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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

RESPONSE TO A LETTER

*My article in the May/June 2017 edition of **Contending for the Faith** (“Proud of Two ‘Distinctives’,” provoked a lengthy letter of protest (reproduced on page 3 in this issue). I first made the observation more than 40 years ago that liberalism is merely thinly veiled universalism—“Universalism Lite.” Said letter serves as “Exhibit ‘A’” of my observation.*

The respondent’s contentions remind me of the “Rodney King” philosophy, “Can we all just get along?”—applied to religion, a mantra of denominationalism for generations. It is tragically evident that this brother has no inkling of such fundamental New Testament subjects as “love,” “unity,” and “fellowship.” He is obviously a disciple of the “Core/Bull’s-eye” concept of the Gospel and the church.

The letter from this misguided brother exemplifies the poisonous effects of liberalism that has stolen hundreds of congregations of the Lord’s people in the past 50 years. Liberalism requires a “new hermeneutic” that repudiates both inspired Scriptural principles of interpretation (e.g., honoring the prohibitive force of Scriptural silence) and rationality. It thereby conveniently converts doctrinal Truths into mere take-your-choice opinions concerning such fundamental matters as worship, moral issues (e.g., marriage, divorce, and remarriage), the work of the church, fellowship, and almost anything else one might mention. The insipid and soul-fatal believe-what-you-want-ism of the respondent allows men (whether brethren or otherwise) to count error on the most basic doctrines as inconsequential—and join hands around their religious campfires while they blissfully sing “Kumbaya.”

*I wrote the MS below 15 years ago. While additional names of men and congregations could be augmented because of the passing of the years, the material nonetheless directly addresses many, if not most, of the pitiful pleadings of the letter-writer. — **Dub McClish***

THE CHURCH’S UNITY AND UNDENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER

Dub McClish

Introduction

From his earliest knowledge that God planned the church, Satan has despised the very concept of it and everything pertaining to it. His first plan of attack was to do all that he could to prevent its establishment. He used the monstrous, murderous Herod the Great, in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the infant Christ in Bethlehem. He personally and powerfully tempted the Lord to abandon His Heavenly mission as He prepared to launch his work of preaching, teaching, and miracle working. The devil employed the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, and lawyers to oppose, try, and tempt the Lord relentlessly during His work on earth. He used one of Jesus’ apostles to betray Him to His enemies and another of His most intimate apostles to deny that he even knew Him.

Satan worked relentlessly through the Jewish leaders in his trials and in inciting the mob to demand His death. Pilate bowed to the will of the prince of all evil in releasing a murderer and delivering the Lord to the cross. Beelzebub thereby employed his mightiest weapon—death—in an effort to thwart the kingdom plans of the Father and His Son. However, as Jesus plainly prophesied, even death itself, “**the gates of Hades,**” could not prevail—Christ built His church just as He had promised (Mat. 16:18)¹. Since the establishment of the church, God’s faithful people in it have been a holy nation under siege by an axis of evil forces consisting of atheism, humanism, paganism, hedonism, and denominationalism, all dancing as puppets on Satan’s strings. He will not cease his opposition to the God-be-

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

“HOW DO I LOVE THEE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS.”

On page three of this issue of *CFTF* is the letter to which brother Dub McClish in his first page article refers. Our editorial will be a critique of said letter.

For emphasis sake, we once again make clear our publication policy concerning communications we receive. In the gray scaled column on editorial page 2, our longtime policy concerning the same is printed in every issue of *CFTF*. It reads:

COMMUNICATIONS received by CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH and/or its Editor are viewed as intended FOR PUBLICATION unless otherwise stated. Whereas we respect confidential information, so described, everything else sent to us we are free to publish without further permission being necessary. Anything sent to us NOT for publication, please indicate this clearly when you write.

Our email critic, therefore, knew, or should have, that there was the very high probability that we would critically examine the contents of the same for the readers of *CFTF*. In the beginning of his email he wrote, “I submit this letter to your attention to ask for your reflection, understanding and consideration.” Herein we will reveal some of the results of our “reflection, understanding, and consideration” of his email.

We want to compliment the writer for his willingness to express his beliefs clearly and email them to us, even those parts of his email revealing his inconsistencies, logical fallacies, absurdities, and doctrinal confusion. There are those of his mindset who are not as forth coming in stating their helter skelter beliefs in writing as he has.

In giving some of his biographical background our critic begins to reveal his view of the Lord’s church. He wrote, “I was born, raised and/or reared in the **conservative wing of the Stone Campbell movement** known as “**the Church of Christ**” in Florence, Alabama” (bold mine, Editor). Of his work he writes, “I have preached and taught many classes as a member of the COC.” As we study through his letter we are made to wonder what he taught and how much personal conviction he had regarding what he taught concerning the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of God’s word, regardless of the subject. His email certainly reveals that at some point in his past he repented of and repudiated that truth—the truth that comes only from rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15; also see Col. 1:5).

As will become clearer in our journey through his email, our critic is closer to the erroneous attitude that Pilate had toward truth than he is concerning what Christ taught about it (John 8:31, 32; 14:15; 17:17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:7). Pilate asked Jesus, “**What is truth**” (John 18: 37, 38)? Our critic is not far behind Pilate in asking that question. Further, it was the apostle Paul who said of those who blinded themselves to the

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A NEGATIVE CRITICAL MESSAGE FROM A LOVING LIBERAL APOSTATE WHO OPPOSES NEGATIVE CRITICAL MESSAGES

Dear Brethren at *Contending for the Faith* Newsletter

I submit this letter to your attention to ask for your reflection, understanding and consideration.

For a little background, I was born, raised and/or reared in the conservative wing of the Stone Campbell movement known as the “Church of Christ” in Florence, Alabama. I am a graduate of Freed Hardeman College. I have preached and taught many classes as a member of the COC. I have been reading your newsletter, along with many others, for several years. On occasion I have found something in *CFTF* worthy of study, reflection and consideration and I really appreciate the scholarship and study in those articles.

However, most of the content in the *CFTF* newsletters seems to be written as a character assassination on some other preacher, theologian, author, preaching school, fellow believer, different church denomination, and/or other Church of Christ congregations that do something or understand an interpretation a little different than you do. And for this you have made the insinuation that they, and those that follow them or attend their churches, are “doomed to Hell unless they repent and see and do things exactly the same way you do.” I take exception to a combative style and CENI interpretive philosophy, but I take much more exception to attacks on the character of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This issue of *CFTF* goes after a Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee. In prior issues you have gone on attack against Whites Ferry Road COC, The Phil Robertson “Duck Dynasty” Family, David Lipscomb U, Harding U, Patrick Mead, Al Maxey, Mark Hicks, Ruble (sic) Shelly, Bobbie Valentine, Max Lucado and far too many others. Do you have any idea how a new believer or potential believer is impacted by this negativity?

From your *CFTF* Newsletter very little writing is on the “Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” and a whole lot of ink is wasted on condemning “this or that” body of believers or individuals. It seems there are whole *CFTF* newsletters without any mention of how “we are saved by grace through faith, not of works so that none of us can boast. It is the free gift of God.” As I read the end of your newsletter I notice that there are only thirteen Churches of Christ in listed. Really, there are only thirteen “God approved” Churches of Christ in the whole world who do everything the right and proper way during a Sunday morning assembly? Everybody else is wrong except this little band of thirteen? Does humility before God and our fellow man really allow us to make that assumption?

I love you brothers. Because I grew up in that COC tradition I understand. I also feel great pity for those who proudly choose to wear the chains of legalism and would gladly tie these burdensome chains onto all of our brothers and sisters. Jesus called that type of person a “viper, white washed tomb..... and when

they make a convert they make him twice as much the son of Hell as they are.” I don’t think that of you at all as I know firsthand how hard it was for me to study and come to different interpretations. I believe that reflection, self-examination, and heart examination are in order and after that repentance for the many people you have hurt with your attacks. I have had to do a lot of repentance for the same reason.

When Jesus gave his final instructions to his disciples just before his death he stated

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:33-35).

In Jesus (sic) final and most important instructions for his body of disciples he totally left out how to do “corporate church worship services”. If “how we do church assembly” is critical and utterly important to our eternal Heaven or Hell destiny, why is Jesus totally silent about it in his commands to his disciples.

In the OT book of Leviticus, God leaves absolutely nothing to chance as to how and when his people are to assemble, rest, fast, celebrate and worship. The how to, where to, when to, rites, decorations, clothing, who may participate and at what level are 100% spelled out and repeated so that there is no confusion for the people of Israel. Nothing is left to chance in the OT and no CENI is needed or even hinted at. Why is there no scripture even remotely like it in the NT? Why is so much puzzle work necessary to find out how a NT worship assembly was conducted? Why is so much left out such as “how did they pray, how did they sing, what words were used for songs, who wrote the songs, what was the rhythm or beat of the songs, did they sing parts harmony, did they hum, did they have solos or congregational singing only, did they clap, did they stomp, did they dance, did they sit or did they stand absolutely still while singing? Did they not use musical instruments because they thought it was forbidden by God, or was it because they didn’t want to draw a lot of public attention to their assemblies because the authorities were out to capture and/or kill them? We don’t have an answer from scripture for any of those questions and we have very little from early church history. So why would I judge my brother and condemn him or his church family about issues I am unsure about. I know what I am comfortable with, but Romans 14 seems to tackle that issue by saying learn to love and accept those who make you uncomfortable and do not judge or withhold fellowship from them. “God approves of both the meat eater and the vegetarian”

Why are all four gospels and all of the inspired NT letters

“totally silent” as to a command regarding the form, when, how often, where, what order, what songs, what... ever else is necessary for a “God approved” corporate church assembly? Why are the epistles lacking any direct command regarding the same issue? Why is there only ONE command “to love each other” that covers all of it and it is repeated often? Why? And why have we traditionally missed it so badly? Why have I personally missed it so badly?

I would never argue that our corporate worship assemblies are not important or that a respectful order is unnecessary. However, I will teach bluntly that if the “order and style” and checking all of our own approved boxes are what we are hung up on, we have totally missed the point. With our keeping of an approved checklist we also miss the blessings that God wants us to receive in our assemblies. We are richly blessed by our “corporate” worshiping/assembling/gathering/sharing/loving/praying/teaching/admonishing/encouraging/singing and sometimes even “challenging” time together. All of these are wrapped up profoundly, and sometimes very messily, in one command “Love one another”.

But why the Lord’s and Apostles’ silence on all of the peripheral “church” stuff the traditional conservative COC teaches is so “important”? Why draw lines of brotherhood and

fellowship on issues so vague and open to interpretation that for over 2,000 years intelligent and Godly theologians cannot agree or come to a unified conclusion of “how to do church assembly so that God 100% approves”? In the final analysis, all we can ever really fully agree on is that Jesus is Lord, he loves us unconditionally, he died for our sins, he rose from the grave to demonstrate to us he has the power over sin and death. Christ blood even covers the sin of messing up corporate worship services which we do every Sunday by commission, omission or attitude. And, there is not any hope that we will ever do a worship service 100% correctly. If our salvation is dependent on a 100% perfect worship assembly 100% of the time, then we are all doomed, period. We follow “THE MAN JESUS CHRIST” not a plan. Because we feeble humans can’t seem to ever agree on “a plan.” It seems that the only option Jesus left to us is “love each other. By this all will see you are my disciples.”

In your next newsletter issues I would love to see articles on the Love of Christ, what he has done for us, what he has given us, and how we can help each other to reflect and live in that love.

God Bless You and your ministry

Anthony Hipps

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(Editorial, Continued From Page 2)

truth:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 The. 2:10-12).

When we cease to love the truth, we will not continue with it. We will turn from it. But no matter which way we turn from it, we will turn to a lie.

Consequences Of Turning From The Truth

Paul makes it clear regarding the consequences for one who ceases to love the truth. We are responsible to God for losing our love for and faith in God as well as all the things pertaining to God—the word of God and the truth it alone conveys, being two of those things. As the inspired penman stated in his letter to the Hebrews, “**Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God**” (Heb. 3:12). Our critic is a prime example of one who did not heed and follow the warning in the previous verse and many like Bible verses. Thus, “**...they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables**” (2 Tim. 4:4). Of such men and their evil influence the apostle Peter wrote, “**And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of**” (2 Pet. 2:2). Throughout his letter our critic denigrates, repudiates, and fights against the absolute objective nature of truth generally, New Testament truth specifically, and the communi-

cative elements inherent in the nature of language, especially the language of the New Testament and the truth it conveys to us. As Paul said to Festus so say we to our critic, “**...I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness**” (Acts 26:25).

Our critic does not now, and evidently for some time, see himself as a member of the church Jesus built. Further, from his critical email it is not clear whether he continues to be connected with any “wing” of “the Stone Campbell Movement.” However, he mentions that he once was a part of as the “conservative wing,” the “Church of Christ.” Notice that he uses the upper case “C” in spelling church and puts the words in quotes. This is one way by which the Independent Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ, the denominations, and apostates in the Lord’s body reference the church that Jesus built. This is part of their jargon to promote the view that the Lord’s church is only a denomination among denominations. The same is true when those same men wrongly label the restoration of pure, primitive, New Testament Christianity as a part of the “Stone Campbell movement.” We are not members of a “movement” as our critic defines and uses the same, but we are members of the one church the Lord built (Mat. 16:18; Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; 4:4; 5:23).

Our critic certainly does not believe that the restoration principle is scriptural. Therefore, he does not believe that the church of Christ (as that term and like New Testament terms are defined and used in the New Testament) is composed of “Christians only and the only Christians.” The fact of the matter is this, as far as our critic’s attitude toward and fellowship of

other “believers,” we cannot tell the difference in him and any other denominationalists. Of course there is a reason we cannot tell the difference in him and them. It is because all of them are the same when it comes to their respect for and approach to the study of the Bible, the Lord’s church, their attitude toward truth, and how to ascertain it. Since the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) readily confesses they are a denomination, we are not surprised to find our email critic in fellowship and completely at home with them, other denominations, and his fellow apostates.

The Independents and Disciples are the consequence of an apostasy by some members of the restored church of Christ. That apostasy began about midway of the 19th Century and grew to maturity in the very early 20th Century with the churches of Christ and the Christian Church being recorded as two distinct and different churches in the 1906 U. S. Census. What became known as the Independent Christian Church and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) did not fully come to pass until they formally went their separate ways in the late 1960s. With the help of such apostates as our email critic, they have for years sought to lead as many members of the Lord’s church as they can into their “Stone Campbell movement” thereby into fellowshiping most denominations. With many, they have had and are having great success as our email critic, and the history of the last fifty years of the Lord’s church proves. Therefore, and again, they reference the Lord’s church with the proper name “Church of Christ,” rather than one of several descriptive terms for the church found in the New Testament. In so doing, they completely ignore what Paul told Timothy when he wrote, **“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing...”** (1 Tim. 6:3;). He also wrote: **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”** (2 Tim. 1:3; Also see Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:10). Let it clearly be understood that we are not members of a man-made “movement,” but are members of the church that Jesus built, purchased with His own blood, over which He is head, to which He adds all those who are obedient to the gospel of Christ, and the only church He will save eternally (Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:18; Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16; Acts 2:38, 41, 42, 47; Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 1:3; 4:3-6; 5:25-32).

“Character Assassination”

Although our email critic compliments some things that have appeared in *CFTF*, he hastens to point out that he thinks...

most of the content in the *CFTF* newsletters seems to be written as a character assassination on some other preacher, theologian, author, preaching school, fellow believer, different church denomination, and/or other Church of Christ congregations that do something or understand an interpretation a little different than you do.

He does not cite any specific instances in *CFTF* of what he alleges to be “character assassination.” So we must respond to his allegations examining what he calls “character assassina-

tion” in the following manner. Please consider the following definition of the same.

Character assassination is a deliberate and sustained process that destroys the credibility and reputation of a person, institution, organization, social group, or nation. (Rojas, Rafael; Blanco, Juan Antonio; de Aragon, Uva; Montaner, Carlos Alberto; Faya, Ana Julia; Lupi, Gordiano (2012). *Aim, Fire! Character Assassination in Cuba*. Miami: Eriginal Books. p. 12. ISBN 978-1-61370-974-0). Agents of character assassinations employ a mix of open and covert methods to achieve their goals, such as raising false accusations, planting and fostering rumors, and manipulating information.

Character assassination is an attempt to tarnish a person’s reputation. It may involve exaggeration, misleading half-truths, or manipulation of facts to present an untrue picture of the targeted person. It is a form of defamation and can be a form of ad hominem argument (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Character_assassination, Accessed on 11/11/17, DPB).

Would our critic please document where *CFTF* has raised false accusations, or planted and fostered rumors, and/or manipulated information in dealing with anyone? This critic of *CFTF* needs to prove that we have exaggerated material, or mislead anyone, or dealt in “half-truths, or manipulated the facts to present an untrue picture of anyone.” ***Would he place his extremely critical email about us in the category of “character assassination”?*** If not, why not? Whatever the case with our email critic, he should know that the burden of proof is placed squarely on his own shoulders to prove that *CFTF* is guilty of “character assassination” (1 The. 5:21).

We have always corrected anything that was incorrect when the proof of the same was given to us. That has been our policy from the beginning and it continues to be the policy of *CFTF*.

With the foregoing in mind, we put the following questions to our critic with the hope that they will help him and our readers understand what “character assassination” is and what it is not.

1. In Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel did he assassinate the characters of the prophets of Baal when he **“...mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked”** (1 Kin. 18: 27)?

2. Did Jesus engage in “character assassination” when He called Herod a fox (Luke 13:2)?

3. Did our Lord assassinate the characters of those He truthfully pronounced to be a generation of vipers, white tombs (white on the outside, but inside full of corruption), and hypocrites (Mat. 23: 13, 27, 33)?

4. Did the apostle Paul assassinate the characters of the church members in Corinth when he wrote of them,

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that

he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you (1 Cor. 5:1, 2)?

Further, did the apostle specifically assassinate the character of the brother who had “his father’s wife,” not to mention the wife of his father whom he had?

5. Did Paul assassinate the characters of Hymenaeus and Alexander when he wrote to Timothy saying, “**Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme**” (1 Tim. 1:20), or when he warned Timothy about Hymenaeus and Philetus, writing, “**And their word will eat as doth a canker...**” (2 Tim. 2:17)?

6. Did the apostle to the Gentiles assassinate the character of Alexander the coppersmith when he wrote Timothy saying about him, “**Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works**” (2 Tim. 4:14)?

7. Did he who wrote the great chapter on love (1 Cor. 13) seek to assassinate Peter’s character when the former withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed for a certain sin in the church in Antioch of Syria (Gal. 2:11)?

8. Did John, the apostle of love, engage in “character assassination” when he wrote, “**I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not**” (3 John 9)?

9. In commending the church at Ephesus for testing those who claimed to be apostles, but found them to be liars, did our Lord and the church at Ephesus assassinate the characters of those the Ephesians determined to be liars (Rev. 2:2)?

10. Of the Galatian churches Paul wrote, “**O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you**” (Gal. 3:1). Did Paul assassinate the characters of the members of the churches of Galatia when he called them “foolish” and “bewitched”?

On and on we could go, putting like questions based on the scriptures to our critic, but the foregoing ones are sufficient to adequately make our point to anyone who can see through a ladder.

In the ten preceding questions, who is it that could truthfully say Paul, et al., engaged in “character assassination” in writing what they did about the people mentioned therein? From the scriptures cited in all ten questions, will our critic point out from them wherein anyone was slandered, for that is what it takes for one’s character to be assassinated? In view of his erroneous definition and warped thinking regarding what “character assassination” is, we ask him again, for emphasis sake, how does he see his own criticisms of *CFTF*? To tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth may well reveal what one’s character truly is, but as such is defined it does not assassinate anyone’s character. To use a comment coined some years ago, it is only “telling it like it is.”

Concerning facts John Adams said, “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the

dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence” (“Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials,” December 1770, U. S. diplomat & politician (1735–1826, <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/3235.html>, accessed 11/15/2001—DPB). We are interested in the facts of any case. As to those facts that pertain to the actions of men we are concerned about whether the Lord approved of them or not. Thus, in the case of spiritual matters, we are interested in determining what the facts in a case are concerning men’s spiritual and moral actions. Then, we are interested in knowing whether they are authorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17). We urge all to see 1 Corinthians 1:10, 11 regarding the apostle Paul’s approach to learning the facts in a case, revealing the source of his information concerning them, and setting out the truth regarding them. This the case because the apostle expected the members of the Lord’s church to honestly apply God’s truth to their problems in order to solve them correctly (Luke 8:15 and 1 Cor. 4:6—*ASV*, 1901).

One can see what Paul did and what he directed Christians to do in determining what is good. To Christians Paul declared, “**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good**” (1 The. 5:21). Having determined what was good, the apostle taught them to hold tenaciously to the good and reject the bad (1 Cor. 15:58). In 1 Corinthians 5:1-7, we read of the apostle’s attitude toward and teaching about those brethren who persist in engaging in sin (Also see Isa. 5:20; 2 Cor. 13:7; Rom. 2:9; Gal. 2:4-13; 1 The. 5:22; 2 The. 3:14; 1 Pet. 3:11; 2 John; 3 John 11).

In the case of our critic, it is a fact that he has no problem condemning us for doing what our Lord and His apostles did as well as what the New Testament teaches the faithful to do regarding what is wrong (bad) and what is good. Thus, it is a fact that by implication, along with us, our critic condemns Jesus and His apostles for engaging what he falsely calls “character assassination.” Again, our critic permits for himself liberties that he forbids in those who oppose his errors. The foregoing hypocrisy is one of the remarkable identifying marks of those who loose men from what God in the Bible has bound on them.

Criticizing—Right For Him, Wrong For Us

In the second paragraph, our critic castigates *CFTF* for criticizing others, but he has no problem criticizing us. Remember what we pointed out about such characters in the preceding paragraph—they permit for themselves what they forbid in others. He wrote that we oppose people if they “do something or understand an interpretation a little different than you [we] do.” Specifically, what “interpretation” of ours about anything obligatory is “a little different than” someone else’s different “interpretation”? What specifically does our critic have in mind? In asking the foregoing question we are not sure what he means by an “interpretation” that is “a little different than” ours. Why will he not give us a specific example of that “interpretation” that is only a “little different than” ours? Also, in the case of facts, let him specify where we have declared something to be a fact when it is not. One would think he would be happy to give specifics of the same since he says *CFTF* has them “doomed to Hell unless they repent and see and do things exactly the same way [we] do.”

When one teaches a false doctrine that causes others to fail to discharge their obligations to God, whether by sins of omission or commission, the false teacher and those who believe his false doctrine have sinned and are lost (Acts 8:18-24; 1 John 3:4; Jam 4:17). The apostle Paul wrote of the same when he penned,

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).

The apostle Peter warned Christians,

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

The apostle John declared to Christians, **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1). Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for testing those who claimed to be apostles and found them liars (Rev. 2:2). John also wrote to the brethren, instructing them to,

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 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 8-11).

In the preceding passages, does our critic think that Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John were writing to warn faithful brethren to resist and oppose the truth, good examples, and wholesome spiritual influences of faithful brethren?

Combatively Opposing Combatants

Our critic also says, “I take exception to a combative style and CENI interpretive philosophy, but I take much more exception to attacks on the character of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.” Seeing that we have previously dealt with what our critic alleges to be *CFTF*’s attacks on the character of our brothers and sisters in Christ, let us now notice the other absurdities he mentions in his criticism of *CFTF*.

It is difficult for us to take our critic seriously when he writes in a “combative style” for the specific purpose of opposing *CFTF*’s “combative style,” knowing that he does so for the purpose of showing that *CFTF* is wrong to be combative. Nevertheless, he combatively opposes combatants. Need I say more? Here is another instance of him practicing on others what he condemns. That is not only negative criticism but also hypocritical. Nevertheless such is the case with these irenic spirited “New Hermeneutic” false brethren of which our critic is one. They are confused to the Nth degree in determining what is right and what is wrong.

Another strong “telltale” sign further proving that our critic is saturated with liberalism (loosing men from what God in His word has bound on them) is revealed when he tells us that he also takes exception to what he calls our “CENI interpretive philosophy.” That to which he is referring is “command, example, and necessary inference” (CENI) as the way the New Testament authorizes anyone to do anything in one’s service to God (Col. 3:17).

Rather than command, example, and necessary inference, we much prefer the more precise description of how the New Testament of Christ authorizes people to act, namely, direct statements (a command is only one kind of direct statement), examples (pattern), and implication (the Bible *implies* and God expects mankind to *infer* only what the Bible implies). In fact, the only way the Bible teaches is explicitly (in just so many words) and implicitly. Moreover, what it teaches implicitly is as authoritative and binding on men as what it teaches explicitly. However, as far as our critic is concerned, he erroneously thinks “CENI,” et al., are inventions of man and, thus, wrong.

For whatever reason, our poor blind critic fails to understand that: direct statements, examples, and implication comprise an important part of the communicative element of any language and are coeval or natural to the functioning of a language. In the process of writing his objections to the foregoing, our critic must employ the same natural communicative elements of language he abhors in opposing them. It is impossible for him to express his opposition to the same or anything else without using direct statements, examples, and implications. Why is that the case? Take away the direct statements, examples, and implication from a language and you destroy one of the major aspects of a language’s communicative elements, which elements are not derived from man.

Does our learned critic not know that long before someone identified and labeled the parts of speech in a sentence such part were already functioning as a natural aspect of the communicative element in a language? A verb was showing action long before it was identified, defined, and labeled a verb. Such is the case with all other parts of speech. Further, the same is the case with direct statements, examples, and implication; they are a natural/necessary part of how a language communicates, informs, authorizes, and directs people.

The fact of the matter is this, our befuddled critic does not believe we are to take the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular as documents of law, instruction, direction, etc., although the divine volume says it is to be taken accordingly (Rom. 8:2; Jam. 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; John 12:48). Thus, the only way to approach the study of and understand what any language says is by knowing how a language communicates.

Because the teaching of the foregoing cited scriptures, and others like them, Paul could instruct Timothy to, **“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”** (2 Tim. 1:13). If there are no direct statements, examples, and implications in a language how would Timothy or anyone else know that about which

Paul wrote, much less follow the instructions found therein? The apostle also wrote, **“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”** (Eph. 3:4; Also see John 8:31, 32; 17:17). When they read the words correctly, knowing the definition of the words, the parts of speech, and the direct statements, examples, and what they imply, they can understand what Paul wrote. If our critic reads those same words written by Paul or other inspired writers of the Bible, then he must know the grammar of the sentences, direct statements, examples, and what they imply. If he does not, how does he read them with proper understanding? Furthermore, if he were to attempt to explain how he “reads” them without using direct statements, examples, implication, and the grammar of a sentence, how would he do it? The fact of the matter is this, no one can express his will in any language except in the way a language works. Did our critic ever study koine Greek or any modern foreign language? If he did, he must have forgotten what one must know about the working of a language in order to understand it.

What we are seeing in our critic’s email is one of the terrible consequences of following the so-called “New Hermeneutics” of the self-proclaimed “scholars” among us. Such is truly a human invention that smacks of “post modernism” (truth is not objective, but subjective and relative. It changes from person to person, time to time, culture to culture, and place to place. What is truth to you may not be truth to me and vice versa). However, without direct statements, examples, implication, and the rules of grammar of a language, it could only be as Shakespeare had MacBeth declare, “. . . a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”—an accurate way to sum up liberalism and the email from our critic.

“Going After” CFTF

Our critic gives us several names of individuals and churches that, he says, “CFTF goes after.” However, as his habit is, he does not specify the wrong that CFTF did in “going after” others in his “going after” us. Thus, his inconsistent comments concerning the same remain only allegations about us. By his own usage and application of “character assassination,” is our critic not guilty of the same?

Again, he speaks negatively about our “negativity.” Clearly, our critic loves negativity when he practices it against those with whom he disagrees. Moreover, he will gladly uphold all others who negate what he negates, otherwise negativity is forbidden in those who oppose him and is a sign of their lack of love.

Our “studied” critic asked, “Do you have any idea how a new believer or potential believer is impacted by this negativity?” When our critic gives a New Testament to a “new believer or potential believer,” does God require him to remove all the negative content about church members from it before placing it into their hands (not to mention the negative records of God’s people in the Old Testament)?

People conveniently forget, our critic being no exception, that the New Testament is made up of letters that circulated throughout the churches of the First Century. The people men-

tioned in those letters were alive when they were being circulated. They contain references to “the good, the bad, and the ugly” regarding individual church members and the state of different churches of our Lord. The Holy Spirit-inspired New Testament of Jesus Christ does not attempt to sweep under the rug the wickedness of certain members.

When people heard about the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, and their punishment, the scripture informs us, **“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things”** (Acts 5:11). Having heard of the case of Ananias and Sapphira, people in and out of the church knew that being a Christian was not a trivial and frivolous matter. Think about the blunders and sins of the apostle Peter that are recorded in the New Testament. They were told everywhere the gospel was preached throughout Peter’s life. Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, put Peter’s sin into his letter to the Galatians for all to read. Consider the negative truth that was written by Paul about the sinning members of the church at Corinth. As that letter was circulated among the churches, as many as read it learned that some from the household of Chloe had reported to Paul about the many sins in the church at Corinth. What about Paul calling the names of false teachers? Also, we read of the apostle John naming wicked Diotrephes because of his sinful conduct? These letters circulated while those listed by name were alive, and no inspired person ever posed a question like the one our confused critic did when he asked, “Do you have any idea how a new believer or potential believer is impacted by this negativity?” I cannot at this moment think of a more foolish and unlearned question as the foregoing one. Of such characters as our critic Paul wrote to Timothy saying:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Our negative critic, who is against “negativity,” also criticized us for doing “little” writing “on the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Our response to his negative and false allegation is that he does not know what he is talking about. To allege that something is or is not the case does not prove it to be so. It seems that our scholarly critic thinks allegations alone are sufficient in and of themselves to prove his case. However, our critic’s allegations do not proof make—again, shades of the character assassinator.

Among other things, our critic would do well to learn why CFTF began in 1970. It was begun by the late brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr. to spotlight false teachers, their false doctrines, and their sinful conduct. It continues to do the same without fear or favor—an example of the same is our shining the bright light of truth on our liberal, “New Hermeneutiker” critic.

Furthermore, if our “irenic” spirited critic would take the time to investigate CFTF’s publications, covering almost 50

years, he would learn that as we have exposed and refuted error we have continued to teach the gospel of Christ. For almost half a century, *CFTF* has published many articles dealing with salvation by grace through and obedient faith in Jesus Christ. We challenge anyone to find some component part of the gospel that has not been taught on the pages of *CFTF* over almost half a century. Again, we could not begin to list the articles appearing in *CFTF* dealing with the first principles of the Gospel as well as the more meaty matters thereof.

If one is ignorant of the longtime, constant, extensive work of that late brother Ira Rice to spread the gospel throughout the world, there is little we can say here to help such a person out of such ignorance regarding the same. Further, we also have traveled the world in teaching the enriching principles of the Gospel of Christ to lost souls as we defended the faith.

We have all the apostles as examples, but especially the apostle Paul, for spreading the gospel, but it was also Paul who serves as a great example of keeping those he converted to Christ sound in the faith. What good does it do to convert people to Christ, but fail to correctly inform about living faithful lives in the Lord's church? Does our critic not know that most of the New Testament is written to Christians to keep them faithful? In so doing, all sins were exposed, refuted, and brethren warned about their obligation to remain faithful. Further, they were warned in no uncertain terms about the false teachers of their day. Indeed, it seems that such was the motive behind our critic in writing his critical email to and about us? If that was not at least a part of his motive, then what was it? As Jude wrote,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 3, 4).

Assumption Or Implication?

The following from our critic's email is as prime an example as I can find proving that he has no idea regarding the difference in assumption and implication. He writes:

I notice that there are only thirteen Churches of Christ in listed. Really, there are only thirteen "God approved" Churches of Christ in the whole world who do everything the right and proper way during a Sunday morning assembly? Everybody else is wrong except (sic) this little band of thirteen? Does humility before God and our fellow man really allow us to make that assumption?

How is it that this learned critic can see 13 churches in *CFTF's* Church Directory and logically conclude that *CFTF* is saying, "there are only thirteen 'God approved' Churches of Christ in the whole world who do everything the right and proper way during a Sunday morning assembly?" ***The churches appearing in the church directory are there because they wanted to be advertised and that is the only reason they appear in it.***

Our critic needs to engage in some serious Bible study concerning, among many other things, the sin of evil surmising. There is nothing in the directory that indicates what he concludes about those churches listed in it. We turn his own question back to him, regarding his evil surmising and his false assumption, neither of which are warranted by the facts in evidence—"Does humility before God and our fellow man really allow [him] to make that assumption?"

It Takes More Than Only Saying It

Our critic tells us, "I love you brothers." That he has deceived himself into believing that he loves us I have no doubt (2 Tim. 3:13). However, in reality he does not love us for "**Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law**" (Rom. 13:10). But our critic works ill toward us when he:

- 1) Refuses to deal in specifics regarding the charges he makes against us;
- 2) Will not practice 1 Thessalonians 5:21 regarding his charges against us;
- 3) Engages in evil surmising regarding us (1 Tim. 6:4);
- 4) Accuses us of following human inventions because we teach that direct statements, examples, and implication are the three ways a language authorizes anyone to do anything;
- 5) Uses "COC tradition" without defining the term and not being specific regarding what he means by the same;
- 6). Writes of our wearing "the chains of legalism" and how terrible it is that we "would gladly tie these burdensome chains onto all of our brothers and sisters" but does not give us a "for instance;"
- 7) Declares that it is our "type of person" that Jesus called "a viper, white washed tomb, and when they make a convert they make him twice as much the son of Hell as they are," but offers no proof of our doing so.

Regarding the previous point number 7, does our "loving" critic not know that he has judged us worthy of hell? Although he explicitly says he does not think that of us, nevertheless, he puts us in the same class as the Pharisees. Thus, by implication he judges us to be deserving of the same place in eternity to which Jesus assigned the Pharisees (Mat. 23:33). How did our loving liberal critic permit himself to develop such a judgmental and condemning attitude? Whatever happened to the liberal's cry of "don't judge me"? After all, it is his nest of vipers that teach an erroneous concept of love that prohibits a Christian from judging anyone else in spiritual matters. The fact of the matter is this, liberals such as our critic, are some of the most judgmental people on earth and as biased and prejudiced in their judgments as anyone could be. The proof of such is our critic's email about us. Again, he practices what he condemns in others, unless they agree with him.

Rest assured that such liberals as our critic will not judge righteous judgment as our Lord commanded men to do (John 7:24; See Psa. 119:172 for the definition of righteousness). These characters judge on the basis of their personal likes and

dislikes rooted in a sick, syrupy, subjective, sentimentalism that does not deal with the facts in a case or in the light of the rightly divided Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16, 17; Jam. 1:25; Phi. 3:16; Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:17; John 12:48). Paul teaches us **“if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed”** (2 The. 3:14). But since our critic does not like direct statements, examples, or implications (although in the very nature of the case when he attempts to oppose the same he is forced to use them), we will not say more than we have already written as to how he writes or understands any language whether it is the language of scripture or other languages.

Since we do not know specifically what he believed when he was in what he calls the “COC tradition,” we have no way of knowing that from which he turned to embrace denomination-ism. He claims to have done much “repenting,” for he knows that he hurt many people while he was in the “COC tradition.” But, he thinks we have also hurt many people by believing and teaching what we do as we also expose/refute error and the false teachers who teach it. Again, he gives no specifics, speaks in generalizations, and charges us without proving a thing.

Fermented Willful Ignorance

Continuing with our critique, we notice that he directs us to read John 13:33-35. Our critic calls this Jesus’ “final and most important instructions.” He continues the sentence by declaring that “he totally left out how to do ‘corporate church worship services’.” He then wants to know “why is Jesus totally silent about it in his commands to his disciples.” He says we are not told how to do corporate worship. Nevertheless, he tells us we are doing it wrong. So much for his “thinking.” One must study the whole New Testament, not just the Gospel accounts, to learn all we are to know concerning living faithful Christian lives, including the worship of God? The apostle Peter wrote:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Pet. 1:2, 3).

How can a person read John chapter 13 and miss chapters 14, 15, and 16, chapters that give the apostle John’s account of our Lord’s promise to the apostles concerning the work of the Holy Spirit with them after He returned to heaven? It was the work of the Holy Spirit with the apostles of Christ that gave us the whole New Testament, miraculously confirmed to mankind, and, thus, proving it was from God and not from man?

Our critic ought to give close consideration to John 14:15 where Jesus said to the apostles **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** Here is something he and all men would do well to heed. Especially since the same apostle later in the New Testament wrote to Christians, saying:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:4, 5).

No one has ever had the love of God perfected without submitting to the authority of Christ found in the words of the New Testament. Moreover, John tells us who it is that loves his brother in Christ when he wrote:

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:2, 3).

I know brethren love me and that I love them only because we do what God said do, the way He said it, when he said do it, and for the reason(s) He said do it regarding our conduct one toward another. Again, herein is the reason I know that our critic does not love us. He has no intention of submitting to all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27) regarding us and the same is true of him regarding many other things pertaining to serving the Lord faithfully. ***He has deceived himself into thinking that love sets aside the authority of God when in reality love always leads one to submit to the authority of God. Christianity is the religion of Bible authority.***

Returning to John chapter 14 we notice the two verses following verse 15. In verses 16 and 17 Jesus promised the apostles:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Then in verse 26 Jesus said to them, **“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”** As Jesus had been with the apostles in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit would be with them spiritually to enable them to do the work He called them to do. They were and are His witnesses and ambassadors from the Court of heaven to earth. Thereby, the final and complete will of Christ would be and was revealed to the world in the words of our Lord’s last will and testament. Further, the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles miraculously to confirm that word to men, proving it was and is the infallible, inerrant, objective, absolute, complete, and final revelation of God to mankind (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jam. 1:25; John 12:48). As Paul wrote, **“that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”** (Gal. 1:11, 12). All the apostles could rightly say the same thing. It was on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, as the apostles kept their Lord’s commandment to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, that the Lord kept His promise to them—the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit promised by Him to them in John chapters 14, 15, and 16 (Also see John 15:26, 27; 16:7-14; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:42; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:2; Jude 2, 3).

So it is the case that Jesus is not silent about the worship of God, even corporate worship. Every act or avenue of worship is plainly taught in the New Testament. But when our critic,

who has repented of believing that the New Testament is the infallible pattern for all things religious, one who has rejected the communicative nature of language, begins to attempt to study the New Testament, it is no wonder that he finds himself **“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”** (Eph. 4:14). The New Testament was revealed to keep us from being deceived, but by our critic’s twisted approach to Bible study he might as well not have a New Testament at all.

Continuing with the topic of worship, our critic tells us that “nothing is left to chance in the OT and no CENI is needed or even hinted at.” I do not know that I have ever read after a more confused and mixed-up person. Since we have dealt with his erroneous views regarding direct statements, examples, and implication (“CENI”), we will not repeat ourselves here. However, when this confused critic indicates that the New Testament leaves things to “chance” concerning our worship to God in the church (but he knows we do it wrong), I must point out that his false view of how to study the New Testament (New Hermeneutics) is one of the big reasons he is in the confused mess he finds himself regarding determining the most fundamental matters of Christianity. If this poor man would recognize that the original languages of the Bible, as is true of all languages ancient and modern, have their own grammars, direct statements, examples, and implications by which they communicate, then he might not be as confused as the following quotation from his email indicates he is.

Why is so much puzzle work necessary to find out how a NT worship assembly was conducted? Why is so much left out such as “how did they pray, how did they sing, what words were used for songs, who wrote the songs, what was the rhythm or beat of the songs, did they sing parts harmony, did they hum, did they have solos or congregational singing only, did they clap, did they stomp, did they dance, did they sit or did they stand absolutely still while singing? Did they not use musical instruments because they thought it was forbidden by God, or was it because they didn’t want to draw a lot of public attention to their assemblies because the authorities were out to capture and/or kill them?

In the foregoing quotation he certainly respects and uses the communicative elements of language when he writes in opposition to and rejection of the same. But he never will understand what the Bible teaches if he continues to reject a language’s natural communicative element found in its grammar and its direct statements, examples, and implication. The New Testament is God’s perfect (complete) law of liberty (Jam. 1:25). But, from our critics email in general and the foregoing quotation in particular we can clearly see that he does not believe James 1:25 and like passages. His “New Hermeneutics” will not permit him to determine from the New Testament what is obligatory or not, or what is optional or not.

We venture to say that he does not believe the Bible teaches by implication. Thus, he cannot prove that Saul of Tarsus repented of his sins in becoming a Christian. This is the case with our mixed-up critic because there is no explicit statement

(in just so many words) found anywhere in the New Testament that says Saul repented of his sins in the process of becoming a Christian. However, I know that Saul repented of his sins in becoming a Christian. And, I know it just as if an explicit statement was in the New Testament saying as much. If our critic states that he knows Saul of Tarsus repented of his sins in the process of becoming a Christian, we simply ask him how he came to such knowledge?

The Weaker Brother

It is sad to see a man fail to grasp what Paul discusses and teaches in Romans chapter 14. Paul is speaking of matters of indifference that some brethren in their ignorance of the New Testament (thus they are weak in the faith, Rom. 10:17) think makes a difference with them in their service to God. Paul says we are to bear with them to respect their uninformed views in those matters of indifference. ***However, nowhere in the New Testament does Paul teach us to tolerate violating obligatory matters.*** Thus, Paul is not discussing matters of obligation, but matters of indifference that some brethren are binding on themselves because they are not fully educated in such matters.

It must be emphasized that Paul did not expect those who were ignorant to remain ignorant and thus weak in the faith, but with the proper use of their time he expected them by their study of the New Testament to grow out of their weak faith. This is the point that the Hebrews writer made to the Christians he addressed in his epistle. These brethren failed to use their time properly in Bible study and in the application of the same in their lives so they could teach others. In fact, through their lack of interest and study, they needed to be taught once again the fundamentals of the faith (Heb. 5:12).

One problem with our critic is that he has repudiated and arrayed himself against how the New Testament authorizes anyone to do anything. Thus, he does not know how to determine what is and what is not obligatory, or optional, or essential, or incidental, or temporary, or permanent, etc. Moreover, because he is confused on these matters he thinks everyone else is too. Thus, he too has fed so long on the slop of human doctrine in denominational troughs, he needs to be taught again how a language works just to be able to read the New Testament correctly.

Our critic also needs to understand that in Romans 14 Paul instructed the mature Christians to bear with weak brethren only so long as they did not cause trouble in the church over what they practiced due to their weak faith. The New Testament never authorizes Christians to accept someone who refuses to discharge obligatory matters because of a “weak” faith. The same is also true regarding every component part of worship, the organization and work of the Lord’s church, as well as individual Christian living. However, our critic has no way of determining any of these things because of his attitude toward and his erroneous approach to study the New Testament.

Missing It “So Badly”

His next paragraph only serves as further proof of our critic’s profound confusion in his approach to ascertaining our Lord’s authority from the New Testament. He writes:

Why are all four gospels and all of the inspired NT letters “totally silent” as to a command regarding the form, when, how often, where, what order, what songs, what . . . ever else is necessary for a “God approved” corporate church assembly? Why are the epistles lacking any direct command regarding the same issue? Why is there only ONE command “to love each other” that covers all of it and it is repeated often? Why? And why have we traditionally missed it so badly? Why have I personally missed it so badly?

Notice the question that ends the previously quoted paragraph—“Why have I personally missed it so badly?” As to all the reasons our critic or anyone else may have erroneously concluded that the only thing the New Testament obligates us to do is “to love each other” is beyond me. Of course, one must have an honest and good heart in studying the scriptures, studying them with the intent to learn God’s will, to the end that one may learn his obligations to God and discharge them (Luke 8:15; John 14:15; Ecc. 12:13). From the totality of our critic’s email, it is clear that he does not understand what the Bible teaches about our love for God, His word, our fellowman, our brethren, and even our enemies. We have previously pointed out from the New Testament that our love for God will manifest itself in our submitting to His will. But our critic has rejected the communicative element of language when it comes to learning God’s will from the words of the Bible. Thus, he has removed from himself the tools by which language communicates God’s will to us. Therefore, he has removed the way one comes to understand God’s will.

The fact of the matter is this, the New Testament is not silent regarding any and all things essential to our salvation. Whether it is what constitutes the only rule of faith and practice, or the component parts in the singular plan of salvation, or the church in its organization, worship, and work, or all that is involved in Christian living, God has revealed His will to us in His Son’s last will and testament.

If your home is north of where you are, then it is ridiculous to complain about the compass when you reject the natural way a compass works in giving you directions so you can get home. The needle on a compass is always going to point to the magnetic north. It is the nature of the compass to do that. But, when you see the needle of the compass pointing north, but the direction it is pointing does not feel like it is north to you, so you strike out for home in the opposite direction from where the needle of the compass is pointing, does it make good sense to blame the compass when you refused to recognize the natural working of a compass and, end up more lost than you were at first? Before one can use a compass one must know how it works and be willing to follow its direction. Our not liking the nature of a compass does not change a thing concerning where north is or how a compass works. So you can benefit from it only if you know how a compass works. Our critic has God’s spiritual compass but he refuses to recognize how it leads, guides, and directs him from earth to heaven. This is the case because he rejects the natural communicative element of a language. He and others like him have no one to blame for the mess they are in but themselves. The foregoing is at least one

great reason why he “personally missed it so badly.”

Our critic states that he “never argue[d] that our corporate worship assemblies are not important or that a respectful order is unnecessary.” But how does he know “our corporate worship assemblies” are authorized by our Lord at all? He has rejected the communicative element of language when it comes to learning what the Bible says. He has proven he does not know how to ascertain from the New Testament what is obligatory, optional, etc., so how does he determine from the language of the New Testament what our Lord has authorized and what He has not?

In one instance our critic says all that the Lord taught is that we are to love one another, but then he upholds the importance of “our corporate worship assemblies.” However, he cannot begin to show from the New Testament that there should be such assemblies, or why they are important. He talks about “checking all our own approved boxes,” but refuses to tell us what “our” approved boxes are that we are “hung up on.” Let this confused man specify what he thinks these “approved boxes” are and we will be glad to deal with them. He says “we are richly blessed” in our worship assemblies by a number of things, but none of them can he prove by his “New Hermeneutic” to be authorized by the New Testament. He simply falls back on his catch all plan, specifically, “All of these are wrapped up profoundly, and sometimes very messily, in one command ‘Love one another’.” What does he mean when he says that all in his list pertaining to the “corporate worship” are “wrapped up” in a profound mess in the “one command to ‘Love one another’?” Our critic has no idea what all his words mean and seemingly to him that is a good thing. I at least I agree with him that it is a mess. Of course, this is the case with the “New Hermeneutics”—its adherents can tell you what it does not mean much better than they can tell you what it means.

“Peripheral ‘Church’ Stuff”

In the next paragraph, he continues to write that about which he believes the Lord and the apostles are silent. He calls these things “peripheral ‘church’ stuff of the traditional conservative COC teaches is so ‘important’.” What are these things? Again, he does not tell us. He says they are “vague” “issues.” Indeed, they are so “vague” he cannot even specify to us what they are? However, our critic wrote a rather lengthy email, most of which has to do with how wrong we are and how confused he is regarding Bible study, specifically the New Testament.

How To Draw Lines Of Fellowship

In closing his critical treatise about us, he finally gets to what he thinks are the only things that really matter when it comes to where the New Testament draws the lines of fellowship. He writes, that “all we ever really fully agree on is that Jesus is Lord, he loves us unconditionally, he died for our sins, he rose from the grave to demonstrate to us he has the power over sin and death.” Our critic could have written this one paragraph and told us what he thinks is essential and saved us from slogging through his man-made religious swamp. But even with his foregoing false “core gospel” stated, all he has said is nothing more than the warmed over man-made and fermented

human doctrinal soup of the likes of the late Carl Ketcherside, the late LeRoy Garrett, Rubel Shelly and friends, *The Christian Chronicle*, the Christian Church, denominations in general, and to one extent or the other the educational institutions operated by the brethren. As Paul warned the church: **“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”** (1 Cor. 11:19).

Our critic caps off all he has written with what really makes him click, “We follow ‘THE MAN JESUS CHRIST’ not a plan.” Again, the foregoing reveals another 60+ years old false doctrine that was long ago refuted. Without the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice, specifically the New Testament pattern, we would know little to nothing reliable about Jesus. Because Jesus is who He is, His plan is more important than anything on earth. It is called the gospel, God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). This is the case, because the New Testament is the plan that reveals the solution to the sin problem. That solution is the New Testament system of Christianity found only in its words, the perfect law of liberty. It is that law of liberty that our critic despises and he does not know how to ascertain our Lord’s plan for the forgiveness of sin here and eternal life in the hereafter. ***It is the plan that we must hear if we are to know the***

man who can save us through His plan.

Of such people as our critic, the apostle of love, John, wrote, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”** (1 John 2:19). As we quoted earlier, so in closing we include it here, **“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”** (1 John 5:2, 3). In the great chapter on love Paul also wrote, love **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”** (1 Cor 13:6). Whatever else is a component part of love, it never rejoices in iniquity, but always in the truth. The love principle never rises higher, alters, or nullifies the authority principle (Mat. 28:18; Col. 3:17; John 12:48).

In view of our critic’s request as he closed his email, we say that he can count this editorial to be one of those articles on love and “how we can help each other to reflect and live in that love.”

—David P. Brown, Editor



(McClish, Continued From Page 1)

loved and blood-bought church of Christ until he is finally cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and confined there forever as his just due (Rev. 20:10).

From almost the church’s beginning “fifth columnists,” traitors within the kingdom of Christ, have arisen. While feigning loyalty to their Commander-in-Chief and His Constitution, all the while they are guilty of spiritual high treason by consorting with the enemy. They sometimes have great swelling words of praise for the enemy while they harshly criticize and belittle the Lord’s elect in the very presence of the foe. Beginning in the last third of the twentieth century these members of Judas’ band have proliferated. They are in places of immense influence as elders, preachers, publishers, editors, authors, and university administrators and professors.

These ungodly and misguided erstwhile brethren are attacking the church at every fundamental point of doctrine and practice, thereby attempting to change it to fit their culturally dictated agenda. Such changes, where successful, have actually destroyed the congregations involved as far as their Scriptural identity is concerned. Their threat is undeniably real, and blind leaders that they are, they have already led thousands of blind followers into the destructive pit of sin and error which such leaders occupy. This threat from those that were once among us is actually more sinister and destructive than that which comes from outside forces.

Satan’s Attacks on Scriptural Unity

The New Testament doctrine of unity is a principal area of attack by these “Benedict Arnolds” who have gone out from us. It may surprise some to learn that only David and Paul employ the lovely word unity, and they use it a total of only three times

in Sacred Writ:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psa. 133:1).¹

Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

David used a Hebrew term that refers to a state of being together, in union, in harmony, or alike. His statement is a proclamation of the wholesomeness, pleasantness, and joy of such harmony, which applies equally to both physical and spiritual brethren. Paul used a Greek word, which in both passages in Ephesians carries the force of unanimity and agreement. His first reference is a ringing exhortation (“**give diligence**”) to the Ephesians to keep (i.e., guard, preserve, take care of) the precious and pleasurable unity that they then enjoyed. In his second reference, Paul discusses a “**unity**” which they did not yet possess or enjoy (“**...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith...**”). It is thus different from the unity of verse 3, which they already enjoyed and were to give diligence to keep. My judgment has long been that Paul is not referring to unity among the Ephesian (or other) brethren in verse 13. Rather, he is here referring to the completion of the New Testament revelation, as he does in 1 Corinthians 13:8–12.²

Although the word unity is rare in the Bible, the concept of it certainly is not. Scriptural unity among the Lord’s people in the Gospel Age may be summarized under three headings:

A Prayer

Unity—oneness—is one of the three significant themes of Jesus' great prayer in John 17—the true “Lord’s Prayer.” He first prayed for and about Himself (vv. 1–5). He then turned His attention to the apostles (vv. 6–19) and prayed, among other things, concerning them: **“Holy Father, keep them in thy name...that they may be one, even as we are”** (v. 11b). Believers on Him through the apostles’ teaching are the third subject of His prayer:

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me (vv. 20–23).

While the Lord would have all those in the corrupt system of denominationalism (who claim to believe in Him) bow to His will and thereby become united in His one church, they were not the aim of His prayer. It is rather aimed at those who will believe on Him to the extent of obeying Him and becoming His disciples. His will is that all of His followers—those whom He has added to His church upon their Gospel obedience—should be one, united, in harmony and agreement with one another.

Moreover, the Lord did not pray for a mere superficial or artificial “unity” that ignores obligatory doctrine and practice. He specified the nature of the unity He sought. It is to be measured by the very unity that characterizes His relationship to the Father and vice versa. This subject must have been a sublime concern of the Christ for Him to dwell on it so earnestly as it pertained both to His apostles and to all who would obey the Gospel.

A Plea

Paul issued an almost impassioned plea for unity in the divided and confused church in Corinth:

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Note first that Paul’s plea rests upon the foundation of “the name of Christ,” a reference to His authority. This plea therefore carries all of the weight of a command, though politely stated. It consists of three parts: (1) They were to speak the same things, which required oneness in their teaching. (2) They were to halt the divisions that existed among them, which is a negative way of telling them to be one. (3) They were to be **“perfected together”** after the manner of several parts that have been so fashioned as to match and fit together so as to become a whole. This fitting together was to involve the very way they thought and reached conclusions. While these pleas were abundantly appropriate for the Corinthian Church at the

time, we are not to suppose that the apostle desired such thoroughgoing harmony of doctrine, speech, thought, and judgment only for the errant Corinthians. Several other passages issue the same exhortation to various recipients (e.g., Rom. 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phi. 1:27; 2:2; 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:8; et al.).

A Plan

Paul set forth a sevenfold plan whereby the Ephesian Church (indeed, any congregation) might maintain the unity they enjoyed and were to keep:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all (Eph. 4:4–6).

These seven elements (of which there is only one of a kind) embrace every facet of religion, including the church, the hope of life eternal, the one faith of the Gospel, the key to accessing the cleansing blood of Christ (baptism), and all three persons of the Godhead. Those who respond to the faith in baptism are added to the one church, in which alone there is hope, vouchsafed by the triune Godhead. If all abide in the one faith, they cannot be otherwise than united.

Humble submission to the doctrine of Christ is the pivotal element in unity. To the “doctrine-doesn’t-matter” crowd, I assert that it matters altogether. The Lord prayed that His apostles and that other believers would be one, even as He and the Father are one. This would necessarily include uniformity of doctrine. Christ came from Heaven to do the Father’s will (John 6:38) and to speak what His Father “taught” Him to speak (12:50). Biblical unity does not ignore doctrine for the sake of loose “union,” but said unity depends upon adherence to doctrine from which true unity derives.

Likewise, Paul’s injunction—that all of the Corinthians speak the same thing and be of the same mind and the same judgment—involves uniform compliance to the doctrine of



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Christ. Furthermore, the apostle's seven-point plan for unity is grounded in specific doctrines and their respective implications. When one attempts to separate doctrinal emphasis and compliance from unity, he is advertising either his ignorance or his liberal agenda.

The very unity for which the Lord prayed was beautifully realized in the early days of the church in Jerusalem: **“And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart”** (Acts 2:46). We do not have to wonder how such wonderful unity characterized these saints. Luke had written four verses earlier: **“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching...”** (v. 42).

Biblical unity is not forced or contrived. It is initially achieved “automatically” when two or more people obey the Lord's plan of salvation. Only as long as they steadfastly continue in the same doctrine, they will continue to be Scripturally united, and not one minute longer.

The church in Jerusalem demonstrates this very pattern. The people were told to repent and be baptized, which about three thousand souls did (Acts 2:37, 41). The Lord added them to His church (vv. 41, 47), that is, they became united with Christ and with one another by obedience to the same commands of Scripture. That blissful unity continued as long as they continued in “the apostles' teaching” (v. 42). Claimed “unity” on any other basis is utter vanity. John forcefully taught the same principle: **“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7).

Divisive Factors

The precious unity that should characterize God's people is often shattered by a carnal-minded man or woman possessed of unholy ambition or in search of power and control. Such folk may not be doctrinal apostates, but they are definitely behavioral apostates. Sometimes an elder or deacon will let his ego get the upper hand, and rather than swallow his pride in humble repentance, he may split the church. Preachers are sometimes guilty of the same shameful behavior. The issue may be nothing more significant than the color of paint or carpet for a building renovation or who is to teach a class or lead singing. Whatever the issue, such utterly selfish folk are bound to have their own way or divide the church trying. The destruction of unity is sometimes so devastating that congregations take years to recover, and some never do. All such folk, who have become pawns of Satan, badly need to remember the New Testament's emphasis on unity.

While selfishness still causes heartbreaking division, perhaps the devil's most effective weapon against Biblical unity in recent times has for some four decades been a continual escalation of doctrinal corruption and aberration. Likely a week does not pass but that several congregations are rent asunder by teachers of strange doctrines. Ironically, one of the most divisive doctrines Satan has “inspired” in some, who at one time were our brethren, is a false view of unity. It is not really a new doctrine, but one that the denominations have been teaching

for generations; it is a “pretend” unity. The tactic is to redefine unity so as to accommodate division. Such folk long ago decided to “agree to disagree” and call it “unity.”

The Fellowship Factor

The study of unity involves the subject of fellowship. Unity implies fellowship. Satan has had a “field day” in leading various ones to attack the Scriptural concept of fellowship as it pertains to the church. The liberals' plan to bring about religious unity involves extending the borders of fellowship to almost all who claim to believe in Jesus as the Christ, regardless of their heretical doctrines and/or practices. This assault by enemies of the Truth upon the doctrine of fellowship is understandable.³ If this writer were going to try to destroy the church, he would certainly make fellowship a primary target of assault because it is so fundamental to the purity and unity (yea, the very existence) of the church. If the Lord's enemies (whether within or without) can destroy or even blur the borderline between the power of darkness and the kingdom of light, they will hardly need to succeed in any other assaults. If the battle is lost on the issues of unity and fellowship, it is lost completely. This being so, we need to study carefully the weapons Satan is using to attack the church on this issue.

While the church was riding the crest of a tremendous wave of growth in the late 1950s and early 1960s, some of the “mainline” denominations (e.g., Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, et al.) were being overwhelmed with modernism. They were “sitting ducks” for modernism because they had long been enslaved to liberal theology and hermeneutics, which had produced liberal doctrine and practice (a part of which was “fellowship-everybody-ism”). These religious bodies, captured almost totally by modernism, no longer stand for anything but super-tolerance of everything and everybody—except those still determined to abide in the doctrine of Christ. The Southern Baptist Church began to feel the same pressures in the 1970s, and those in that denomination who still claim to believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible are in a fight-to-the-finish struggle for control with liberals and modernists. This struggle threatens to split the Baptists right down the middle.

It was predictable that sooner or later these religious currents would affect the Lord's church. There had been isolated cases of loose fellowshippers among us all through the years, but they were just that—isolated. Even as late as the early 1960s, when a liberal preacher or professor was discovered, he was generally dismissed and deprived of a pulpit or classroom unless he repented. Liberalism would soon prove to be not so isolated and unpopular. One of the early indications of a more widespread influence of liberalism among us was the accusation from some brethren in the early 1960s that preachers had over-emphasized the plan of salvation to the neglect of Christ Himself. The “Man or the Plan” issue, as it came to be popularly styled, was thoroughly discussed in the brotherhood papers. This was an early attempt by some to shift emphasis away from sound doctrine, which obviously had some success to that end.

The late Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett called their

version of this assault in the late 1950s, “Unity in Diversity.” They sought to convince brethren that religious people do not have to be united in “doctrine” (e.g., worship, congregational organization, etc.), only in a few basic tenets of the “gospel” (e.g., the virgin birth, the Deity of Christ, et al.). It appears that they may have succeeded beyond what most of us anticipated.

Mission Magazine, a monthly journal that first appeared in July 1967, played a leading role in this effort. Until its demise about twenty years later, it would carry the banner of liberalism (at times evincing outright modernism) for the young liberals in the church. It attacked the concept of a Biblical pattern for the church and the Scriptural bounds of fellowship at least as early as the January 1973 issue. Likewise, in the late 1960s Reuel Lemmons, editor of *The Firm Foundation*, defended Pat Boone’s fellowship with Oral Roberts on nationwide television. The attack on Scriptural fellowship and the pressure for some sort of unity with denominationalism were accelerating.

During the 1970s, the influence of those who wished to extend the fellowship boundaries picked up momentum. They were led by such forces as the once-solid (and still influential) Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, and the *Herald of Truth* radio and television programs, which had come under strong criticism for their liberal leanings. These criticisms culminated in a marathon meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1973 attended by over two hundred preachers and numerous representatives of Highland and Herald of Truth. The meeting only intensified the fears and confirmed the suspicions of concerned brethren.

Institutions of higher learning were a fertile breeding-ground for the digression that carried away so much of the church in the nineteenth century. They are repeating this dubious function in the present. Since the 1950s, Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, has been a bastion of liberalism

on the West Coast. The school’s concept of “fellowship” is best demonstrated by the fact that it has non-Christians on its faculty and board. For many years Pepperdine’s lectureships have been a haven for purveyors of every strange doctrine. The other colleges were generally perceived until the 1970s as conservative, with some more so than others.

With the retirement of Don Morris as president of Abilene Christian College (now ACU) in 1970, a spirit of unprecedented tolerance on that campus soon became observable. The Bible department and the lectureship gradually began to be increasingly staffed with men of “uncertain sounds,” including the subject of fellowship. With succeeding administrations the drift has become an open and obvious shift.

Today ACU is one of the foremost proponents and encouragers of unscriptural unity and fellowship as the following matters illustrate:

1. The almost exclusive use of liberal speakers on its lectureships, workshops, and seminars from the 1980s on.
2. Outrageously heretical statements, both orally and in writing, by various men on the faculty of the Bible department and the president himself (so numerous and well-known as to need no documentation).
3. Books authored by ACU professors and/or published by ACU Press. A case in point is a book by Carroll D. Osburn, ACU Professor of New Testament, in which he writes that he rejects “arrogant exclusivism” and that in his view “Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.”⁴ Lest anyone doubt just what he means, he further explains:

There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on...whether the Lord’s Supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those

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who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories such as premillennialism...or soteriological matters such as whether baptism is “for” or “because of” remission of sins.”⁵

4. The appointment in 1992 of a Methodist preacher, a student at ACU, as editor of the school paper (defended by the president).

All of these things relate directly to the tearing down of the limits and bounds of fellowship as set forth in the New Testament. Lamentably, several other colleges and universities supported by the Lord’s people are rapidly following this ecumenical, “unity-in-diversity,” lead of ACU.⁶

In 1983, Rubel Shelly shocked the brotherhood by declaring his newfound ecumenism, stating that he believed there were faithful and devout Christians among all the denominations. This represented a total reversal of his previous strong and true doctrinal stance spanning several years in defense of the Truth. The next year he and his cohorts organized the first of a continuing series of “Unity Forums” with leaders of the Inde-

pendent Christian Church (ICC). A major aim of these meetings was to pursue fellowship and unity between the Lord’s people and the ICC. These Forums were “tailor-made” for the devil’s devious designs against the church, and he has used them to the fullest.

From the beginning, these sweet little powwows almost exclusively featured men who purported to represent the church of the Lord, but who were known for their ultra-liberalism by their repeated capitulations on both doctrinal and practical issues. One of the ICC prime movers in the Forums soon began a tabloid he named *One Body*, the major purpose of which was to leave the impression and to foster the concept that we and they are indeed one—united and in fellowship—in spite of their numerous departures in doctrine and practice. Many liberals who have abandoned the Truth were all too willing to take up the ICC unity mantra. Both Pepperdine and ACU have hosted these Forums at various times. (In spite of the hundreds of hours spent in these discussions, the ICC people have adamantly said they are not about to give up their unscriptural innovations, particularly instrumental music in worship.)



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Instead of steadfastly calling for the ICC folk to repent of their apostasy, many of our soft, compromising, and “irenic” brethren who were (and are) participating in the Forums began to urge that we view the use of instruments as merely a matter of opinion or conscience, rather than one involving Scriptural authority and sin. In the very first Forum (1984), Furman Kearley suggested that congregations could first begin using ICC preachers to teach a class, and then gradually move them into our pulpits. (Significantly, a few months afterward Neil Anderson, then publisher of *The Gospel Advocate*, summarily removed the late Guy N. Woods as editor and replaced him with Kearley.) In 1985 Calvin Warpula, one of the frequent Forum speakers, dogmatized that it was “untenable” to demand that ICC folks publicly repent of error and sin in using instruments in worship before we extended fellowship to them.⁷ Such folk have achieved the only kind of unity in which they seem to be interested—“unity” in error.

Several publishers, editors, and authors through periodicals and books have lent (and continue to lend) themselves to Satan’s agency. Besides *Mission Magazine*, referenced earlier, other publications contributed to the fellowship apostasy. Ruell Lemmons, who had compromised Biblical fellowship and unity for several years as editor of *The Firm Foundation*, was relieved of his editorship by its new owners in 1983. Within a year, he had found backing from Alton Howard (an elder in the notoriously digressive West Monroe, LA, church) for a new journal (*Image Magazine*), in which he could have full freedom to propagate his liberalism and ecumenism. In 1992, Rubel Shelly was instrumental in beginning *Wineskins*, an even more liberal journal (difficult as this was!).

The Christian Chronicle, which was all but dead by the 1970s, was purchased and revived by Oklahoma Christian University in the mid-1980s. Its editors have turned it into the major “unity-in-diversity” influence (do not miss this additional school connection). Its purpose statement reads in part that it “...seeks to inform, inspire, and unite churches of Christ worldwide.” It informs all right—about everything liberal and outlandish. It must surely inspire and encourage liberals greatly in their liberalism. Through its utter lack of discrimination relating to apostates and their activities, it seeks to unite all—as long as everyone will submit to its liberal, fellowship-everybody agenda.

A spate of books from liberal brethren (again, many of them professors in “our” universities) has flowed from the press the past two decades, and their central theme is one: The church must make whatever changes are necessary, including broadening its fellowship, to attract, adapt to, and unite with those addicted to current culture. They have all but completely abandoned any quest for Scriptural authority for their changes. Books and periodicals have played a major role in leading many astray.

Ecumenism has also received great impetus from various workshops, seminars, and lecture programs. In 1978, the first “Tulsa Soul-Winning Workshop” (lately defunct) was conducted. By 1980, the liberal doctrinal agenda of this annual event was clearly evident. From year to year, it provided speakers

who were a “who’s who” of the most liberal and denominationally minded people who were once among us. They were not been timid about urging fellowship with those outside the family of God. In 1989, three of the largest and most liberal churches in and around Nashville, Tennessee (Woodmont Hills, Madison, and Antioch), at the prompting of Madison, planned the first “Nashville Jubilee” (now defunct, for which we thank God). One did not even need to see the first slate of speakers to understand that it would be another hotbed of avant-garde doctrine and practice. The three sponsoring congregations were evidence aplenty of where it was headed before it even started. When the lectureships of some of our higher institutions of learning, as already mentioned, are added to these efforts, these combined forces constitute a powerful force for the “gospel of change” concerning fellowship as legislated by the Son of God.

Although today there are many others who echo Rubel Shelly, he was the foremost advocate among us of fellowship with children of darkness in recent years, both in word and deed. Besides his statement that he believes there are devout Christians in all the denominations (1983) and his leadership in the ecumenical Forums with the ICC (1984 to the present), on April 10, 1994 he was the featured speaker at the post-Easter “celebration” of seven denominations (including Woodmont Hills where at the time he preached). It included the employment of various kinds of unauthorized music, including choir singing and a brass band. The theme of his sermon was unity and fellowship based on the “central” and “core” themes of the Gospel, of which the resurrection is an example, never mind such “trivialities” as Christ’s law concerning the work, worship, and organization of the church.

Three days later (he was a busy boy that week!) he spoke at Christ’s Church, a Pentecostal Holiness group in Nashville. He praised their pastor as a “godly man” and said that God’s kingdom is “wider, deeper, larger, greater” than any of the denominations (including us, of course). He condemned the setting of boundaries against one another in religion and gave the Lord’s church a good bashing, much to the delight of his sectarian audience. He called the church “our little part of the body of Christ.”⁸ One could not frame statements more directly opposite to the New Testament doctrine of unity and fellowship. Since 2015, Shelly has taught in the Lipscomb University faculty with a dual appointment in philosophy and religion.

Attacks on the Undenominational Nature of the Church

When Jesus said, “**I will build my church**” (Mat. 16:18), He did not have a denomination (a mere part of His church) in mind. When the church became a reality on Pentecost (Acts 2:38–47), it was not a denomination (merely a part of the church). When the Lord began adding people to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), He did not add them to a denomination (one among two or many religious bodies). When the apostles and other brethren began to take the Gospel to Judea, Samaria, and finally, to “**the uttermost part of the earth**” (1:9), they did not establish varying denominations or congregations of the same denomination. They simply established the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, for which He died (20:28; Eph. 5:25). In its very nature, the church Jesus built is not only undenominational—it

is also anti-denominational.

Some exceedingly basic principles are involved in the foregoing statements, none more basic than the invariable seed-harvest rule: **“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”** (Gal. 6:7). From the beginning, God decreed that this principle would govern the world He had created. Its earliest applications related to the vegetable and animal families. Seed corn has never produced watermelons, dogs, or roses, but invariably, more corn. From the first union of a ram and nanny goat until the present, the offspring of such unions has never been a toad, a turnip, or anything else but a kid goat. (This same inviolable law exposes a major fallacy of evolutionary theory, incidentally.)

While the foregoing principle is so elementary and universally observable that none should ever be able to forget or gainsay it, some nonetheless deny its application in the realm of religion and morals. Paul wrote the inspired statement of this rule primarily in application to moral, spiritual, and religious issues. However, we do not have to wait for the Gospel era to understand that it has always been in force relative to religion. As men proliferated and were scattered abroad from Babel, they invented their own gods, religions, and doctrines. God’s sowing and reaping law is behind His revelation of the law to Moses and His decree that parents were to keep it faithfully themselves and teach it constantly and without fail to their children (Deu. 6:1–14). God knew that, religiously and morally, they would be the products of their teaching. He knew that only the “seed” of true teaching could produce future generations that would remain true to the very first commandment He gave them: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:3). Just as the false doctrines about idols could not produce faithful Israelites, neither would God’s pure law ever produce idol-worshippers. Lamentably, of the second generation of the settlers of Canaan, the Bible describes the evil harvest of the false doctrines (“seed”) they accepted:

And...there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim; and they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Jehovah to anger (Jud. 2:10–12).

The sowing and reaping principle in regard to doctrine is implicit in every admonition to abide in and faithfully teach God’s Word (e.g., Jon. 3:2; Mark 16:15; John 8:31; Rom. 10:15; 2 Tim. 4:2; et al.). It is also implicit in every warning against accepting or teaching false doctrine (Mat. 7:5; 16:6; 24:11; Gal. 1:6–9; Col. 2:8; 2 Pet. 2:1; et al.).

In Luke’s account of the Parable of the Sower and Jesus’ explanation of it (Luke 8:4–15), Jesus began His explanation by saying, **“The seed is the word of God”** (v. 11). Two indisputable implications derive from the fact that the Word of God—the Gospel, God’s Word since Calvary—is the seed of the kingdom:

1. Only the Gospel “seed” can produce the New Testament church “crop.” One cannot produce the Lord’s church from the seeds of the *Methodist Discipline*, the *Philadelphia Confession*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Catechism*, the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Book of Mormon*, or any other kind of seed. Those “seeds” will bring forth after their kind as surely as will corn and cows.

2. When the Gospel is faithfully preached, if it produces anything at all, it will always produce only the undenominational church of Christ. The unadulterated Gospel has never produced a Mormon, a Methodist, a Muslim, a Roman Catholic, a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, and it never will. Furthermore, the beautiful and simple Gospel has never produced a liberal preacher, professor, eldership, or church, and it never will.

The late Thomas B. Warren nailed it exactly in the title of one of his books: *The Bible Only Makes Christians Only and the Only Christians*. If the undenominational church of Christ came into existence and was maintained by the preaching of the apostles originally (and it was), then the same undenominational church of Christ will come into existence and will be maintained by the preaching of that same Gospel in any age. In spite of the simplicity and clarity of this principle, there are those who still want to be counted as part of the church, but who despise both the principle and the nature of the undenominational church it produces.

Such folk deny that the faithfully restored church of Christ in our age is the church of the apostolic age. They deny the possibility of as well as the need for restoring the New Testament church. They cannot abide the distinctiveness of the church revealed in the New Testament. They view themselves as members of merely another denomination that may be a little closer to the New Testament than other denominations, but nonetheless a denomination. (Of course, if they are only talking about the congregations they have corrupted according to their denominational concepts, then we could not agree more that they are members of denominations. Many religious bodies still hypocritically wear “Church of Christ” on their buildings and property when they long ago ceased to be such.) Lynn Anderson, while preaching for the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, stated in a 1973 sermon that “the Church of Christ is a big, sick denomination.” Many have followed his lead with the same perverted view of the church in the ensuing years.

The Crux of the Matter, a 2001 book by three ACU professors, provides ample evidence and is a good sample of the elitist attitude that can think of nothing but denomination when it hears the word church. The book ridicules the idea that the saved can be identified only with the church of the Lord. Its authors label such an idea as “arrogance” and describe the church of Christ as merely an “American-born body.”⁹ They declare that it is to be “extremely sectarian” to deny that anyone “outside our churches could be a true Christian.”¹⁰ Disparaging the idea that we (or they) are members of the church that the Christ founded and to which He still adds obedient believers, they speak of the Campbells, Stone, and other early nineteenth-century restorers as “the founders” and “founding leaders” of

churches of Christ.¹¹ The erudite ACU authors obviously do not believe that Christ founded the church. (Once more, do not miss the fact that the ACU campus is the source of the foregoing material.)

It would be bad enough for such folk to abandon the Truth themselves (for they will be lost if they persist in their error). However, they are determined to “convert” as many as possible to their denominational paradigm. With but few exceptions, those who are attacking the undenominational nature of the church are trying to stay among us. Casting aside even the possibility of restoration, they are bent on restructuring the Lord’s body after human designs. Unfortunately, the hyper-tolerant climate of society in general, coupled with gross and general Biblical ignorance in most members of the church, provides fertile soil for their poisonous seed. The devil must be gleefully smiling at their efforts on his behalf. We will do well to notice some of the tactics Satan is using to destroy the church by denominationalizing it.

The Way We Are to View and Interpret the Bible

Some of the liberals who attended the first unity forum with the ICC in 1984 came home crying for a “new hermeneutic” (i.e., a new set of rules of Bible interpretation) so we could have fellowship with those in the ICC in spite of their being members of a denomination. A few years later some of the self-proclaimed “scholars” began to holler for a “new hermeneutic” at their “scholars’ conferences.” They especially want to discard any respect for the prohibitive nature of the silence of Scripture. They would have us believe we do not have any law under Christ, that the New Testament is not a “constitution,” but merely a “love letter” from Heaven. They deny that the Bible contains patterns for the church or that we are obligated to follow it strictly. Some have already taken positions, the implications of which constitute a denial of the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. What chance has the Scriptural teaching on fellowship or the undenominational nature of the church if such views of the Bible prevail?

The Way We Are To Worship

Some are suggesting (and practicing) the observance of the Lord’s Supper on other days besides the Lord’s Day. Some now say that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is a non-issue—that they have no scruples against them and can worship with those who use them. An increasing number of congregations are regularly using “special” or “presentation” music (i.e., solos, choirs, and other groups such as “praise teams” that are separate from the congregation) in their worship assemblies. Casually dressed suave promoters presenting pop-psychology pep talks—laced with a few funny stories—long ago replaced Bible-quoting preachers in many pulpits.

Drama and theatrical productions are frequently filling or almost crowding out the normal sermon time in some congregations. The practice by those in the congregation of lifting and fluttering their hands over their heads during songs and prayers and applauding (during the songs, at points of agreement with the preacher, at a baptism, or at some announcement) is on the rise. Some have already done away with a Gospel invitation

and ridicule those who continue to offer one at each assembly. It has become increasingly common for congregations to meet only on Sunday morning and to replace the normal evening worship period with “cell” or “life group” meetings in homes.

Some congregations now have two morning worship assemblies. One is structured along “traditional” lines and is conducted for those who might be offended by “non-traditional” practices. The other, usually styled “contemporary,” is for liberals who care little or not at all for Scriptural authorization for what they say or do and who, sooner or later, will impose their entertainment “worship” on the whole church. Ironically, they do not seem to realize that what they are doing is not “fresh” or “new.” Rather, they are merely borrowing hollow, worn-out practices and rituals of sectarianism and combining them with the religious jive of Pentecostalism, as if these wholly emotion-driven activities possessed some magical formula for creating “spiritual worship.” All of these represent major alterations that already greatly affect the subject of fellowship and the church’s undenominational status.

The Role of Women in the Church

The secular, social, political, and humanistic “women’s liberation movement” of the 1970s and 1980s has had an obvious influence on some brethren who seem to care more about being “politically correct” than about being doctrinally correct. The liberals are pushing women into leadership roles in the church as rapidly as they can. Their usual beginning point is to use them as ushers or announcers and to pass the trays during the Lord’s Supper.¹² The next “progression” in the incremental change agenda of the liberals is to have them read Scripture (perhaps while seated on the front pew) or lead a song or a prayer from a pew. The next step may then be to have them teach mixed adult classes, with the intent eventually to move them into the pulpit. A few years ago an Alabama congregation published its agenda for appointing women as deacons, then as elders, and finally, turning the pulpit over to them. The Richland Hills, Texas, congregation recently did away with the office of deacons and in their place appointed a large number of “special servants,” which included both men and women. Faithful brethren will have no choice but to refuse to fellowship such apostates who already conceive of the whole church as a denomination.

The Plan of Salvation

As previously cited, Carroll D. Osburn, ACU Professor of New Testament, avers: “There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on...soteriological matters such as whether baptism is ‘for’ or ‘because of’ the remission of sins.”¹³ Jimmy Allen, a longtime Bible professor at Harding University, has written an entire book devoted to the proposition that a believer need not know or understand the Scriptural purpose of his/her baptism for it to be Scriptural baptism.¹⁴ Max Lucado, who long ago left the church in his convictions (but still preaches for a denomination that calls itself “Oak Hills Church of Christ” in San Antonio, Texas), told listeners to his radio program just to call God their Father and He would save them. Then, he

offered, that they should be baptized, but not in order to be saved. These quotations are crucial to the issue of fellowship. If it makes no difference whether baptism is “for” or “because of” remission of sins, if immersion “for any reason” is Scriptural, and if baptism is not even necessary in order to be saved, then we are actually in fellowship with multiplied millions of denominationalists. In fact, the church is indistinguishable from a denomination.

Moral Issues

In the 1970s some prominent brethren, led by James D. Bales of the Harding University Bible faculty, began advancing doctrines that relaxed the Lord’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in Matthew 19:9. As a direct result of the “loopholes” he and others invented in God’s law for marriage, there are now men in leadership roles (preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, et al.) in some congregations who have divorced and remarried on grounds other than fornication. There are likely thousands of couples by now whose adulterous marriages have been justified by themselves and by church leaders on the basis of these alleged “loopholes” and who are accepted as faithful members in hundreds of congregations. Some brethren vigorously defend “social drinking” of alcoholic beverages, dancing, the wearing of immodest apparel in public (including public mixed swimming), and playing the state lottery. Some have already suggested an attitude of tolerance on the subject of abortion.¹⁵ All of these relate to the subject of who will or will not be retained in the fellowship of the local congregation and whether or not the church will follow the lead of most of the major denominations that have fully capitulated on most moral issues.

The Specific Issue of Fellowship

Rubel Shelly has publicly renounced his former Scriptural convictions in favor of liberal views of Ephesians 4:4–6 and 2 John 9, which views imply the existence of fellowship between all who believe (1) in the atonement of Christ for our sins and (2) in His Deity.¹⁶ Carroll Osburn, referenced earlier, likewise argues that 2 John 9 refers only to teaching concerning the nature of the Christ, not to the things He taught and/or authorized others to teach. Therefore, they allege, fellowship should not be withheld from those who do not believe the Lord’s supper should be taken every Sunday, those who wish to use instrumental music in worship, premillennialists, or (as noted above) even those who teach that baptism is “because of” remission of sins.¹⁷ The move for unity and fellowship with the ICC (and other denominations as well) is both the effect of this push for a broader fellowship and the cause of additional efforts of this sort. More and more preachers, especially in the large metropolitan churches, are joining denominational ministerial alliances.

Blunting Satan’s Attacks

I must not conclude the study of this subject without exploring some possible ways to repel the assaults upon the unity and the nondenominational character of the Lord’s church. Accordingly, I suggest the following:

1. We must understand the meaning of unity as defined

by Scripture and help others to understand it also. It is that which exists when people are in fellowship with each other and who thus jointly partake or participate with others in a common blessing, experience, work, or some other such thing. It is the harmony that is produced when people share in a common relationship due to meeting like qualifications, conditions, or characteristics. Unity in spiritual matters derives among those who have obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation and who are continuing to “walk in the light” (1 John 1:6–7).

2. We must understand what the Bible teaches about whom we should and should not fellowship and therefore with whom we are to be united. A better treatise on the subject could not be desired than Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 6:14–18:

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

This passage (along with many others) will prevent one who is serious about loyalty to Christ from having any perception of unity with or of extending spiritual fellowship to any member of a denomination or anyone else outside the body of Christ. It will also prevent one from having fellowship with many who are members of the Lord’s church, as many passages instruct (Mat. 18:15–17; Rom. 16:16–18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 The. 3:6, 14; Tit. 3:10; et al.).

3. We must identify and refuse to extend fellowship to those who were once among us, but who have now (I say it with great sorrow) gone over to the enemy and are trying to take the entire church with them. There is no sense in which God’s faithful children can be united with them in their present state of apostasy. It is far past time that we quit coddling, tolerating, and handling with kid gloves these folk as if they were still deserving of some degree of respect and credibility. There is no justifiable reason to pretend that they are something besides what they are—spiritually evil and ungodly folk who are bent on destroying the church of the living God! We must recognize that they have made shipwreck of the faith and they have gone so far in their rebellion that in many cases to refer to them with the warm, familial term, brother, is to besmirch it. For our part, we will no longer do so.¹⁸ As John wrote of the anti-Christ of his day, so he could write of these: “**They went out from us, ... but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us**” (1 John 2:19). I earnestly wish that, as they have gone out from us spiritually and doctrinally, they would all also bodily depart and start their own denominations. If they possessed either honor or integrity they would do so.

These include such men as Carroll Osburn, Rubel Shelly, Mike Cope, Royce Money, Max Lucado, Jeff Walling, Marvin

Phillips, Steve Flatt, Lynn Anderson, Alton Howard, Rick Atchley, Wayne Kilpatrick, Harold Hazelip, Michael Armour, Calvin Warpula, and a host of others of their ilk (“And what shall I more say? For the time will fail me if I tell of Jim Woodroof, Randy Harris, Phillip Morrison, Denny Boultinghouse...” [to appropriate Heb. 11:32]). By the words these men have spoken, written, and published and by the things they have done and are doing deliberately, repeatedly, and openly (we can only imagine what they have done and said in secret council and private chambers!), they have shown beyond any question for even the least observant saint that they have sold out to the Prince of Darkness and are determined to serve his purpose to destroy the church of the Lord. Their method seems to be to so cloud the perception of what the church is that brethren will perceive it to be merely a humanly-devised denomination (and a second-rate one at that) and will thereupon join in fellowship with and be lost in the religious cesspool of denominationalism at large.

With much grief I must say that apostate congregations include Woodmont Hills and Madison (Nashville, TN), Richland Hills and Midtown (Fort Worth, TX), Preston Road, Skillman Avenue, Highland Oaks, and Preston Crest (Dallas, TX), Garnet and Memorial (Tulsa, OK), Highland and Hillcrest (Abilene, TX), White Station and Highland (Memphis, TN) and many, many others. These have shown their true colors, not over a few weeks or months, but over many years in most cases. Their elders and deacons (at least in the majority) are apostate and they have employed, endorsed, and financially supported (in some cases with six figure salaries) some of the rankest heretics among us, and they continue to do so. They have not just temporarily and innocently “made a mistake” in these matters, which they have tried or are trying to correct. Rather, they are firmly settled in their direction, and they will not be turned back in spite of all the pleas and warnings faithful and concerned brethren.

4. We must not associate with those who are in error in any way that can be interpreted as approval or endorsement of them. Further, we must rebuke those who, though they do not themselves actually teach error concerning fellowship or related subjects, will still associate with, defend, and give implied endorsement to those who do. Robert R. Taylor, Jr. gives an excellent description of this all-too-frequent phenomenon in the following passage:

It is difficult to figure out some of our brethren in their inconsistent actions. They will bemoan the liberal spirit that is capturing large portions of our once uniformly conservative brotherhood. Yet on a continuing and even increasing basis they will appear with them on lectureships, workshops, seminars, and other occasions. It would be wonderfully courageous and highly commendable if they went to unmask their errors and uphold Truth with militant majesty; yet this they do not do as a general rule.... If they went there with the spirit of Elijah before Ahab or the false prophets of Baal, the spirit of noble Nathan before adulterous David, the spirit of John the Baptist before Herod and Herodias, the spirit of Christ before Pharisaic hypocrites, or the courage of Paul facing Judaizing troublemakers, they would not have the welcome mat extend-

ed to them for repeat performances. Will any doubt it? If so, on what logical basis?¹⁹ [How sad it is that brother Taylor has not consistently practiced the truth he taught in the foregoing words.—Editor]

In my boyhood days on a central Texas ranch, we had several hundred goats. I learned at an early age the meaning of the expression, “You can’t run with the goats without smelling like them.” While these exact words are not in Scripture, the principle they embody is. Verily, **“Evil companionships corrupt good morals”** (1 Cor.15:33). For the same reason and in like manner, close companionships with apostates tend to corrupt sound doctrine. Even if a brother who associates with liberals and heretics in a close and friendly way does not actually succumb to the error of those companions, undoubtedly his boldness to cry out against such errors is thereby lessened and he tarnishes his own reputation by doing so.

Those who do such and who are called to account for it often squeal in protest that we are assigning “guilt by association.” In their view, there is no such thing. However, if John does not teach this principle, we fail to see what he is teaching: **“If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works”** (2 John 10–11). The brother who would receive a false teacher into his house and give him greeting so as to imply encouragement and endorsement (**“bid him God speed,”** *KJV*) must share in the guilt of the false teacher’s sin. This is so even if the host in this case does not actually do any false teaching himself. He is guilty merely by his amicable association with the heretic he befriends!

5. Elders must be awakened to the pivotal role they have the responsibility of fulfilling in these onslaughts of Satan. False teachers would never have gained such notoriety and influence had elders not provided safe havens for them and continued to use them. Even now, some otherwise sound and conservative elderships see no inconsistency in inviting a false teacher for a Gospel meeting or workshop of some sort. Likewise, they will allow programs to be announced from the pulpit, on bulletin boards, and through the church bulletin on which false teachers are featured. Perhaps elders could do more than almost any other one group in the church to halt the march of liberalism. Let them make it clear to their respective congregations that they will not knowingly invite liberals into their pulpits, either as local preachers or as guests, and let them forbid the publication of articles in their church bulletins that are written by these men (even if a given article teaches no error, the publication of his material gives the unworthy author undeserved credibility and implied endorsement). Rather, let them furnish the congregation with sound and strong reading materials, both in a good local bulletin and in other Scripturally sound publications such as *Defender* and *CFTF*.

Conclusion

Repelling Satan’s attacks against Scriptural unity and the undenominational nature of the church with all of our might is absolutely crucial. If the walls of Zion are breached at ei-

ther of these gates, the cause will be lost utterly, for then the church will no longer have a Scriptural identity. It will simply be absorbed into the kingdom of darkness with all the rest of counterfeit Christendom. God forbid!

Endnotes

1. All Scripture quotations are from the *American Standard Version* (1901) unless otherwise indicated.
2. See author's discussion of this passage in "Some Commonly Misapplied Scriptures, Part 6," *The Gospel Journal*, December 2001:29–30.
3. Parts of the remainder of this chapter first appeared in a modified form in the author's chapter, "Declaring War on the Fellowship of the Lord's Church," *Heaven's Imperatives or Man's Innovations: Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ*, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1995), pp. 81–117.
4. Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom: Essays Favoring Non-Sectarian Christianity* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), p. 64.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
6. Actually, they are not truly ecumenical. Their ecumenicity extends only and always leftward.
7. Calvin Warpula, *One Body*, Winter, 1985, p. 31.
8. For a fuller discussion of Shelly's antics on these and other occasions see Curtis A. Cates, *The Core/Bull's Eye Gospel Concept Refuted* (Memphis, TN: Cates Pub., 1994), pp. 79–83.
9. Jeff W. Childers, Douglas A. Foster, Jack R. Reese, *The Crux of the Matter* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2001), p. 116.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 135.
12. Dick Sztanyo in "An Overview of the Present Discussion: The Role

of Women in the Church" in *Women to the Glory of God*, ed. Jim Laws (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ, 1994), pp. 154–155.

13. Osburn, pp. 90–91.
14. Jimmy Allen, *Rebaptism* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1991).
15. David Vanderpool, "Abortion: A Look at Questions and Controversies Surrounding a Major Societal Issue," *The Christian Chronicle* November 1993:14–15.
16. Rubel Shelly, *I Just Want To Be a Christian* (Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian, 1984), p. 82; *The Restoration Movement and Unity: Preachers and Church Leaders Forum* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1986), p. 72.
17. Osburn, pp. 71, 90–91.
18. See the author's comments in "Editor's Clippings," *The Gospel Journal* February 2002:31–32.
19. Robert R. Taylor, Jr., "Where and When Shall We Draw the Line of Fellowship?" in *Studies in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 528.

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The Home: Developer Of Souls

Jerry C. Brewer

The home is society's incubator where children are to be nourished both materially and spiritually. The father is to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8), nourish his children up in spiritual things (Eph. 6:4), and the mother is to be a keeper at home (Tit. 2:3-5). When parents fail in these things—as surely they have in this present time—children are left to their own devices. Morals, duty, love for God, parents, and their fellow man have no meaning to them. This near universal neglect of children today has not only created multitudinous problems in civil society, but has also affected local churches.

It was God's intent from the beginning that children were to be produced in homes where men and women are married. That law was unchanged in Jesus' day and remains unchanged in our day. God never intended that mankind should roam and breed freely as do the animals of the earth, but that one man and one woman would form a union for life.

But those children produced in God-ordained homes must be developed into God-fearing individuals, and that responsibility falls squarely upon the shoulders of parents. God's pattern for developing children into decent, God-fearing, adults was given by inspiration centuries before modern child-sociologists and psychologists created their industries. There are four ways in which a child must develop to be a

decent citizen of any society, and those are expressed by the inspired Luke regarding the human maturing of Jesus. "**And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man**" (Luke 2:52).

In the personal development of the child Jesus, He "**increased in wisdom and stature.**" The order of these two things indicates the importance of them. Of first importance are the mental and physical development of the child. The next order is also revealing. He increased "**in favor with God and man.**" Thus, Jesus matured mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

Providing for his family, both physically and spiritually, has always been the primary responsibility of the father. Paul reminds us that, "**...if any provide not for his own, and specially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel**" (1 Tim. 5:8). It also was, and remains, the God-given responsibility of the mother to be a keeper at home and guide the children. This was divinely commanded through Paul in his letter to Titus when he said the older women should teach the younger women, "**to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.**" (Tit. 2:4-5) This is absolutely the only pattern for the home that can and will produce morally upright citizens and faithful members of the local church.

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DIRECTORY OF CHURCHES

-Colorado-

Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 989-8155.

-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. 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.

-Oklahoma-

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.

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.

-South Carolina-

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

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. Website: www.northpointcoc.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 218-2892; 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.

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.

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

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