

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

A REVIEW OF B. J. CLARKE'S ARTICLE

Joab: David's Military Captain Who Had His Own Agenda

Bruce Stulting

The article under review appeared in *Power* magazine as a three part series. *Power* is a monthly publication of the Southaven Church of Christ, Southaven MS, and is, therefore, overseen by her elders. I have known brother Clarke for several years and have benefited greatly from his writing and preaching. In the final installment of his series, Clarke uses the "hidden agenda" of Joab as a springboard to launch into some "modern applications." Some of his applications raise some serious questions. These questions will be addressed in this review of Clarke's article.

It is pointed out by brother Clarke, "*Joab was by no means the last man to push his personal agenda to the point of destroying others.*" He offers Paul's enemies and Diotrephes as New Testament examples to support this statement (Phil. 1:15,16; 3 Jn. 9). Further, he states, "*Sadly, it is still true today that certain brethren are obsessed with advancing their own agendas to the detriment of the local church and the brotherhood as a whole.*" This is a serious charge! If such scoundrels are indeed rending asunder congregations and the brotherhood, *who are they?* Surely, some agenda driven brethren caused Clarke to see the need to spend the necessary time and effort (three separate installments in *Power* over a three month period) for him to expose in writing their practices. Clarke needs to mark these false brethren so they can be avoided (Rom. 16:17). However, writing in vague generalities is becoming quite common among many brethren today, especially among those who company with brother Clarke.

The following is a review the "modus operandi" of those who Clarke states have a *personal agenda*:

1. "*They do not hesitate to rebel against those in au-*

thority to accomplish their purposes." He speaks of "*change agents*" who "*rebel against the will of godly elderships.*" To whom is he referring? Dave Miller is the only notable person of late whom I can think that has recently helped led a congregation against its eldership. Could Clarke be referring to the current division over elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation that undermines the authority of elders? The evidence shows that Dave Miller first taught and helped implement the elder r/r procedure at the Brown Trail Church of Christ, Bedford, TX, in April of 1990 and gave his consent to a repeat of the practice in 2002. I doubt this could be the case because Clarke is on record defending Miller and his elder r/r doctrine at the Open Forum of the 2006 Farmington, Missouri Lectures. Furthermore, he had no problem appearing with Miller on the "Polishing The Pulpit" program in 2005. If anyone has an agenda, it appears to be Clarke in his attempts to justify his fellowship with Miller—a known false teacher.

2. "*They are willing to use deceit to accomplish their goals.*" He states, "*Brethren who have an agenda will distort the truth if they deem it necessary to turn brethren against other brethren.*" Again, we ask, "Who is distorting the truth and how?" Clarke, "thou art the man"! Did you have a hidden agenda when you distorted the truth and left the impression that opposition to Miller and his r/r did not begin until August of 2005? In 1990, I was a recent graduate of the Southwest School of Bible Studies (1989)—hereafter SWSBS, but knew of the r/r error and its opposition at that time. Surely, others with more experience in such matters would be more informed than (at that time) a preacher with less than a year's experience! The

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

UNCLE WILBERT

Uncle Wilbert was the first of seven siblings—Daddy being the sixth. In 1929 Uncle Wilbert joined the U. S. Navy. Dec. 7, 1941 found him on board the USS Lexington, his home for many years preceding. Thus, he was outside Pearl Harbor with her sister carriers on that infamous day 67 years ago. He remained on “Lady Lex” until her sinking in the Battle of the Coral Sea in the Spring of 1942.

Back on American soil awaiting orders Uncle Wilbert was stationed at Port Arthur, Texas. In time he was assigned convoy duty in the North Atlantic, then he participated in the Battle of Cherbourg, English Channel and the landings at Normandy on June 6, 1944. Following that momentous historical event he was transferred back to the Pacific. On March 26, 1945 during the battle of Okinawa, while serving on board the Destroyer O’Brian, a Japanese Kamikazi crashed into the ship taking Lt. (jg) Wilbert Cullen Brown’s life. He had been awarded three Citations for Bravery, the Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal and others.

While in Port Arthur Uncle Wilbert wrote my father a letter. By that time Daddy had enlisted in the Army Air Corp. He too was awaiting his orders, not knowing to which theatre of war he would be assigned, nor what duties would be his. Knowing, then, some of these things regarding Daddy, Uncle Wilbert gave his younger brother some sage advice.

Uncle Wilbert first told Daddy that although he did not know which one of the Axis enemies he would find himself fighting, he informed Daddy that the enemy could and had been beaten. Secondly, Uncle Wilbert advised Daddy that in the heat of battle, he was not to allow any thing to distract him from his assigned task. No matter the death, horror or destruction going on around him, he was not to leave his post or cease his work. This, according to Uncle Wilbert, was the best advice he could give Daddy that could keep him alive in the midst of battle if anything could.

I possess Uncle Wilbert’s letter to Daddy. It means much to me for obvious reasons. But it is as a Soldier of the Lord in our Lord’s army that I find Uncle Wilbert’s experienced advice so important. Paul employed such terminology when he wrote 1 Cor. 16:13.

When the enemy is near but no one knows exactly where, the battle hardened Roman centurion cries out to his fellow legionaries, “**Watch ye!**” Indeed, without watchful care the enemy will take one by surprise. As the enemy battle line in full array draws near, the

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2009 SPRING CFTF LECTURES

“Religion & Morality—FROM GOD OR MAN”

FEBRUARY 22—25, 2009

David P. Brown, Director

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

- 9:30 AM Steve Yeatts: *Higher Secular Education—What Should You Expect Your Child to Be Taught?*
10:30 AM Darrell Broking: *Divorce & Remarriage—Did God Say What He Meant And Mean What He Said?*
NOON MEAL PROVIDED BY THE SPRING CONGREGATION
5:00 PM Lester Kamp: *The Social Gospel—Following Christ for the Loaves and Fishes*
6:00 PM Terry Hightower: *Atheism—True or False?*

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

- 9:00 AM Jack Stephens: *Marriage—Who Originated It and Governs It?*
10:00 AM Michael Hatcher: *The Resurrection of Christ—Is Jesus Christ Alive Today?*
*10:00 AM Sonya West: *The Feminist Movement—“You’ve Come a Long Way Baby,” But Was it Up or Down? (I)*
11:00 AM Wayne Blake: *Humanism and Pluralism—Is Man the Measure of All Things?*

LUNCH BREAK

- 1:30 PM Skip Francis: *Darwinian Evolution—Is Man Only an Improved Ape?*
2:30 PM Paul Vaughn: *The Bible—Inspired by Man or God?*
3:30 PM Dub Mowery: *Abortion—Murdering a Baby or Removing a Blob of Protoplasm?*

DINNER BREAK

- 6:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
7:00 PM Daniel Denham: *The Nature of Truth—What is The Truth About Truth?*
8:00 PM Jesse Whitlock: *Homosexuality—Didn’t He Make them Male and Female?*

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

- 9:00 AM Ken Cohn: *Theistic Evolution—Is Evolution the Mechanism God Used to Create the Universe?*
10:00 AM Ken Chumbley: *Agnosticism—Can We Know Anything?*
*10:00 AM Sonya West: *The Feminist Movement—“You’ve Come a Long Way Baby,” But Was it Up or Down? (II)*
11:00 AM Gene Litke: *The Age of the Earth—Young or Old?*

LUNCH BREAK

- 1:30 PM Johnny Oxendine: *The Sexual Revolution—Are We Dressing Fornication and Adultery in Formal Wear?*
2:30 PM Gene Hill: *Preacher Training Schools—Are They Living Up To the Reason They Were Begun?*
3:30 PM David P. Brown: *Atheist Ethics—Are Ethics Without God Possible?*

DINNER BREAK

- 6:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
7:00 PM Danny Douglas: *The Humanity of Christ—Is He Truly Human?*
8:00 PM Lynn Parker: *Modesty—What is the Bible’s Definition?*

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

- 9:00 AM Buddy Roth: *Medical Doctors—Killers or Healers?*
10:00 AM Lee Moses: *The Historical Jesus—Is Christ a Mythological Being?*
11:00 AM Gary Summers: *Post Modernism—Is My God Not Your God and My Truth Not Your Truth?*

LUNCH BREAK

- 1:30 PM Tim Cozad: *The Miracles of Christ—Did Jesus Work Miracles? If He Did, Why Did He?*
2:30 PM Bruce Stulting: *Deity of Christ—Is Jesus of Nazareth God?*
3:30 PM John West: *“Good Ole Noah Built an Ark Like God Told Him To”—Are You Kidding Me?*

DINNER BREAK

- 6:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
7:00 PM David B. Watson: *Christians Must Be Militant—Does Jesus Demand that the Church Confront Error?*
8:00 PM Dub McClish: *Higher “Christian” Education—What Should You Expect Your Child to Be Taught?*

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topic was covered in the 1997 Bellview Lectures and again in 2001 at the Florida School of Preaching Lectures. Marvin Weir further exposed the r/r error in an article that appeared in the October 2002 issue of *The Gospel Journal*—that is *The “Old” Gospel Journal*. In this article Weir listed Miller as one who approved the r/r doctrine. I know for a fact that Clarke is aware of at least some of the foregoing evidence. How do I know? Because he was a speaker on the 1997 Bellview Lectures when the doctrine was dealt with, exposed and refuted. Surely he listened to the lecture! Surely he read the book!

The point is this—*efforts were being made to mark Miller from the very beginning of the controversy*. Why then would Clarke leave the impression that this had not been a brotherhood issue until August of 2005? *Could it be possible that Clarke himself has a hidden agenda? Could his agenda be an attempt to justify the sixty brethren who signed a support letter for Apologetics Press with the false teacher Dave Miller serving as Executive Director?* It is amazing that many of those who signed the letter of support at one time opposed Miller and the elder r/r error. Now, in an effort to appear consistent, they must downplay Miller’s sin or seek to justify him. Many have sought to do the latter. What has changed—Miller, his error on elder r/r, or those who once opposed him and his error? Dave Miller has not changed nor has his doctrine. *Thus, once faithful men have changed in a vain attempt to hide their and Miller’s sins.*

3. **“They are willing to destroy others to get what they want.”** Again, we are left wondering who it is that Clarke has in mind. Could he be talking about brother Curtis Cates’ attempt to destroy the reputation of brother Dub McClish? In his resignation e-mail to the TGJ Board, Michael Hatcher stated, *“It now appears to me that there has been a concerted effort to destroy the reputation of a good man—Dub McClish”* (September, 2005, *CFTF*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 9). Cates loyalty to the Memphis School of Preaching (hereafter MSOP), its supporters and his former students led him to forsake the Truth and turn on a faithful brother in Christ. However, it is doubtful that Clarke has this incident in mind since he now is on the faculty of the MSOP.

4. **“They are always looking for information that they can use against others so they might manipulate them into doing what they want them to do.”** He mentions those who are in the *“fault finding mode.”* What is wrong with being in a *“fault finding mode”*? Jesus was in a *“fault finding mode”* in order to persuade sinners to repent. When they failed to repent, he used their faults (sins) to persuade others to forsake them. This was done for the good of all. There is nothing wrong with finding fault and exposing sin. Clarke knows this and has practiced it in the past and actually did so in the article under review. Once again, Clarke makes reference to wrongdoing, but gives no wrongdoers’ names. *(If bro. Clarke was not in a fault finding/placing frame of mind when he wrote his three part article, what frame of mind was he in?—Editor)*

5. **“They often hide behind the work of others to get what they want.”** Perhaps he is referring to “Barry Gilreath, Jr. (and others) who used David B. Smith in an attempt to destroy the Northside Church of Christ, Calhoun, Georgia.” A full account

of this is covered in an article entitled “The David B. Smith Controversy” that appeared in the May 2007 issue of *Contending for the Faith*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 5. Unfortunately, Smith fell in with some of those unscrupulous brethren who had a personal agenda. Needless to say, his association with such men cost him his job, reputation and (more importantly) his soul if he has not or does not truly repent. However, I doubt that Clarke has this situation in mind since Barry Gilreath, Jr. is associated with the Gospel Broadcast Network that regularly uses Miller.

Clarke speaks of those who *“will plant the seeds of doubt in other people’s minds about one or more of the elders.”* This is exactly what elder r/r is about. It turns the office of the elder into a popularity contest. And, if a qualified elder does not get a 75% approval rating (*only of those who vote, not the whole church*), he is removed. However, if an unqualified elder gets the 75% approval (*only of those who vote, not the whole church*), he retains his office. In other words, it only takes 26% disapproval (*of those who vote, not the whole church*) to remove a qualified man. **This is what Miller taught (of which he has not repented) and Clarke defends.**

6. **“They often progress (or should we say digress) to the point that they publicize their lack of respect for authority.”**

Further Clarke states, *“By going public, they create a ‘line in the sand’ moment when brethren feel compelled to choose a side. This almost always leads to a church/brotherhood split!”* Is it not the case that Curtis Cates and the board of TGJ drew such a line when they forced Dub McClish and David Watson to resign? Is it not the case that the elders of the Highland Church of Christ in Dalton, Georgia drew such a line when they withdrew (unscripturally) from the elders of the Northside Church of Christ in Calhoun, Georgia when they (Northside) dared questioned the use of Miller on GBN? *(If such was not the case in both instances, then what was it?—Editor)* Men with hidden agendas have drawn lines of fellowship and these are the very men that Clarke seeks to defend.

7. **“They are often cruel in their advancement of their personal agenda.”** Let us look at some of the *kind* things said by our loving brethren about those who would dare oppose Miller: (1) The sweet words of Wayne Jackson, *“perpetually childish, supersensitive, grumpy, and/or constantly on the prowl for a fight . . . little people . . . lathered-up radicals . . . rabble rousers . . . misguided zealots . . . strife-causers — Church Controversies—July 8, 2008;* (2) Gentle words of Keith Mosher *“...these people are as vile a group, and I do mean vile, as I have ever read after in my life. . . they want to destroy about nine good works in the brotherhood just to prove a point.”* July 15, 2006 — Sunny Slope Lectures – Paducah Kentucky – [a work is good *only* when it supports the Truth and opposes error–BLS]; (3) “Yogi” Joseph A. Meador (former director of the SWSBS, former board member of TGJ, but now an apostate child of God) wrote that *“a few who are in a small, but no less toxic, loyalty circle...a small negative faction, who if they gain control, will only rupture fellowship in the church even more than they already have.”* These are just a few of the kind remarks from our loving, “balanced” brethren who are striving for a kinder, gentler brotherhood.

Again, with the exception of Meador, these are the men with whom Clarke works shoulder to shoulder and whose sins he seeks to justify.

By the way, harsh words are not always a bad thing. One need only read Matthew 23 to know that our Lord had harsh things to say to the scribes and Pharisees. (The thing that many seem to have little concern about is whether these harsh words, when called for, are the Truth or not.—*Editor*) Saul of Tarsus had no problem saying to Elymas, **“O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord”** (Acts 13:10). Such language shows the seriousness of perverting the Truth.

8. **“They are not bashful about recruiting others to help them carry it out.”** Brother Clarke was not bashful in efforts to recruit those at an Open Forum at the Farmington, Missouri Lectureship to support his agenda to justify Miller.

9. **“They create unnecessary burdens that other people have to bear!”** Clarke refers to all manner of church work being hindered by the elders and brethren having to worry about someone’s personal agenda. He is probably correct; it is hard for the elders and the brethren to do their work when they have to worry about elder r/r. That campaign work to stay in office is time consuming.

10. **“They are quick to blame and accuse others for problems they themselves have caused.”** Clarke is exactly right! Miller and his supporters split the church and those who expose their error/schismatic efforts get the blame. Remember, the one that drives the wedge, splits the log. Miller drove the wedge, not those who point out the wedge and the split.

11. **“They sometimes turn on their own relatives to achieve their personal goals.”** Dub McClish recounts a conversation with brother Clarke

“at Power Lectures in early August 2005, begging him to cancel his appearance on the ‘Polishing the Pulpit’ program, because Dave Miller was scheduled to speak on it, which occurred the following month. His father, brother Ted Clark, told me later that he had done the same, and neither of us knew the other had done so until after the fact. As many know, B.J. rejected the pleas of both of us” (*The Final Word*, pg. 27).

Once again, brother Clarke, “Thou art the man.”

12. **“They will often recruit their supporters by implying that faithfulness to God necessitates embracing their personal agenda.”** B. J. Clarke claims *“some brethren get their feelings hurt and want to lash out at those who hurt them.”* It has been asserted by Curtis Cates (and others – Clarke included) that there was no effort to oppose, expose, mark or withdraw from Miller until after McClish and Watson were forced to resign from *TGJ*. It is further asserted that the current “attacks” on Miller and his supporters are simply “sour grapes”. This false assertion has been dealt with previously. It is interesting that McClish was forced to resign from *TGJ* when he dared question Cates and Meador’s support of AP and Miller. *Talk about “sour grapes”!*

13. **“They are often self-deceived and do not see themselves as they really are.”** Who is self-deceived, the one who marks

the false teacher, or the one who feels compelled to defend him? Who is self-deceived, the one who has consistently withstood a false teacher and his supporters, or the one who withstands the false teacher until it becomes inconvenient to do so? Who is self-deceived, the one who backs their brother when he stands for the Truth, or the one who betrays their brother when he stands for the Truth? Who is self-deceived, the one who is loyal to Christ and His church in all things, not just some things, or the one who is loyal to a school of preaching, publication or broadcast network to the extent of defending a false teacher?

14. **“Those who have reputation for advancing their own personal agenda cause people to wonder what their motives are even when they stand for the truth.”** It is a fact that when one compromises the Truth on one issue, then they are liable to do it again. How can Clarke consistently stand against any error when he has compromised the faith regarding the elder r/r error in order to remain in fellowship with the false teacher, Dave Miller? *Clarke has sullied his garments and will be suspect until he repents.*

15. **“They often possess a false sense of security because of their ignorance/misinterpretation of Scriptures.”** In an attempt to justify elder r/r at the Open Forum at the Farmington, Missouri Lectures, it was suggested that this was an application of 1 Tim. 5:19, **“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”** However, this is not what was taught or practiced by Miller and others at Brown Trail, in Bedford, Texas. There was no effort made to receive any accusations, rather, *the elders underwent a performance review.* Here is an example of an attempt to wrest the Scriptures to justify false actions. Remember, false practice many times leads to false doctrine.

CONCLUSION

It is unfortunate that we cannot look upon a man’s heart and know his motives. That being the case, it is hard to tell if one has a personal agenda. However, Jesus said, **“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”** (Mat. 7:20). We have examined some of brother Clarke’s fruit, and his actions indicate that his agenda is to uphold brother Miller, a known unrepentant false teacher, no matter what he must do in order to do so. His article is self-condemning. As the proverbial saying goes, **“Physician, heal thyself!”**

Unfortunately, there are some who would try to impugn the motives of brethren who are trying to uphold the Truth.

“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim” (1 Kings 18:17,18).

Clarke has assumed the role of Ahab and would accuse those who expose sin as the troublemakers with their own agenda. Nothing could be further from the Truth. Brother Clarke, along with many of his friends, would do well to heed his own advice without bias and make sure he is advancing the agenda of the Lord and not his/their own.

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A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Lavonne McClish

There is a sense in which we do have a personal relationship with Jesus. We are indebted to Him for our salvation, which is definitely on an individual basis. However, the expression, as used by so many people today, is not a Scriptural concept at all. They usually mean that we should be “pals” with Jesus, and that we should talk with Him as we would to an equal. The entire Gospel according to John is an excellent study of the relationship we should have with Jesus the Christ. However, certain passages are more direct and specific than others.

John the Baptist was a fleshly cousin of Jesus, and was sent by God to prepare the way for His Son. Yet he did not presume to claim a “personal relationship” with his Lord (John 1:29–36; 3:27–30). In chapter 8, verses 31 and 32, Jesus says only those who continue in His word are His disciples; only the Truth could make them free. Does this sound like a “personal relationship” with Jesus? Our relationship to Christ is that of sheep to shepherd (10:1–15). It is not a “personal relationship.”

Jesus did have a close **earthly** personal relationship—a friendship—with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1–44), but even so, it was not a relationship of equals. It cannot be used to say that we today should have such a close “personal relationship” with Jesus. Martha called Him *Lord* (vv. 21, 39) and stated her belief that He was/is the Christ, the Son of God (v. 27). When she went to tell Mary that Jesus had come, after the death of Lazarus, she said, “**The Master is here**” (v. 28). Mary also called Him *Lord* (v. 32).

Jesus’ friendship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus calls to mind the close friendship Abraham enjoyed with Jehovah (Gen. 12–25; Heb. 11:8–19). Second Chronicles 20:7 calls Abraham the friend of God, as does James 2:23. And yet Abraham did not presume to be “buddy-buddy” with God, but referred to himself as “dust and ashes” when compared with God (Gen. 18:27). He felt very unworthy to be asking God for favors.

Jesus said, “**If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my father honour**” (John 12:26). This doesn’t sound like a “personal relationship.” After He had washed the apostles’ feet, He said, “**Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am...The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him**” (13:13, 16). No “personal relationship” here, either. Jesus was closer to John than to any of the other apostles (vv. 23–26), and yet John still addressed Him as “Lord.” The apostles were *disciples*—followers—of Jesus. He was their Master.

Jesus said in John 14 that no man could come to the Father except through Him (v. 6). He told the apostles they should have known Him **and** His Father (v. 7), but apparently they did not, from what Philip said in verse 8. Jesus

then proceeded to say (summarizing and paraphrasing here), “Do you mean to tell me you **still** don’t know me, after all the time I have spent with you?” (vv. 9–12). He then promised that whatever they asked **of the Father in Jesus’ name**, they would receive (v. 14). (It must be understood that this promise was to the apostles. Our prayers are answered, yes, but not in the same way as were those of the apostles.) Verses 16 through 31 contain Jesus’ promise to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to them after He (Jesus) went back to the Father. The Comforter would teach them all things that they needed to know (v. 26), and bring to their remembrance everything Jesus had taught them while He was with them on earth. From the time of His ascension on, Jesus’ relationship with the apostles was that of a Mediator, through Whom they could go to the Father. They were given their inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

“**If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love**” (John 15:10). “**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**” (v. 14). “**Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you**” (v. 16c). “**But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me**” (v. 26). Jesus was going back to the Father and, rather than leave them comfortless, He was sending the Holy Spirit to them. It was best for them that Jesus go away (even though they would see Him no more, 16:10), otherwise, the Comforter would not come (16:7).

Again, their relationship with Jesus would now be as a Mediator and an Intercessor through Whom they could go to the Father. Over and over we see that, while the apostles had a close relationship with Jesus for the three and a half years of His ministry on earth, that changed when He went back to Heaven. “**Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you**” (16:23b) They were not to ask **Jesus**; they were to ask the **Father** in Jesus’ name. Mary Magdalene was weeping at the tomb of Jesus, thinking someone had taken His body away (20:11–18). When He had revealed Himself to her, Jesus told her not to touch Him, because He had not yet ascended back to the Father. The relationship had changed.

Jesus said that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter in to the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of His Father (Mat. 7:21–27). Matthew concludes this passage by saying, “**For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes**” (v. 29). Jesus said, “**All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him**” (11:27). The Father and the Son have a “personal relationship” with each other; we do not have that

kind of relationship with either. Once when He was teaching, His mother and His brothers came, wanting to see Him. But He said, **“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”** (Mat. 12:46–50). Apparently Jesus’ earthly family thought they had a close personal relationship with Him. The relationship that matters to Him is with those who obey Him.

In Matthew 14 we read the account of the apostles in a boat on the stormy Sea of Galilee. Jesus came to them, walking on the water, and when they saw Him they were afraid. Peter wanted to walk to Jesus on the water. But when He took his eyes off Jesus and began to look at the waves, he was afraid and began to sink. Jesus scolded him for doubting. When they got to shore, the apostles came and worshiped Jesus, saying, **“Of a truth thou art the Son of God”** (Mat. 14:24–33). No close “personal relationship” here. The apostles knew themselves to be vastly inferior to the Christ.

In Caesarea, Jesus asked the apostles who men said that He was. Then He said, **“But whom say ye that I am?”** Peter answered, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (16:13–17). No “personal relationship” here. Jesus went on to say that we would have to deny ourselves if we want to follow Him (v. 24). When He comes again, He will reward every man according to his works (v. 27)—clearly we are in a subordinate relationship with Jesus.

In Matthew 17 we have the account of Christ’s transfiguration in which He was apparently given His Heavenly glory again for a short time, and Moses and Elijah came to talk with Him. He had taken Peter, James, and John with Him. Peter, not realizing what he was saying, wanted to honor Jesus and Moses, and Elijah. But the voice thundered from Heaven, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”** (vv. 1–6, emph. LJM). Not Moses and the law, not Elijah and the prophets, but Christ only. Clearly there was no close “personal relationship” here, but an atmosphere of awe. They had seen the glory of Christ and heard the Father’s voice. Matthew 18:11 says, **“For the Son of man is come to save the lost.”** He is our Savior. We can have no “personal relationship” with such a One.

Zebedee’s wife, the mother of James and John, came to Jesus, **worshipping Him**, asking Him to give her sons places of honor in His kingdom. Jesus’ answer shows that the earthly relationships were not going to be the important ones (Mat. 10:20–23). Even two members of His “inner circle” would not be guaranteed closeness to Him after His kingdom came. Jesus used this occasion to teach the lesson that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves (v. 26–28).

In the parables related in Matthew 25, do even the **faithful** have a “personal relationship” with Jesus? Jesus, while He was on the earth, was even closer to Peter, James and John than he was to the rest of his apostles. Did they have a “personal relationship” with Him, according to Matthew 26:36–46, when they were supposed to be waiting and watching with Him? Jesus, in talking to the apostles just before He went back to Heaven, said, “All power is given me in Heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (28:18–20). Jesus would be with the apostles, yes; but He was clearly the One in authority—not a “personal relationship.”

In the first chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus called His apostles: **“Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men,”** He said to the four fishermen (vv. 17–20). This was a follower/leader relationship, not a “personal relationship.” Jesus was even able to command the unclean spirits and make them come out of people (v. 27), which showed His Deity.

The second chapter of Mark tells about the man sick of the palsy (he was paralyzed) whose four friends let him down, on his bed, through the roof because that was the only way they could get to Jesus. To everyone’s surprise, instead of healing him right away, Jesus said, **“Thy sins be forgiven thee”** (v. 5). As usual, some of the scribes were present, and they began to “reason” in their hearts, **“Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?”** (v. 7). Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, **“Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk”** (vv. 9–11). Could they—or can we—have a “personal relationship” with One who has the power to forgive sins and to cure diseases?

In Mark 4, we have a different account of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. This time, Jesus was in a boat with the apostles, only He was asleep on a pillow. When they, in terror, woke Him, He rebuked the storm by saying simply, **“Peace, be still.”** The fearful apostles, talking among themselves after Jesus had rebuked them for their lack of faith, said, **“What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”** They didn’t seem to feel a close “personal relationship,” but a reverent realization that they were in the presence of Deity.

The fifth chapter of Mark tells of a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years, and had spent all that she had on physicians, but still had her disease. She thought to herself that, if she could just touch His clothes, she would be healed; and surely enough, she was. But what she had not counted on was that Jesus felt power (virtue) go out of Him. She was afraid, but she came forward and fell down before Him, telling Him the truth (vv. 25–34). She realized that He knew what she had done. Question: Did that woman have a close “personal relationship” with Jesus?

When, in Mark 8, Jesus began to teach them that He must suffer many things and be killed, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him (v. 32). Now, it may be that Peter thought he had a close “personal relationship” with Jesus, but Jesus relieved him of that notion: **“Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men”** (v. 33). In Luke 5:4–5, Jesus, sitting in Simon Peter’s boat, told Simon to launch out into the

deep and let down his net. Peter replied, “**Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.**” Here, again, we have the Master/Servant relationship, not a “personal relationship.”

Jesus said to His disciples, “**And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?**” (Luke 6:46). If we had a close “personal relationship” with someone, would we call him Lord? Jesus said in Luke 17:7–10, speaking to His apostles,

“Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he

did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.”

What kind of relationship is that?

In none of these accounts (and we have only skimmed the surface of four of the books of the New Testament) do we find any hint of a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ. We are His servants, His followers, His sheep—and He is our Master, our Leader, our Shepherd, and our Mediator between us and God.

—908 Imperial Drive
Denton, TX 76209

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Martha Bentley

In 2 Peter 1:3-4 we are told—

according as the 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 whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world though lust.

This being true, should we not offer continual thanks for these many blessings? So many prayers today are simply “gimme” prayers to satisfy personal desires. Certainly God knows our needs before we ask (Matt. 6:8), but He desires that we pray for these needs (Matt. 6:9-13). We are assured He hears the prayers of the righteous (Prov. 15:29), and has delight in the prayers of the upright (Prov. 15:8).

However, God will not accept just any prayer from anyone, no matter how fervent or scriptural in content it is (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:3; Acts 2:42). Moreover, James 4:3 tells us, “**Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.**” And again, “**If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you**” (John 15:7). Further, Christians are told to, “**Pray without ceasing**” (1 Thess. 5:17). Again, “**if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him**” (1 Thess 5:18).

For *what* then are we to pray? Since God has already given us *all* things, we should not cease to thank Him for all the many daily blessings. In the morning when you awake do you immediately thank God for the night’s rest and a place to rest, or are you in such a hurry you forget? Get up a few minutes earlier and have a minute to be thankful. Do you ask God to see you safely to your destination and thank Him when you arrive safely? We live in a free country. Do you continually thank God for our freedoms? Are you thankful for your Bible and the ability and freedom to read it? Does

a beautiful sunset evoke immediate thanks from you? There are so many of our blessings we simply take for granted, though they are given daily (Psa. 68:19). The early church “**continued daily**” in their service (Acts 2:46).

How can we think that prayers we have in our worship services Sunday and Wednesday can begin to suffice for all the other days filled with countless blessings? God is our Father and we should count it a privilege to be able to talk with him at any time, not just in time of trouble. What kind of relationship would prevail with our earthly father if we spoke to him as infrequently as some do their heavenly Father? Even our Lord felt the privilege of prayer when He rose up before day that He might go pray in private (Mark 1:35). *Think about it.*

—8305 S. Burchfield Dr.
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THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE “NO” ON PROP. 8 CROWD —INTOLERANCE—

Johnny Oxendine

The newspapers (*See documentation following article*) carried a story recently about a Sacramento, CA theater director who resigned his position amid the furor over his donation to the Yes on Proposition 8 campaign. The company is a non-profit musical theater company, but it is now the Exhibit A of what can and will happen in this state if the proponents of sin have their way.

Scott Eckern resigned after it became known (tracked down by online activists with a website that lists the contributors to Yes on 8) that he had made a \$1000 donation to Yes on 8 (which amended the state Constitution to recognize only marriage between a man and a woman). His donation stemmed from his religious beliefs (he is a Mormon), but because he opposed same-sex marriage he has been a focal point of anger by the theater community that was opposed to the proposition. Some were refusing to stage their plays, some actors were refusing to perform, and some supporters of the theater were threatening to withdraw their financial support. Now you can see clearly the ugly head raised if you do not agree with the homosexual agenda. Boycotts and protests have been covered by the news media almost daily to keep the pot boiling.

What they are hoping is that this does not cause a backlash against the No on 8 crowds because it will make them look as if they oppose freedom of expression. It exposes a crazed mentality that will not accept the majority view that was simply another reaffirmation of a previously passed proposition (Prop 22 in 2000) that the state courts had overturned. There is no need here to discuss the merits of the proposition itself; the Bible describes God’s view of such

behavior in both Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. What this does show us is the relentless efforts of those who are set on mandating an acceptance of sin will not stop with this proposition defeat, but may force it to a higher level – the United States Supreme Court. Then the matter will, perhaps, be settled once for all (and we can only hope that the right way will win out in that vote).

This mentality is prevalent even in the brotherhood. The idea that even if something is wrong, if enough of the brethren will support it, time will be on their side though the scriptures are not. How sad for any to feel the need to rely on numbers for their point to gain validation.

This so-called movement behind same-sex marriage is not going to stop. It would have been interesting to know what would have happened if the election had gone a different way. There would have been a huge complaint by that community that the election was over and we would need to get over it.

Brethren cannot be intimidated or tolerant of such aberrant behavior. The efforts to keep the definition of marriage as it is now will require an awareness that does not dissolve into complacency. What we are seeing are the true colors of those who are marching and shouting for something – anything – to help overrule the will of the people.

If we cannot abide by laws, and will always complain that unless our view is adopted, we will protest in the “whatever” way appeals to us until we wear you out. Well, contend brethren!

—P. O. Box 5026
San Mateo, Ca. 94402

[*San Francisco Chronicle*, “**Theater Official Quits Over Anti-Gay Donation**”, Wednesday, November 12, 2008, Associated Press. Also, “**The Ugly Backlash Over Proposition 8**”, John Diaz, *San Francisco Chronicle*: Wed., Nov. 23, 2008. Diaz’s article appeared on page G – 9 of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. John Diaz is *The Chronicle*’s editorial page editor. You can e-mail him at jdiaz@sfchronicle.com. —*Editor*]

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PRESENT DAY SODOM

Daniel Denham

Everyone familiar with the Bible can recall the fate of the wicked cities of the Plain in Genesis 19. Among those cities were Sodom and Gomorrah, cities whose moral decadence was so great that their very names have come to be associated in our vernacular with debauchery and sexual perversion. Their evil in going after *strange flesh* helped doom them to a state of ignominious disrepute rarely paralleled in history. The evils of Sodom in the practice of homosexuality gave rise to the name “sodomite” as a synonym for “homosexual.”

Today a new Sodom darkens the earth. It is a land where homosexuality is flaunted as merely an *alternate life-style*. In one of its major cities the number of practicing sodomites is estimated to include one out of every five people in its census. One film company recently put out a movie in which the Savior and Lord of glory was portrayed as an effeminate homosexual who also *had flings* with Martha and Mary. It is a land where some religious leaders have stepped to the forefront to defend such practices as *normal and wholesome*.

One Pentecostal minister, familiar to millions in his homeland, was defrocked by his denomination due in part to accusations that he engaged in this type of conduct himself. A bill that would grant full civil rights on the grounds of sexual preference has been introduced into this nation’s legislature. This law, if passed, would grant the same rights that exist under the law to race or ethnic origin to any wishing to practice an aberrant form of sexual behavior. An amendment to this nation’s constitution was narrowly defeated. It would have granted full license to such conduct. A recent scandal rocked its Senate when it was discovered that several hundreds of thousands of dollars of federal revenues (tax monies) were given to homosexual front groups to estab-

lish and conduct seminars and clinics on better homosexual techniques.

By now you have undoubtedly realized that the new Sodom is the United States. The trends that are in motion moving us toward the ashe-heap of history must be reversed. Homosexuality must be denounced from our pulpits and its practitioners among our own members (and there are more than one might imagine normally!) disciplined. It is a sin (cf. Rom. 1:26-28; Jude 7). If there are not enough righteous left to deliver this nation, then it—as did the cities of the Plain before—shall fall! (Ezek. 22:30-31). May God open our eyes to see the bleak and dismal future for our land, our children and their children, etc. if we fail to stand for what is right! If God’s people cannot be depended upon to further sound moral values, then who can?

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WHY IS IT?

Alton W. Fonville

Why is it that some of the most religious people in the world are the last ones to see the truth of God’s word regarding what the prophets told was sure to come? Jehovah sent His prophets to tell them of things to come, and to warn them of certain destruction if they continued in their rebellious and sinful ways of life. After that, He sent his only begotten Son into the world to be their Savior and High Priest under a new priesthood, to provide blessings which they had not known before under the old covenant. It has not changed since the days of old. The “chief priests” in the Levitical priesthood should have known better but, they were the very ones responsible for the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. The scribes and the Pharisees were the ones calling out, **“crucify him, crucify him.”** He was their Savior, but, they did not recognize Him. He did not come “as they wanted and had expected.”

Many times while Jesus was here trying to teach people, He would ask them, “Have ye not read the scriptures?” It was in them, to which they claimed so much allegiance, that He pointed out very bluntly on one occasion, **“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God”** (Matt. 22:29). At another time, He again put them in their place by telling them a true story regarding Himself: **“And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner”** (Mark 12:10). The Jews were told, as they were trying to trap Him and to kill Him, **“And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”** (John 5: 38-40). He first offered His own people, the Jews, a chance to receive their Messiah and the blessings which He provided, but, they rejected His many offers and the Gentile world reaped the benefits under the Priesthood which God set up. Shortly before His ascension back into heaven, He told disciples: **“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me”** (Luke 24:44). So why is it that people can hear the words of God and at the same time, not accept them?

Could it be from a lack of serious study? Or, could it be from the putting of human wisdom up in competition to that of Almighty God’s infinite wisdom? Maybe it could be from one never “setting his heart” to believe what God has told us. They still have some reservations about the absolute truth and its authority in what He left as a guide for us in that one and only way to the Father. Remember, Jesus did say, **“I am the way, the truth and the life.”** He did not say “I am a way among many different ways.” That is the false teaching which you can hear from so many different denominational speakers, and it is also permeating the body of Christ, the church which Jesus established, recorded in the book of Acts. It is sad to note that some of our gospel preachers are actually heard to say things like, *“I choose not to believe certain things because I want to believe it another way less offensive.”* In spite of what the text clearly reveals, they have a version of the event which they choose to believe. Is this not putting our wisdom against God’s? Was our heavenly Father not capable of

providing accurate information for our journey to heaven? Did He not preserve His holy Word for us through His infinite providence? How can we, His “finite creation” indict our very Creator and accuse Him of being derelict and unable to give us the proper words for a correct understanding of His divine will? When those teachers give us different meanings from what God plainly said, they need to be **“marked and avoided”** and they are not worthy of support from faithful brethren. We need to be put to shame for our lack of study and the faith which it would insure.

—337 Madison 4605
St. Paul, AR 72760

Eyes will not see when the heart wishes them to be blind – Desire conceals truth, as darkness does the earth — Seneca

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[The following installment is the first in a series of articles concerning the eldership that we will print, the Lord willing, over the next several months. Originally this information appeared in a single uncopyrighted booklet written and printed in about 1990. It was one of the last literary productions of the lamented gospel preacher, brother Bill Jackson. Although it seems impossible, Bill has been in eternity for almost 20 years, having passed from this life to his reward in April 1991 during his sixty first year. Time has not altered the timeless Truth taught in brother Jackson's material on this most important subject. Herein, therefore, is another work from Bill's pen that continues to teach us. Indeed, he being dead yet speaketh. Your editor continues to believe that brother Jackson's material about elders' life and work is true to the Bible, practical and beneficial for the edification of the Lord's church for those who study it and are exercised thereby.]

Regardless of how sinful preachers become, how ungodly deacons are, how incompetent Bible class teachers turn out to be, or how bad anyone else in the church is or will be, if the elders were willing to do at all costs what God commanded them to do, no problem could arise in God's church that would not be solved by faithful elders. Thereby, the Lord's church would kept faithful to God.

With those points in mind we commend you to the first article and the articles to follow in this serious and sobering study of the elders—God's men—those who tend Christ's church.

The only alterations made to brother Jackson material was for the purpose of putting it into article format. —DPB]



“...a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ...”
(Titus 1:7)

ELDERS: Who Are These Men? *Those Who Watch Over Souls (1)*

W. N. “Bill” Jackson

THE NATURE OF THE MEN AND THEIR WORK

(1) *ELDERS OCCUPY AN OFFICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.* The office is established by God, with both the work and the nature of the men set forth plainly in the New Testament. In re-visiting the congregations established in an initial visit, Paul, on his first missionary journey, saw to it that “... they ... ordained them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). Pointing young preachers to the work before them, Paul stresses the qualifications and some of the work to be embraced by elders (1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1 :5-11). The apostle pointed out that the selecting of elders would be a *setting in order* a matter that was lacking (Titus 1 :5).

(2) *ELDERS ARE TO BE SPIRITUAL MEN.* Our emphasis is on the word *spiritual*, and it must be. Far too many congregations have rushed to select men, all the while noting the points of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, but with little emphasis on the spirituality of the men. All qualifications are given in the Word, and must be noted, but it should not be the case that the man's marital status and having believing children — topped off with his being *good in money matters*—virtually assures his selection. CHARACTER qualities are most vital, and many congregations have learned to their sorrow that trouble came, not as regards whether the man had a wife or children, nor as to his businesslike manner, but in behavior completely contrary to the character qualities God sets forth.

(3) *ELDERS ARE TO DO A SPIRITUAL WORK.* Once more, the men are to be of spiritual quality because theirs is to be a spiritual work. The meaning is that the men must

be selected in view of the work that is before them. They need to know what that work is, and the congregation needs to know the same. The points we are now making all come together in this: *Men who are non-spiritual will not be able to do the spiritual work God gives them to do!*

NEW TESTAMENT WORDS CONCERNING THE MEN

In order that we might appreciate the work of elders, we wish to briefly look at the functioning as set forth by God. Our device will be to look at the actual words used in the New Testament to refer to their work, and we find these:

(a) *BISHOP* (Greek: *EPISKOPOS*)—One who oversees, looks upon, inspects, sees after, cares for, guards, visits, watches over, watches after and superintends. This is the word used by Peter in charging the elders to “**take the oversight**” (1 Peter 5:2), and the word used by Paul in stating that these men are made “**overseers**” (Acts 20:28). We cannot see the range of expressions within the word “*bishop*” without knowing that elders have a great work to do.

(b) *ELDER* (Greek: *PRESBUTEROS*)—One who presides over assemblies, who is older, one of age, with appropriate dignity and wisdom. This is the word most often used in the New Testament because in its basic meaning it has use referring to elders in Judaism as well as those who are elders (elderly) in terms of years. It is the most frequently used word pertaining to elders in the church. The meaning of the word fits exactly with the points regarding the elder not being new in the faith (*a novice*, 1 Tim. 3:6) and having established himself then both in the faith and in terms of

the maturity coming from family leadership responsibilities. Again, one with the character qualities God sets forth would be then expected to possess the needed wisdom and dignity. That element in the meaning of the word, “*a presider over assemblies*,” also fits exactly the point of elders having rule, watchcare and superintending responsibilities, combined with the next point we will make.

(c) *SHEPHERD/PASTOR* (Greek: *POIMEN*)—One who tends, feeds, cherishes, guides, nourishes and protects a flock. It is the word *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11, and is used as regards the flock of God in 1 Peter 5:2, to be fed, tended to by these men. Their work, then, is to pastor the flock, with all the varied implications of the words used (above) in definition.

(d) *RULER* - (Greek: *HEGEOMAI*)—One who leads, leads the way, goes first, chief. The word itself has application in a number of ways in the New Testament. but in the instance of Hebrews 13:7, 17 it refers to the office we are now discussing. In a time when some men are quick to assert that elders *do not rule*, these verses are most important in that, especially in verse 17, the rest of us are told to obey and submit.

These are sufficient to let us know the awesome responsibilities given to those who serve as elders. Hebrews 13:17

further stresses that elders will have to give an accounting—yea, one day before He who is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) all who have thus served will make an accounting.

Most Important: It Takes Time

Though we will be looking at the men and the qualities of their lives later, just here we want to state that the work of elders involves TIME and INTEREST and CONCERN beyond that given by the rest of those who make up the church. Those who embark upon this work need to know that they are taking on responsibilities IN ADDITION TO all the other responsibilities they share with all other members of the congregation. An elder must continue to do all that is required of all members, and must also be aware that he is to be an example before all in the work, and additionally has taken on oversight responsibilities.

In all of our study with a congregation, and with men who may be considered for the work, it is with urgency that we state this: DO NOT TAKE THE WORK IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO TAKE THE TIME! And, very often it will mean that you MAKE THE TIME by letting some secular matter go that you attend to the work of the Kingdom!

—DECEASED

A QUESTION OF FELLOWSHIP

Roelf L. Ruffner

Benevolence for the New Testament Christian is not a matter of option but of faithfulness to our Lord and Savior. **“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”** (1 John.3:17). The same principle applies to a local congregation of God’s people. **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”** (James 1:27). For several generations congregations and individuals have scripturally used this passage and others to justify the financial support of an orphan’s home. Many young lives have been blessed in the process.

This is why I was disappointed to read the December issue of THE CONCERN, a newsletter put out by the Mountain States Children’s Home (MSCH) in Longmont, Colorado. In it there was a report on their Annual Benefit Auction. Mentioned as first on a list of Corporate Donors to the auction was the “Rocky Mountain Christian Church”. I preach for the High Plains church of Christ in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we have supported MSCH financially for a number of years. After Wednesday evening Bible study I showed the newsletter to some of the men of the congregation (we have no elders.). They agreed that I should investigate and find out what was going on at MSCH.

The next day I did a simple internet search and found that the Rocky Mountain Christian Church (RMCC) was

a large congregation of the Independent Christian Church denomination. It is located in Niwot, Colorado. I called MSCH and later that day the President of the Board of Directors returned my call. We had a cordial conversation with no harsh words exchanged by either side.

This brother confirmed that MSCH had indeed received funds from RMCC. He said that they had initially been contacted by them with an offer of a monetary donation. He had then met personally with the preacher and elders of RMCC. The Board had agreed to accept funds from this denomination and “saw nothing wrong with it”.

I reminded this brother that Christians are to **“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”** (Eph.5:11). Many in the body of Christ today do not realize that denominations are an abomination in the sight of the Lord (1 Cor.1:10). When our Lord prayed that night right before His betrayal He did not ask the Father that His followers tolerate religious division, rather **“that they all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee”** (John 17:21). Brethren have swallowed whole the heresy of religious pluralism because all they hear from the pulpit is that sweet Siren’s song of “unity in diversity.” **“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”** (Jer. 5:30-31).

It was also obvious from our conversation that this

brother saw no problem with knowingly taking money from any source. I asked him if he would knowingly receive money won in the lottery. Unhesitatingly he responded, "Yes!" He also commented, "But we are doing Christ's work here". I responded by asking him, "So you would agree that the end justifies the means?" After a pause he said, "I guess I would." Later, after our conversation, I recalled reading of another advocate in the New Testament of this same approach to decision making – the High Priest Caiaphas. As justification for the monstrous act of murdering the Son of God he said, "**Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not**" (John 11:50).

Brethren often see no ethical or Scriptural difficulty in taking money from any source or even dispensing the kingdom's money to anyone. I am afraid that brethren have a blind spot when it comes to money. They only see "green" and not black and white. They fail to see the spiritual connection to money the Bible calls "fellowship." To knowingly receive a donation from a religious group is to be in fellowship with that group. The apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit considered the financial support Paul received from other congregations as "fellowship". "**And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only**" (Phil.4:15 – ASV). Likewise when brethren financially support the Gospel Broadcasting Network, knowing that they are in full communion with a marked false teacher, Dave Miller, they are in fellowship with GBN and, by implication, Dave Miller. I do not understand why brethren cannot see this. (Lest any reader should gather the wrong impression, I am NOT advocating the erroneous doctrine of Saints Only Benevolence. "**As we therefore have opportunity, let us to good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith**" (Gal.6:10 – emphasis mine RLR).)

This brother also threw into the discussion a familiar argument, for me. "MSCH is not the church". (You frequently hear this argument from defenders of apostate "Christian" universities to justify their unauthorized practices.) I agreed with him that an orphans' home is not the church but a home.

(Continued from Page 2)

centurion exhorts his men to "**Stand fast!**" Immediately preceding the clash of arms the stalwart centurion shouts to his men, "**Quit ye like men!**" By which is meant be courageous in the face of the enemy. Also see Eph. 6:13-17. How important such advice is to every loving faithful soldier in the Lord's Army who desires to be a good soldier in service to the Captain of his salvation (2 Tim. 2:3, 4; Heb. 2:10; Peter 1:10; Rev. 2:10). By experience Uncle Wilbert knew what he was doing when he advised Daddy concerning a soldier's conduct under fire. And, so did the apostle Paul when it comes to being a faithful soldier of the cross involved

I understood that the Board, as the head of that home, can receive unsolicited donations from non-Christians. This principle is taught by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:23ff regarding the eating of meat by a Christian which had been first offered to idols. By the same principle the church can accept that \$1 placed in the collection plate by the unbeliever.

But to knowingly receive funds from a denomination is a different matter. MSCH since its inception has been affiliated with the churches of Christ. I asked this brother what their public acceptance of this public donation says to a world which knows that churches of Christ teach that denominations are an abomination. What does it say to the Rocky Mountain Christian Church? All he would answer was a now common refrain, "But we are doing Christ's work here".

Brethren, the question of fellowship is paramount in our trouble times. Many pass themselves off as "Christians" but they don't quite meet the Biblical qualifications. Yet brethren are increasingly accepting such people (and their money) with open arms and no questions asked. But this is not the way the faithful of old treated such pretenders. When Ezra and the remnant started to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem their heathen neighbors wanted to "help".

Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up to hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us (Ezra 4:2-3).

I wish more of my brethren had the spiritual backbone of these brave men to refuse the wrong and choose the right when it comes to fellowship. May the Lord bless spiritual Israel with men who understand the preciousness of fellowship and the blessedness of obeying the Son of God!

—5211 Timberline Road
Cheyenne, WY 82009

in spiritual warfare.

Today, it is a shame, to say the least, that many who want to be known as faithful servants of the Lord have actually forgotten that in order to be such they must be soldiers of the Lord, fighting the fight of faith. Nevertheless the battle continues to rage. The war is not yet won. And, even if our death is called for, rather than forsake our post, let us not give one inch over to the enemy whether he or she is found in the church or out of it.

—David P. Brown, Editor

“EXPELLED! (No Intelligence Allowed)”

Ken Chumbley

This is the title and subtitle of a movie released in 2008 by Ben Stein that was shown at some movie theaters and is now available on DVD. I do not usually recommend movies of any kind. However, after viewing the DVD recently, I would highly recommend that all view this film. If you have children, view it with them and discuss its content as it will help them and you in being able to combat the errors of evolution.

Specifically, this movie shows how the very idea of “intelligent design” is put down by many in the scientific community. It did not mention the words “God,” or “creation” and did so for a reason. The movie explains how that scientists, with high credentials, are ostracized by their peers in the scientific community and have even lost their positions in academia because they dared to suggest that the evidence from science could (not even must!) imply intelligent design as being the cause of the existence of the world, the universe, the solar system and indeed all of the galaxies that science has been able to probe. Most of those who are interviewed clearly are not religious people and, in many respects, hold to most of the tenets of modern science that rejects God.

The concept that “intelligent design” could account for the beginning of matter and of life is clearly being ruled as “inadmissible” by many in the scientific community without regard to the evidence that is presented. Those who would even speculate that “intelligent design” might account for the origin of all things are immediately regarded as being on the “lunatic fringe” and nothing that they say or write could be anything other than the ramblings of fools and not worthy of scientific study. Such is strange given the fact that science is supposed to deal with the evidence and those who have propounded the idea of “intelligent design” have offered evidence to back up their conclusions. Rather, it seems that many in the scientific community would rather reject the evidence out of hand rather than examine it for fear that the evidence might lead to the conclusion of “intelligent design” rather than the conclusions that they have reached. It appears that many are scared to examine the evidence for fear doing so might make their atheistic, agnostic or skeptical ideas look silly.

During the course of the movie, Ben Stein interviews one of the leading British scientists, Richard Dawkins and asks him about the origin of the universe. He indicated that it was a slow process – but did not know how. When asked about intelligent design, he said that an earlier civilization in the universe could have evolved that designed a form of life and seeded it on to this planet. However, when pressed further by Stein about how that earlier civilization came to be he went back to the idea that there was a slow process, but he did not know how it started. As with all such, he reverts to some matter that was able to produce life but could not say where or how the matter came to exist. Thus, Dawkins,

like so many others cannot come up with a first cause but because of preconceived ideas rule out intelligent design because they cannot accept that God might be involved. The Bible tells us that it is the fool who has said there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

Academia has decided to expel Intelligent Design (God) from the discussion of origins, so much for academic freedom! We need to do all we can to confront these “elitists” who rule God out of court but have no scientific evidence to back up their decision. We must challenge them to allow open discussion and to defend their position rather than pontificate and expect all others to roll over and accept their “superior wisdom.”

—535 Clearwater Road,
Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

[Among others, the late Thomas B. Warren stands out as one who, as far as I know, did as much as anyone, and more than many, to oppose atheists and the like. He did his best to train men to meet them on the polemic platform – to be militant for the cause of Christ. He exhorted elderships to take out full page advertisements in newspapers to challenge atheists and their supporters. Few elderships with their “peace at any price” mind-set, “guard-the-church-treasury-at-all-costs” mentality, whose preachers were/are a part of the soft insipid “how to win friends and influence people” variety, heeded his plea. Why is it the case, that so many who were trained by him to oppose atheists, et al., are rarely, if ever, found challenging them to public oral debates? In fact, they are rarely heard from unless it is to urge their unscriptural concept of balance on an already, for the most part, neutered bunch of elders, preachers, youth ministers, educators and churches. Some of them have migrated to the liberal side of the fence, and/or they are pressing some special hobby. If they speak up and out at all, they oppose those of us who continue to stand where faithful brethren have always stood. Biblical fellowship is corrupted by the respect of persons and a false love.

Truth has fallen in the streets. Muley cow-headed brethren trample it under foot as they, with their herd mentality, stampede toward the chief seats of academia and special brotherhood projects—most of it done at the expense of Bible authority for their beliefs and actions—and the people love to have it so.

Will a remnant continue to refuse the siren call of popularity, pomp and pseudo-sophistication, the easy way, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Knowing that by faith we are able to possess the land for God, no matter what others may or may not do, we continue to labor to be faithful to God in all things. For, as Paul wrote “we are more than conquerors through him” (Rom. 8:37). — EDITOR]

Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

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

-England-

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

-Florida-

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

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

-North Carolina-

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

-Oklahoma-

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

- Tennessee-

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

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; 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., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

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

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

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

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

-Wyoming-

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

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