and what is “sinful.” His position is that “the first drink” of alcohol, in one’s home, or wherever (one’s dorm room?) is not sinful. However, Edwards thinks the first drink is risky because it may cause one to sin later. I wonder how many students at FHU will not attempt to justify drinking “small amounts” of alcohol in their own dorm rooms on the basis of Edward’s “advice”? When I was a student at FHU in the 1950’s, one preacher student was expelled for having a few “small drinks.” How many such young people could become alcoholics because of brother Edwards’ statement? No one knows! Here is my reply to bro. Edwards thoughtless remarks.

How many “small drinks” does it take to become intoxicated? One or two or four? If it takes two or more, how close together do they have to be before “intoxication?” If two consecutive drinks constitute intoxication, then one drink would be “half” intoxication, or a vital first part of intoxication. What if one takes several “small amounts” within an hour, or short period of time and gets heavily intoxicated? Is that not sinful? Even the “first” the drink is intoxicating. The amount of alcohol in that “first” drink will intoxicate according to its power to do so. Is not intoxication (drunkenness) sinful? Webster says an

intoxicant is “something that intoxicates, specifically (a) a drug that intoxicates. (b) alcoholic liquor.” A “toxicant” is a poison. “Drunk” and “intoxicated” are synonymous. *Webster’s Thesaurus* lists “drunken, high, inebriated, intoxicated, tight, tipsy” as being all the same. One’s “first drink,” and any “first drinks” after that, are always stimulating or exhilarating [Alcohol is more of a depressant. See <http://www.newbridgerecovery.com/newbridge-is-alcohol-a-stimulant-or-a-depressant/>, *Editor*], especially until there have been so many “first drinks” through the years that it takes more than another “first drink” to become tipsy. When one drinks “small amounts of alcohol,” he has an intoxicant in him, and is “intoxicated.” A “toxicant” (poison) is “in” him. Every swallow of alcohol is a swallow of poison. It may not kill the body instantly, but it poisons the brain and the soul. What is the point in drinking, unless there is some stimulation (intoxication)? And, when that occurs, the guilt of “drunkenness” has taken place. Is that not sinful?

Habakkuk 2:15 pronounces a “woe” upon drinking. God said through the prophet, “Woe to him that gives drink to his neighbor...to make him drunk,” and then in verse 16 He extends the “woe” (or curse) upon the one who gives the drink in that he “also—drinks.” The “woe” is upon the drinker and the one he makes drunk—both now drinkers, or drunk.

Bro. Edwards’ implication is that he would “advise” people not to drink “one drink” (small amounts of alcohol—but how he determines the amount of the alcoholic content in that one drink, who knows). However, if they do not take his (advise), and are willing to “risk sinning,” then he will not tell them that their “one drink” is sin. Edward refuses to see that by taking the first drink one is one drink drunk. Edwards argues that we should avoid what leads us into committing the sinful act, but

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

THE "MAINSTREAM CHURCH OF CHRIST" APOSTASY

Although our Lord gave individual members of His church a scriptural proper name (*Christian*: one who is of Christ—Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16), He did not give the church revealed on the pages of the New Testament a proper name. However, there are several terms of designation for Christ's church that are found on the pages of the New Testament and each term tells us something about it. Some of those scriptural terms are: "my church" (Mat. 16:17, 18), churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16), church of God (1 Cor. 1:1, 2), and other terms used by the inspired writers. We call the church what it is, and the terms of designation used by the inspired penman of the New Testament properly tell us what the Lord's church is. We have no New Testament authority to call the church anything but what inspiration called it (Col. 3:17). Thus, when we speak of the New Testament church we mean the church set out on the pages of the New Testament.

In recent years we have heard certain brethren refer to the "Mainstream Church of Christ." That term of designation for the body of those saved by Christ is foreign to the New Testament. Thus, it violates the inspired apostle Peter's directive to Christians found in 1 Peter 4:11. The scriptural fact of the matter is that there is no such institution bearing that name that is acceptable to God. We should not be surprised at these shallow brethren's departure from being directed by such passages as Colossians 3:17 and 1 Pet. 4:11. The reason being this—some time ago these same brethren decided to ignore the New Testament doctrine concerning Christian fellowship found specifically in 2 John 8-11.

Brother Jerry Brewer's article (p. 4) correctly cites the upcoming lectureships at Bear Valley, Denver, CO and Cane Ridge Restoration Lectureship, Lexington, KY as prime examples of the departures of "Mainstream Churches of Christ" from the New Testament pattern concerning Christian fellowship (If you have not read brother Brewer's article, please do so now).

After learning of the "unity in diversity" on matters of obligation being violated by these churches and the speakers on these lectureships, brother Kent Bailey, opined:

Obviously, pornography and the recreational drinking of alcoholic beverages in conjunction with Elder Re-evaluation and the false doctrine of "Marriage-intent" are now acceptable at AP, MSOP, and the North Lexington Church. If any throw up a protest to my conclusion all I can say is that one's actions speak far more loudly than one's words. What will be next? Preachers meeting together for some beer and looking at Playboy Magazines?

Rubel Shelly and his ilk must be rejoicing beyond measure at the victory they have won over these brethren as they practise the fellowship he advocated beginning more than 30 years ago. Given the rapid development of the digression among these brethren in the last 13 years or so in their "unity in diversity," there is no end to where their loose journey will lead them. Sadly, few in the sectarian "Mainstream Churches of Christ" will

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THE “EXPERTS” ON MARRIAGE AND MORALITY

Lee Moses

Morality among our nation’s leaders has been sorely lacking for some time. Instead of George “I cannot tell a lie” Washington, we get Bill “It depends on what the meaning of ‘is’ is” Clinton, re-defining “is” and “sexual relations” to suit his own desires. Instead of “Honest Abe,” we get sexual deviants like Barney Frank, Mark Foley, and Anthony Weiner. Our current President’s sordid past is coming back to drag the office of the Presidency through the muck. A few years ago, Newt Gingrich’s adulterous background brought the political amorality of our time to the fore. According to one of his ex-wives, Gingrich had insisted on an “open marriage.” This does not refer to open lines of communication in a marriage, but to allowing each spouse to date (etc.) other people. Gingrich denied this particular allegation, though he did not deny his adultery. Prompted by this situation, the January 20, 2012 *New York Times* asked a strange question:

If [Gingrich’s ex-wife’s] account is true, was he onto something? If more people considered such openness an option, would marriage become a stronger institution — less susceptible to cheating and divorce, and more attractive than unmarried cohabitation?

Some question, huh?

Enter in the “experts”—answers to the above question were provided in eight columns written by those alleged to have expertise in marital matters and ethical questions. The titles to the columns may give a hint to their views—“No One Approach is Ideal”; “Multiple Partners, but One at a Time”; “The Perils and Promise of Openness”; and “The Right Way to Try Openness.” Consider some of the gems to be mined from their contents:

- Nonmonogamy — or monogamishamy¹ — certainly isn’t for everyone. But it’s a better solution for those who are incapable of monogamous behavior.
- Replacing today’s default marriage vows with compulsory personal contracts would create the space for two adults to seriously and soberly sit down and decide what it is that they want from married life.
- Other couples, though, might find their mutual commitment strengthened if they let off some steam, relieving the pressure of life-long monogamy.
- For some couples, an open relationship can solve more problems than it creates.
- Monogamy is not much of a choice when you are forbidden to choose anything else.

Only one of the writers seemed to have any real problem with the concept of an “open marriage.” A couple of the experts suggested that open marriages were not right “for most people.” Another said, “Open marriage doesn’t work for most people and isn’t a lifestyle we should turn toward now;” implying that open marriage works perfectly for some people, and that perhaps eventually it **will** be a lifestyle toward which we should all turn (emphasis mine, LM).-

The one column that did have a real problem with “open marriage,” entitled, “High Risk to Women and Children,” provides evidence that, as the title suggests, open marriage is particularly unfair to women and destructive to children. However, this column never uses words such as “sin,” “sinful,” or even “wrong.”

However, God makes clear that such conduct is sinful and wicked. Adultery is one of the works of the flesh, which will keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9). As much as God hates divorce (Mal. 2:15), He granted the fornication of one’s spouse as the one reason to allow one to divorce (Mat. 5:32; 19:9). Had he relented to the enticements of Potiphar’s wife, would not Joseph have still committed **“great wickedness, and sin[ned] against God”** (Gen. 39:9)—even if Potiphar and his wife had agreed to an “open marriage”? **“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body”** (1 Cor. 6:18).

The proliferation of immorality is seen at three levels—(1) the doctrinal compromising politician’s sermons who perpetrate it; (2) the media who delights in and minimizes its sinfulness; and (3) the sociologists and psychologists who normalize it and insinuate it can actually be healthy. Our nation’s leaders should be examples to and of America. As Teddy Roosevelt said, “Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike.” If so, how much longer can the life of our nation endure, with the lack of character and morality on the part of its leaders?

We see the media trying to manipulate facts, and thus to manipulate morality. As Marvin Olasky observes,

Now that most leading journalists don’t believe that “objective truth” exists, the media doctrine of “objectivity” has become a balancing of subjectivities: Balance out quotes from person A and person B, and voila: objectivity, or at least fairness.³

And with all the opinions offered by the *Times*, no one was selected to offer the view that “open marriages” are universally wrong. Objectivity, fairness, and truth are not to be found somewhere in the middle of the eight opinions chosen, but in the objective, just, and wholly true word of God.

And sadly, these “experts,” who are supposed to help families . . . who teach in our universities, who write the books we read, who offer counsel to those in need . . . lack any moral compass whatsoever, and provide instructions harmful to marriage, to society, and to man’s relationship with God. No one who offers counsel contrary to His holy will really stands as an expert on these matters.

Be aware of where supposed “experts” stand with regard to God’s word before seeking out their counsel. Do not swallow whatever they say simply because of their rumored expertise. **“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations”** (Psa. 33:11).

¹ A term the writer uses to describe “a relationship that’s almost entirely monogamous” (emph. LM).

² This observation was made by Marvin Olasky in his review of this series, “Open and Shut,” *WORLD Magazine*, February 11 2012, 11.

³ Ibid.

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the first drink of alcohol is not a sinful act. It is the case that there are some sins that may lead us into other sins, but we must abstain from all sin. Also, the consequences of some sins in this life are worse than others, but any sin separates one from God. For instance, young people should avoid “heavy petting,” because it might well lead to fornication. Well, “heavy petting” is lasciviousness, which is already condemned, as well as fornication. So, some sins should be avoided because they may lead to sins of worse consequences in life, but all sin should be avoided.

How many bites of the forbidden fruit did Eve have to take before she sinned? Would Dr. Edwards have justified her in taking the first bite as not being sinful, but that it might lead her to sin at a later time by eating the whole fruit? Perhaps bro. Edwards has not had to deal with the problem of alcoholism in his family, or he would not be so soft on the use of poison.

Were Paul, Peter, and John just giving advice when they taught believers to “**abstain**” from fleshly lusts (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 John 2:15-17)? Paul also wrote that we are to make “**no provision**” for the flesh, “**to fulfill the lusts thereof**” (Rom. 13:14)? If taking a few drinks in the home or dorm does not “provide” occasion for even further drinking and heavy intoxication, what would provide for such? What about an “alcoholic,” who knows that even “one drink” of alcohol

will set him back on the road to ruin, would bro. Edwards still say one drink is not sinful?

Finally, I would like to present some analogies. *First*, speaking of fornication or “illicit sexual relations,” can sexual action be started without fornication being committed? What difference is there in the first minute of sexual activity and the completion a few minutes later? *Second*, the starting of an automobile. How can one start the engine of his car without it running? Would one conclude that he can “start” the car without causing the engine to run? The only way to keep the engine from running is not to start the car, for when the car is started, the engine is running. It is impossible to start the engine without the engine running.

So it is with intoxication. When the first drink is taken, intoxication has begun. Brother Edwards used the expression, “He has sinned with the first drink”, but those words were preceded with words that he would “not tell” that to a Christian as long as he drinks in small amounts in his own home. Preposterous!! Sometimes when a drunk is seen, the remark is made, “He had one drink too many.” TRUE, but which ONE? The last or the first? Had he never taken one drink, he would never have become a heavy drinker, or an alcoholic, to bring hurt and ruin on himself, his family, and loved ones.

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“HOW LONG?”

Jerry C. Brewer

The en masse departure from the faith by “mainstream churches of Christ” continues with no end in sight. To read their bulletins and website posts, one comes away with the idea that Jesus died for trips to Six Flags, Easter egg hunts, dramas, puppet shows, church softball leagues, psychological counseling, camps, colleges, seminars, marriage workshops, women’s days, children’s church, hoedowns, talent shows, tennis matches, trick or treat, adopt-a-highway programs, campouts, children’s musicals, gardening projects, quilting bees, raking leaves, repairing roofs, tax and financial workshops, public relations, meals on wheels, coffee and donuts, and multitudes of like Social Gospel programs. Yes, all of those listed above are “ministries” from websites of so-called “Churches of Christ” who have left the faith.

A similar apostasy took place in the mid to late 1800s. Of those who introduced mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church in that apostasy, Moses Lard wrote,

In what light then must we view him who attempts to introduce it into the churches of Christ of the present day? I answer, as an insulter of the authority of Christ, and as a defiant and impi-

ous innovator in the simplicity and purity of the ancient worship. ...But what shall be done with such churches? Of course, nothing. If they see fit to mortify the feelings of their brethren, to forsake the example of the primitive churches, to condemn the authority of Christ by will worship, to excite dissension, and give rise to general scandal, they must do it (“Instrumental Music in Churches and Dancing,” *Lard’s Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3, March, 1864, pp. 332, 333).

The instrumental music controversy of which Lard wrote had been an issue in churches of Christ for more than a decade, and he determined that it was time for the faithful to act. Among the remedies he suggested were the following:

Let every preacher in our ranks resolve at once that he will never, under any circumstances or on any account, enter a meeting house belonging to our brethren in which an organ stands. We beg and entreat our preaching brethren to adopt this as an unalterable rule of conduct. ...Let those brethren who oppose the introduction of an organ first remonstrate in gentle, kind and decided terms. If their remonstrance is unheeded, and the organ is brought in, then let them at once... abandon the church so acting; and let all such members unite elsewhere. Thus these organ-grinding churches will in the lapse of time be broken down, or wholly apostatize, and the

sooner they are in fragments, the better for the cause of Christ (Ibid).

The time has again come for the faithful to act. How long will brethren in our day continue to abide the egregious departures from Truth by “mainstream churches of Christ”? Today’s symptoms differ from those in 1864, but the cause is identical to Lard’s day— a failure to respect the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). In 1864 it was mechanical instruments of music. Today it is layer upon layer of Social Gospel “ministries” and the open fellowship of error that have plagued the church far more than a decade. Lard’s sentiment that, “the sooner they are in fragments, the better for the cause of Christ” was echoed in an email message I received this week. In it, brother Gary Grizzell wrote, “The sooner the major divide between the faithful and the pretenders is known and faced, the better.” We wholeheartedly agree with both men.

There exists an amalgamation in the church of our day comprised of “mainstream churches of Christ”— “pretenders” in brother Grizzell’s words—and those who fellowship them. In fact, fellowship is the major problem among us. Churches and preachers, like those of the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) who would have never have fellowshipped churches like Bear Valley in Denver, Colo. in previous years, are now cozily bedded down with them in error.

Bear Valley’s lectureship, set for Sept. 13-16, 2018, is an example of the amalgamation of those who were once sound, but have swapped Truth for a mess of pottage. Among the speakers is Dave Miller, who became a lightning rod in the church with his false doctrines of elder reevaluation and reconfirmation (Elder R/R), and that marriage is not a marriage if those who marry don’t “intend” it to be.

Barry Grider, preacher for the “mainstream” Forest Hill church of Christ in Memphis, and an MSOP instructor, is also speaking with Miller. Another speaking with Grider and Miller is Eddie Parrish who preaches for the “mainstream” Brown Trail church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, where Miller orchestrated the Elder R/R process and divided the church. Brown Trail later issued a statement of “repentance.” So much for Brown Trail’s “repentance,” seeing that Parrish fellowships Dave Miller and Miller never repented.

The “mainstream” North Lexington church of Christ in Lexington, Kentucky will conduct the 38th Cane Ridge Restoration Lectureship, Aug. 2-5, 2018. Among those speakers is Kyle Butt of Apologetics Press, whose director is Dave Miller, and B. J. Clarke, director of MSOP. Also speaking is the “mainstream churches of Christ” version of Hugh Hefner, Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) President David Shannon. Yes, the same David Shannon who defends nudity in art classes at FHU. Not only does Clarke seem to have no problem with Miller’s doctrinal error, but he apparently has no problem with Shannon’s immorality. And who but a “mainstream church of Christ” like North Lexington would

have a purveyor of pornography on its lectureship? The respect these preachers and churches have for the authority of Christ could be put in a gnat’s eye, and its eyesight would still be 20/20. Paul and John wrote,

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18). Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine 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, 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).

None of the above churches or preachers respect the word of God written by those two inspired men. Those preachers and churches are an almost imperceptible speck of the doctrinally cancerous growth thrusting deeply into the body of Christ. That deadly growth continues to swell with “mainstream churches of Christ,” lying silently beneath the surface in our back yards and turning deaf ears and blind eyes to the massive apostasy that roars like a tsunami across the land. In Lard’s words, they are, “the insulter(s) of the authority of Christ, and...defiant and impious innovator(s) in the simplicity and purity of the ancient worship.”

Ephraim is joined to his idols.

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DEAVER, WOODS, AND DIRECT HELP

Gary W. Summers

Mac Deaver, the champion of “the direct help from God” heresy, occasionally prompts the reader who is considering his 2007 book (*The Holy Spirit*) to laugh. He does not intend to be humorous, but the reader cannot help but chuckle at his tactics. In his first chapter, Mac tried to establish that Gus Nichols agreed with his position while at the same time saying that in his oral debates he “never claimed brother Nichols to be in agreement” with what he had publicly defended (11). It remains confusing, then, to hear him say that brother Nichols probably did agree with him (12). Anyone who has read Gus Nichols’ book on the Holy Spirit knows that he did not agree with Mac, despite Mac’s suspicions to the contrary. Do these quotes of brother Nichols (from his book, *Lectures on the Holy Spirit*, published in 1997), sound like he believed that the Holy Spirit directly helped or influenced the Christian?

Question: Should we pray to God to give a preacher a “ready recollection?” Is this providential, miraculous, or what?

Answer [from brother Nichols, GWS]: That’s all borrowed from the Apostles in John 14, when Jesus promised them that the Spirit would inspire them to reveal Christianity, to reveal the Gospel. He said, “**He shall bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you.**” (John 14:26) Jesus did not want them to go out and preach without knowing exactly what he had taught, without any perversion whatsoever. He would not let them preach until they had received that power.

In Luke 24:48, he said, “**Ye are witnesses of these things.**” And then in v. 49, “**Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.**” It is error for a man to claim that same power tonight, when he is not an apostle, not in the same class they were, when the world is not in the same condition. (Acts 1:8)

They had no New Testament at that time, not a line of it. And I say again, it is a pity for people to reason in circles and ignore the facts that make a difference (151).

The reason that this quote is particularly pertinent is that many of Mac’s supporters are constantly asking, “Don’t you ask for the Holy Spirit to help you when you preach?” or some variation of that sentiment. Brother Nichols, who allegedly agreed with Mac, utterly demolished that view. Below is a further comment that cannot be misunderstood.

Question: How does the Holy Spirit guide men today other than through the Word?

Answer: Tonight I have been saying over and over that he does not! The Holy Spirit’s guidance is in the written word of God, and by it he does a thorough job guiding us. “**Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel**” (Psa. 73:24) (83).

Unlike Mac, brother Nichols believed that the Word of God was sufficient and that we did not need direct help. This next quote is equally clear.

Question: Does the Holy Spirit speak through men today in a direct way? Does he motivate them to speak by “influence” on this behavior?

Answer: The Holy Spirit now through the Bible influences us to speak; but there is now no direct “independent of the word” operation, or revelation, for us. Such ideas “make the word of God of none effect” today because people will ‘turn up their noses’ to the word, and look forward to, or expect, imaginary direct revelation. This is absolutely a “decoy” to get people away from the word of God. The whole thing is a work of Satan, who wants to belittle the “word” of God and render it ineffective (82).

It is both comical and sad to see Mac Deaver trying to get brother Nichols to agree with his position. His treatment of brother Woods is both puzzling and humorous. In chapter one of his book, Mac spent a good deal of time trying to show that brother Warren utterly defeated Woods’ position on the Holy Spirit’s indwelling at a forum in 1967. Then Deaver begins his third chapter by attacking what Woods wrote concerning the Holy Spirit. But after doing so, he then tries to convince the reader that this man with lame arguments actually agrees with him (does that make Mac equally lame?). In other words, if a man was so erroneous in his Holy Spirit views as Deaver alleges Woods was, then why would he trumpet that Woods agrees with him? Mac does not seem to be able to help it. Sooner or later, everyone agrees with him.

It parallels the global warming enthusiasts. If it is hot, that is evidence of global warming. If it is severely cold, that is also evidence of global warming. If it is too wet or too dry, guess what? It is just further proof of global warming. So it is with Mac. If someone’s views are different from Mac’s, he nevertheless agrees with him. Even if he plainly denies what Mac believes, he still wrote a phrase or sentence that could possibly be construed as agreeing with Mac. There is no escaping this irresistible conclusion—everyone agrees with Mac!

JAMES 1:5

Since this discussion focuses on James 1:5, let us see what Mac says, Woods says, and the Scriptures teach. To begin with, James 1:5 teaches: “**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**” The first thing that one studying the book of James would notice is that this

verse is not isolated but is part of a text. The wisdom being sought here is probably that which will enable the Christian to understand the reason for various trials which must be endured in order to develop patience (vv. 2-4). After this verse come three that encourage the seeker of wisdom to pray in faith; if he doubts, he will not receive an answer because he is unstable and double-minded.

Brother Woods kept this verse in its context; he wrote: “The ability to see great blessings in sore trial is not an inherent one, and must, therefore be acquired” (40). Brother Woods then elaborates on the means by which this wisdom is and is not acquired. He made clear that this wisdom does not come from:

- 1) a study of philosophy;
- 2) meditation;
- 3) consulting with wise men.

In other words, brother Woods differentiated between a) knowledge obtained through study by the accumulation of facts, and b) wisdom, which is the ability to apply the knowledge one has learned. In that connection he wrote that facts stored in the head “are obtained only through mental effort” (40). Wisdom, on the other hand, can only be bestowed by God.

Whether the reader agrees or not with brother Woods, the point is that this is what he taught in his commentary. He closed this section by saying that the manner in which God grants the wisdom prayed for is not dealt with in the text, which is absolutely correct. James did not tell how God would grant the wisdom—just that He would.

EVERYBODY AGREES WITH MAC

Perhaps a television network would like to pick up the above title as a religious sequel to the secular old TV sitcom, *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Although brother Woods simply stated a fact—that the manner of God’s granting the wisdom was not specified—Mac immediately (and incorrectly) draws the conclusion that therefore brother Woods believed it was a direct infusion from God. He argues that, since the wisdom can only come from God and not through mental effort or study, that it must come direct from God’s mind to ours. Mac concludes: “Now, will someone please explain to me how it is that brother Woods did not imply direct help from God!” (49).

Okay, Mac, read the following explanation carefully. What are the ways in which God can grant His people wisdom? Of course, there is the direct method, which was actually done in the first century. Wisdom is one of the nine spiritual gifts that Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 12; in fact, it is the first one he mentions (v. 8). The second is knowledge. In granting these gifts, God gave Christians the information or the ability directly. Just as prophets were given the words to speak, those with these gifts could communicate spiritual

knowledge they had not studied to obtain or impart wisdom which usually came from observation and application of principles. By the way, to say that God grants wisdom today directly implies that these gifts are still operational. If it is argued that even one of the gifts remains operational, how can anyone shut the door to the other eight, which includes speaking in tongues and the working of miracles? To suggest that brother Woods would have opened this door would be a repudiation of everything that he ever taught on this subject.

Although brother Woods affirmed that wisdom did not come through mental effort, which studying would require, he did not rule out thinking, period. Suppose, for example, that the one praying for wisdom to understand why Christians face trials was brought face to face with a situation in which a brother had suffered. God, through His providence, might allow him to overhear a conversation in which a pagan was so impressed by the demeanor of the Christian in the face of the trial that he was considering the authenticity of Christianity. Having heard of the benefit of a brother’s suffering, he immediately achieved the understanding for which he had prayed. Did this wisdom come from study or meditation? No, he grasped the point in a moment, in a flash (as it were). This sudden realization that came through God’s providence required a minimum of mental activity—totally unequal to that which is achieved through mental effort.

Mac immediately rules out the explanation just provided for God giving wisdom through providence, but he does so erroneously. Misapplying what Woods said about knowledge requiring mental effort, Mac then concludes that no mental effort is required in wisdom either: “Thus, it has nothing to do with reflection or any other mental activity at all” (49). As already shown, the mental activity required in studying and learning and the mental activity in coming to a sudden realization are two entirely different matters.

ANDREW CONNALLY

Now the careful reader notices a bit of misinformation in Mac’s book on the Holy Spirit. Below the quote from brother Guy N. Woods is footnote 50, which begins on page 48 and finishes on page 49. Mac states that Connally quoted the Woods’ passage and then drew the following conclusion: “But God gives it, directly to us, and He gives it ‘liberally’” (49). The only problem is that Connally made that statement before quoting the passage by Guy N. Woods. Whoops! All right, it is only a technicality, but is it one that a man who prayed for wisdom would make? Surely, Mac prayed for wisdom in writing his book.

Connally was assigned James 1:1-12 for the ninth Annual Denton Lectureship book, which was published in 1990. The quotation cited above came before the Woods’ quote. Immediately after it, Connally wrote “Thus here is something God does for the child of God personally and directly in response to believing prayer” (50). What Connally meant by the word “directly” only he knew. In 1990 Mac

did not hold the position he currently advocates, let alone Andrew Connally. Although it is possible that Connally believed what Mac now teaches, it might be the case that he was thinking of God's providence, in which God brings something about apart from the Word versus something that comes about as a result of our studying the Word.

Certainly brother McClish, who edited the book, did not understand brother Connally to be saying that God infuses wisdom directly into our minds, just as He would have a spiritual gift in the first century. As editor of the original *Gospel Journal*, brother McClish devoted an entire issue that dealt with the various aspects of Mac's teaching. Mac did not say that either Connally or McClish agreed with him (which is surprising), but he did offer this comment in the footnote 50 already alluded to: "Notice that Connally uses the word "directly," and please consider that this book was edited by Dub McClish" (49). The reader is left to draw his own conclusion.

WISDOM

James says to pray for wisdom, but Jesus had earlier promised others that they would be granted miraculous wisdom. In Luke 12:11-12, He said that, when His disciples were delivered up to authorities, they should "not worry about how or what" they should answer. In other words, both knowledge and the wisdom to use that knowledge would be provided. Jesus added that the Holy Spirit would tell them in that very hour what they should say. This same idea is repeated in Luke 21:14-15 when Jesus told His disciples: **"Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist."**

This means that God gave them the words directly and the ability to speak with wisdom. Again, this clearly indicates a miraculous ability. Do we still have this ability today? No, the promise was made to Jesus' disciples in the first century who did not have the Scriptures—not to us who do have the opportunity to learn and use them properly. Stephen literally did what Jesus promised. As he faced his adversaries, **"they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke"** (Acts 6:10).



A TIME OF SEPARATION

Jess Whitlock

President Trump has certainly taken his share of criticism for attempting to enforce the laws of the land concerning illegal immigrants, even from those of his own party. The basic argument we have heard over and over again is that they could be separated from their children. That is sad, but will we then be consistent?

Of course, Jesus Himself set the standard. When He finished teaching on various matters, no one had anything else to say. He perplexed those with His question on John's baptism so that they admitted they did not know how to answer Him (Mat. 21:23-27). When He gave His answer on taxes, they marveled and left (Mat. 22:22). When He answered the Sadducees concerning the woman married to seven husbands **"they were astonished at His teaching"** (Mat. 22:23-33).

Jesus silenced His adversaries with His great wisdom. Mac has silenced no one. Daniel Denham wrote 90 pages of criticism of Mac's book, which is included in Profiles in Apostasy #2, recently published by *Contending for the Faith* (Feb. 2011). He had at least three times that material which he has accumulated on the subject, showing the fallacies of Mac's reasoning and positions. If Mac had a fraction of the wisdom of Stephen, the apostles, or the Lord, no one would be able to refute the positions set forth in his book, but brother Denham, this writer, and others have shown that Mac's teachings do not reflect wisdom but folly.

Brother Denham points out that Mac wrote "that God in answering our prayer would be increasing our personal capacity to grasp or comprehend that wisdom provided in the Scriptures..." (109). Really? And Mac knows that—how? Mac's problem is that Mac teaches that man, when he prays for wisdom, cannot receive information; so he fancies instead that God will enhance his "Capacity to comprehend or better grasp that source material" (109). In other words, he alleges that his "comprehension skills of the revealed Word would increase."

Brother Denham rightly says: "There you have it! Just accept Mac's doctrine and God will multiply your brain cells, energize your cognitive functions, and/or juice up your intellect" (115). Once again, we see that Mac's case is built on assumptions that are only conjectures. James is not teaching that our brain cells will be supersized if we pray for wisdom. In some manner God will grant our request, as brother Woods wrote. God is capable of supplying wisdom in a way other than directly.

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Consider these scenarios: (1) a man (citizen/illegal) robs your bank of \$50,000 and is found guilty. He is sentenced to 30 years in prison. But, he has children. Then what? (2) a man (citizen/illegal) robs your bank. A bank guard pulls his gun and is shot to death in the conflict. The bank robber is found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. But, he has children. Then what? (3) a man (citizen/illegal) robs your bank. Your mate or one of your children is there as a customer. The police arrive, having responded to a silent alarm. Your loved one is taken hostage and killed. The man is found guilty and

sentenced to the death penalty (Gen. 9:6). But, he has children. Then what? In each instance has the law been violated? The answer must be “yes” or “no”. My dad taught me at an early age, “Do not do the crime, if you cannot do the time.” Original? No. True? Yes. Some things demand separation!

There is coming a time of great separation! Mothers and fathers will be separated from children. Husbands will be separated from wives. Brothers will be separated from sisters. Nephews and nieces will be separated from aunts and uncles. In a nutshell, those who are saved will be separated from the lost, and family ties will be of no consequence.

Our Lord spoke concerning the coming day of judgment.

But when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats...then shall He say also to them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:31-32, 41).

So, we note there will be a separation like that of sheep and goats. There will be a separation of those on His left hand and those on His right hand.

In that great day there will be a separation of evil from good (John 2:28-19). It is compared to a separation of the wheat and the tares (Mat. 13:24-36). Again, it is a division between those who are prepared and those who are unprepared (Mat. 25:1-14). It is also likened to a distinction between the wise and the foolish (Mat. 7:24-28). There are only the two groups. There is not an alternative group; there is no middle group in between.

Almost everyone remembers the tragedy of the Titanic. On board were the rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated, men, women, children, the crew, and the passengers, et al. However, when the “list” was published, there were only two groups: those who were saved and those who perished! It will be thus on that great and notable day of judgment. There will be a separation that will last for an eternity (Heb. 9:27; Acts 17:30-31; Mat. 25:31-46; 2 Pet. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:10; etc.).

That time of separation will be forever and ever.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever...and if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10, 15).

Hell, like heaven, is eternal. The Greek words for “eternal” and “everlasting” are *aion* and *aionios*. The words are defined: “everlasting, eternal, always being, never to cease...”. The punishment for the lost will be forever and ever: (Mat. 25:41-46; 2 The. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:17; and

Jude 6,13).

Where will you be the day after that separation takes place? Are there some changes that need to be made between now and that day? Today the question is, “What will you do with Jesus?” In that day, the question will be, “What will Jesus do with you?”

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## “MARK” AND “TURN AWAY”

Dub McClish

Paul’s final plea to the saints in Roman was for doctrinal purity:

**Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them (Rom. 16:17).**

This statement is not merely a polite suggestion, but an earnest entreaty with the strength of a charge, an order, or a command.

The substance of the appeal is that the pure doctrine of Christ must be carefully preserved. The principal means of doing so were two: (1) Mark those who were causing division by their error; (2) Turn away from those brethren. The originators and/or propagators of the divisive doctrines must be “marked” (from *skopeo*, meaning to “look [out] for, notice, keep one’s eyes on someone or something” [Arndt & Gingrich]). Every Christian is to exercise this vigilance for false teachers.

How strange that anyone claiming loyalty to the teaching and example of Christ would sympathize with purveyors of perverted doctrine. The only way some brethren “look out for” heretics is to defend them and supply their needs. Quite pitifully, many (including elders) are so ignorant of the Truth they cannot recognize error when they hear or read it.

Others count it a mark of spiritual superiority never to “keep books” or “files” on any brother. Such folk pride themselves on their ignorance of who is teaching or practicing strange things, thinking that such self-imposed ignorance somehow nullifies the errors or at least, their taking any action concerning them. A generation of ignoring instead of taking note by a large number of brethren has produced predictable widespread apostasy.

Some argue that “branding” is not in Paul’s command to “mark.” This observation is true concerning this one word. However, the very act of taking note of false teachers so as to be able to avoid them demands that they be branded/

exposed. This was the Lord's practice (Mat. 16:6). Paul's charge has no meaning if his aim was not the identity and exposure of the divisive errorists.

These teachers are not to be listened to or extended any treatment that implies endorsement (cf. Tit. 3:10; 2 John 10–11). Preachers, congregations, and universities, and schools of preaching are rightly judged by the company they keep. If many of our brethren had not been too sophisticated and "bleeding-heart" tolerant to obey Paul's instruction in this

matter over the past thirty-five years, most of the liberal element could have been isolated and its damage minimal. Instead, heretics have been allowed—and continue—to circulate with freedom and acceptance in a large portion of the church like ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing among lambs.

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(Continued From Page 2)

see beyond their noses to where Satan's "Pied Pipers" are leading them. "Unity in Diversity" in obligatory matters is very much alive and well in these two lectureships as well as the churches and their works from which their speakers come.

We first printed the following article in the August 2003 *CFTF*. It was written by our faithful brother Geoff Litke. It makes very clear how Satan and his servants have accomplished what they have in getting the church to apostatize and how they continue to accomplish their goals. —David P. Brown, Editor

### SATAN IS AN "INCREMENTALIST"

Paul warned the Corinthians about their actions lest Satan gain an advantage over them. In doing so he declared, "we are not ignorant of his devices" (1 Cor. 2: 11). Christians ought not to be naive about the way Satan works. The scriptures teach the children of God to, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6: 11). The word Paul used for "wiles" is from the Greek word *methodeia*. Anyone can clearly see the Greek words connection to the English word "method". The children of God know Satan's methods and devices. Throughout the Bible, God revealed the various ways that Satan works. He works through lies (John 8:44; Gen. 3:1-5) that are always and only propagated by wicked men (John 13:3; Eph. 4:27; 1

Tim. 4:1). Nevertheless, knowing these methods has only helped minimally. Satan has gained advantage at the expense of the ignorance of God's people.

God's children have a long history of forgetfulness (Jer. 2:32). In this way Satan has time after time been allowed to cause trouble among God's people. Whereas mankind is impetuous, Satan is quite patient. He was content to work for generations to ensnare the people of the land (Jud. 2:7-10). About a generation ago things about which faithful members of the Lord's church were warning their brethren were dismissed and ignored because they "aren't any trouble here" or "we are sound and don't have that problem," but when the barking of the "watch dogs" was ignored the foxes moved in.

### "CHANGE BY DEGREES"

Incrementalism is a policy or advocacy of a policy of political or social change by degrees (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). The same thing could be said about change in religious matters. Doctrines that were once thought settled will inevitably "re-clothe" themselves. The saddest thing is that those who teach against them have been, are, and will be labeled as ones who beat dead horses and refuse to let things lie. Those who are concerned are labeled as "living in the past" and "airing our dirty laundry" (continued on next page).

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Once, the majority of Christians agreed that the Holy Spirit worked only through God's word, and never separate and apart from it (or in conjunction with, in concert with, alongside of, or any other verbal gymnastics one can do to get a direct "zap" of power, wisdom, or strength from the Holy Spirit to and on the mind or spirit of the Christian). The unity on these views was rarely (if ever) taught or thought to exclude God's providential works that continue today or the miracles limited to the first century. Thus the majority stood united against the errors of Calvinism and Pentecostalism, but now many brothers embrace and preach that the Holy Spirit operates directly on the inward man of the Christian. That is palpably false (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Luke 8:11).

At one time Christians understood the difference between evangelism towards those lost in denominationalism and fellowship with denominations, but now it is common for "Churches of Christ" to plan, participate, and fellowship with denominations—and their motives are at best unclear (Eph. 5: 11). Modernism was warned against extensively in the '60's and '70's, but ignored by many "sound" churches because it was only something occurring in extremely "progressive" churches (those that digress from the truth, 2 John 9). However, now it is difficult to find folks not heavily influenced with the fundamental idea that truth is subjective (to some degree—most still do not realize they are affected). Many

accept as fact the perverse and heinous teachings that the writers of the Gospel needed "source material" and that many "redactors" (rewriters) participated in composing today's Bibles, as well as canonicity being "determined" hundreds of years after the apostles died. Now these very views are pouring forth from pulpits. Indeed, Satan has accomplished much by being patient.

**"THIS MEANS YOU"**

The only question is this, "Where will it stop?" Only we can answer that question. Each Christian is responsible for continually preaching the word and defending the faith (1 Tim. 4:2; Jude 3). And, we must not allow the passing of time to make us complacent. As the faithful apostle Paul was so we must be zealous and jealous for the purity of the body of Christ.

The peerless apostle to the Gentiles wrote,

**For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3).**

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Over the past half-century-plus, I have had the opportunity to write hundreds of articles and manuscripts. My late beloved wife, Lavonne, and our son, Andy, have written a considerable body of material as well. These documents treating various Bible and Bible-related subjects total several thousand pages.



**Dub McClish**



**Lavonne McClish**



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### **-England-**

**Cambridgeshire**—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. [www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk](http://www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk). Contact: Inside the U.K.: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Postal/mailling Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

### **-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.

**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. <http://www.bellviewcoc.com/>

### **-Montana-**

**Helena**—Mountain View Church of Christ, 1400 Joslyn Street, Helena, Mt. 59601, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Matt Bidmead (406) 461-9199.

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**Elk City**—Northeast Church of Christ, 616 N. Locust Ave., Mailing address P.O. Box 267, Elk City, OK 73648-0267, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., Wed.: 7:00 p.m. Jerry and Nathan Brewer, evangelists. The church building is one block east of North Van Buren, on East Avenue C in Elk City, Oklahoma . FaceBook : [www.facebook.com/nechurchofchristecok](http://www.facebook.com/nechurchofchristecok).

**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: [allenlawson@earth-comm.com](mailto:allenlawson@earth-comm.com).

### **-South Carolina-**

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### **Texas-**

**Denton area**—Northpoint Church of Christ, 4224 N. I-35 (Greenway Plaza, just north of Cracker Barrel). Mailing address: 4224 N. I-35, Denton, TX 76207. E-mail: [northpointcoc@hotmail.com](mailto:northpointcoc@hotmail.com). Website: [www.northpointcoc.com](http://www.northpointcoc.com). Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 218-2892; [dubmclish@gmail.com](mailto:dubmclish@gmail.com).

**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., 1:30 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring *Contending for the Faith* Lectures. [www.churchesofchrist.com](http://www.churchesofchrist.com).

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

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**San Antonio/Seguin Area**—Nockenut Church of Christ, 2559 FM 1681, Stockdale, TX 78160, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., [nktchurchofchrist.org](http://nktchurchofchrist.org)