

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

BIDDING GODSPEED

Dub McClish

John wrote a stern warning in 2 John 11: **“For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”** (KJV). John was warning about our attitude/behavior toward those who have departed from Jesus’ teachings (individuals, churches, papers, or schools). To offer support, in word or deed—even by implication—to those who have abandoned the Truth is to share their guilt.

Manifestly, many are violating this passage by bidding God speed to those who propagate error. They are, in fact, practicing a form of “Unity in Diversity.” I refer not to those who have proved themselves to be dedicated liberals (no less is expected from them). Tragically, some otherwise apparently faithful brethren/congregations are doing so in various ways. Their behavior implicitly (and contradictorily) supports the very things they otherwise profess to oppose.

Reprinting bulletin articles demonstrates this phenomenon. Occasionally a faithful brother may innocently reprint an article by an apostate, unaware of the error of its author on other subjects (none of us is omniscient), which emphasizes the need for every Christian [especially preachers and elders] to keep up with “who” is saying and doing “what”). However, I am struck with the “so what?” attitude with which some otherwise sound brethren reprint articles by false teachers.

While a given article by an unfaithful brother may contain no error, when faithful brethren publish such, they harm the cause of Truth and righteousness in at least the following

ways. They:

- Imply endorsement of and fellowship with the writer beyond merely his article
- Give him a platform and credibility that he should be denied
- Encourage naïve, undiscerning, and ignorant readers to heed his words when he does not teach the Truth
- Further contribute to the doctrinal confusion and fellowship compromises so rampant among the saints.

If such careless behavior is not bidding God speed to a false teacher, I know not what to call it. We are known as much by whom/what we commend as by whom/what we oppose.

Publicizing activities of liberals and apostates (including meetings, lectureships, youth rallies, and workshops conducted by congregations and “Christian” universities) also has the same effect. It appears, however, that some churches somehow feel obligated to print, post, or orally announce every notice of area events they receive, regardless of its source or content or the individuals involved.

When a church announces (by bulletin, from the pulpit, on the bulletin board, or otherwise) activities of congregations or schools that are known for their apostasy or programs that feature liberal brethren, it thereby promotes apostasy by giv-

(Continued on page 20)

IN THIS ISSUE...

BIDDING GOD SPEED – DUB MCCLISH.....	1
EDITORIAL—I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU IGNORANT – DPB.....	2
IRIS GALLAHER – DPB.....	3
WHAT IS THE EMERGING CHURCH? – DANIEL DENHAM.....	4
DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH – ROELF RUFFNER.....	11

THE CHALLENGE OF SAME SEX UNIONS – ALBERT MOHLER.....	14
2012 SPRING CFTF LECTURESHIP BOOK, THE N. T. CHURCH AND COUNTERFEIT CHURCHES.....	21
FORGIVE AS GOD FORGIVES – CHARLES POGUE.....	22
WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: 37 TH ANNUAL BELLVIEW LECTURES – JUNE 9-13, 2012.....	23

Contending FOR THE Faith™

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

With this issue of *Contending for the Faith* the paper becomes a bimonthly publication. We have made this change to save on the cost of postage. Thus, we can keep our subscription prices the same. We are also increasing the number of pages from 16 to 24 pages.

We deeply appreciate our subscribers and we continue to request your prayers on our behalf in the work of *CFTF*.

—The Publisher

Editorial...

I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU IGNORANT...

It is common knowledge that the general populace of the U. S. is at an all time low in their knowledge of the Bible. Moreover with each passing day our society becomes more ignorant of what I refer to as the first principles pertaining to the basics of the fundamentals of the Bible. In the church's effort to teach the gospel (Christianity is a taught religion—Mat. 28:18-20), aside from learning how to rightly divide the Word of truth and in doing so also learn how the Bible authorizes (2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16, 17; Col. 3:17), we must be sure not to approach people with the assumption that they have a fundamental knowledge of the Bible. They may or may not, but in most cases they do not. If we assume anything regarding their Bible knowledge, assume they know nothing about it. Also, if they are familiar with the Bible at all, their knowledge of it will likely be warped because of the widespread and longtime influence of denominational doctrines.

THE SECULARIST AND PAGAN—Many people come from backgrounds that are secular. If they will study with us, we must begin with proofs for the existence of God, the Deity of Christ, and the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible, etc. Also, much of this material can be used in teaching those in the pagan religions.

If we have the opportunity to study with those in or influenced by pagan religions, we must have a working knowledge of what their religion teaches. Thereby we can better understand their religious views, especially what they be-

lieve to be the final authority in religion. In other words, we must take them where we find them in their ignorance of God, the Bible, etc., and begin our study with them at whatever point in their knowledge or the lack of it that we find them.

The same is true in studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventist, Catholics, and all of those religions believing in some other authority other than the Bible, or books they consider to be on the same level of authority as the Bible, or those who believe in direct revelations from God.

THE DEVOUT DENOMINATIONALIST—Of course, there are those denominational church members who are active in their denominations. But in general their Bible knowledge is much less than that of their denominational forefathers. We must not assume they know much, if anything, about the Bible in general and certainly not a rightly divided Bible (2 Tim. 2:15). We can expect them to be strongly influenced and trained to be subjective and caught up in a romantic emotional (better felt than told) sentimentalism that they have been wrongly taught is love. Many of them will view religion from the following old denominational perspective, "It does not make any difference what we believe, just so we are sincere." But do not expect them logically and consistently to apply this false premise to all beliefs, situations, and circumstances wherein it applies. In fact, many of them will not think logically or consistently on much of anything pertaining to religious beliefs. Although there is the exception, in general we should not expect them to know the details of what makes their particular denomination differ-

ent from other man-made churches. Again, we must have a working knowledge of the major doctrines influencing the denominations—Calvinism, Armenianism, Premillennialism, Charismatics, to name some of the major denominational doctrines.

Another important point to keep in mind in working with devout denominationalists is this—it is extremely difficult for them to understand the church outside of denominationalism. They are so entrenched in the false denominational concept of each denomination making up what they have been erroneously taught to be "the one great invisible church" that they have difficulty conceiving of all Christians being in only one church with no faithful children of God to be found in any denominational church (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:42, 47; Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:4; Col. 1:18). Thus, they do not believe the church has anything to do with their salvation. Moreover, they do not understand that the church of Christ has distinct identifying marks, setting it apart from all denominational churches. Denominationalists erroneously think that as long as they believe in Jesus as their savior, the denominational differences over doctrine have nothing to do with one being lost or saved. Their false idea is that Jesus saves them and following their salvation they join the denomination that best suits them.

BRETHREN IN DIGRESSION—For the purpose of this article I have in mind those digressive brethren who are **liberal**—by their doctrines they loose people from what God in His Word binds on them.

Also, for the purpose of identification and study, and only for those two reasons, I am putting these digressive
(Continued on page 16)

Iris Gallaher 1928 – 2012

Contending for the Faith extends its condolences to brother Bill Gallaher and his family on the death of his beloved wife, Iris. Sister Gallaher passed from this life on March 29, 2012. The Gallahers had been members of the Bellview Church of Christ since they moved to Pensacola, FL in 1955. Sister Gallaher taught children's classes for many years in the teaching program of the church. Brother Gallaher served as one of Bellview's elders for 37 years until declining health caused him to cease that work.

The Bellview congregation considered sister Gallaher a Godly example of a Christian woman, wife, mother, teacher, and friend. She and brother Gallaher worked for the Lord as a team and together they were a great influence for good as they labored with the Bellview brethren for the Lord. She will be greatly missed.

In entering eternity, sister Gallaher has ceased her pilgrimage and is at rest with her Lord. We rejoice with brother Gallaher and his family in the exceeding great and precious promises of Jesus to His faithful church as we continue to stand on Jordan's stormy banks, casting wishful eyes toward Canaan's fair and happy land where our possessions lie.

—David P. Brown, Editor

WHAT IS THE EMERGING CHURCH?

Daniel Denham

Defining the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) poses a bit of a problem in that, because of its postmodernistic basis of subjectivity, the proponents of the movement hold very little consensus on a wide range of issues. They have problems defining their own belief system to each other's satisfaction. Two major advocates for it describe it as a "disparate movement, which is so diverse and fragmented that some observers and insiders do not like to think of it as a movement at all" (Gibbs & Bolger 29). Leonard Sweet writes: "For many within the movement, the emerging church is an umbrella that covers many diverse movements" (*Emerging Culture* 41).

However, emerging (sometimes called emergent)¹ churches will cooperate with one another socially, religiously, and politically to achieve what common goals they do share. It is the purpose of our study to outline the major goals or tenets in which there is virtually universal agreement among them. These provide a framework for understanding the over-arching structure known as the Emerging Church Movement.

SURRENDER TO POSTMODERNISM

The first major tenet or underlying principle that animates the movement is, of course, *Postmodernism*. The Emerging Church Movement was generated by the shift into post modern thinking among philosophers, especially those influenced by the works of Heidegger, who himself was a Nazi before and during World War II. His socialistic political ideas were brought over into his philosophical system, being premised on a profoundly neo-Darwinian view of existence. Social Darwinism, "the survival of the fittest," animated Nazi racial and sociopolitical thinking. Heidegger was no exception. He wedded his political views to his predominantly mystical religious views. His philosophy has also influenced many theologians.

The ECM preachers and theologians, coming mostly from liberal Roman Catholic and evangelical backgrounds, have accepted most of the basic assumptions of Postmodernism. From this assumption they contend that Postmodernism must be *engaged* as a legitimate philosophical viewpoint from **within** the system in order to be *relevant* to the current generation. This feeds into another assumption that we must resort to language that addresses this new *paradigm* of our youth in keeping with "the prison house of language" within which their own societal group binds them. In 1960s parlance, we must, according to the ECM, become "hip."

The older leaders of the movement are 1960s radicals now come of age and often tenured in universities.

The ECM churches view themselves as "missional" in nature. While on the surface this sounds a bit Biblical, it is not. The language of the Scriptures stressing the seeking of the lost to save their souls is instead co-opted for more secular and worldly pursuits. They are on a mission, but it is not a mission from God, despite the use of the Latin term *Missio Dei* (Mission of God) in which they couch their designs. The Kingdom of God to the ECM is to be primarily concerned with all the affairs of the physical world and its environment. The spiritual concerns are of secondary importance, if having any real importance to the ECM leadership.

Leonard Sweet argues that Christianity must relate to the culture in which it lives and compares the debate over the role of Christianity in culture to "debating the roles of hydrogen and oxygen in the air we breathe" (*Emerging Culture* 14). But the ECM approach to culture is to embrace it and utilize it for *its* purposes. It is a holistic surrender to the dominant culture. As Brian McLaren, the most influential of current ECM leaders, has written:

As Christians who want to live and love on the other side, we had better get a feel for post modernity from the inside, because in many ways post modernity is the other side, and it defines reality for more and more people (*The Church* 166).

Singing the praises of Post modernity, McLaren declares, in a chapter titled "Enter the Post modern World Part B: Engage It," "... the opportunities presented by postmodernism are downright exciting. So I come here to engage postmodernism, not to bury it" (177). Echoing the words of Marc Antony from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, however, is no real defense of McLaren's principal assumption of the primacy of Postmodernism, nor of the adjunct that Christians must wallow in it to be relevant to the real needs that Christianity is to address.

From this assertion that Christianity is to engage the contemporary relative culture, it is not surprising to find ECM advocates speaking of the church as a "pilgrim church," as seen in *The Second Incarnation* written by Rubel Shelly and Randall Harris (69-86). Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, in like manner, write:

The church universal is an emerging church, for as the body of Christ here on earth, it awaits with eager anticipation the return of its Lord. As such, it is a church always in the process of becoming. It has never arrived in any final way. It is a pilgrim church, living the present reality of the reign of God

in its provisional form until its consummation. It “emerges” as it engages the complex mosaic of cultures represented by the peoples of the earth. In so doing, it is morphed in those cultures and exerts a redemptive influence within them (43).

They observe, “Emerging churches embody their way of life within post modern culture” (44). Stressing that, emerging churches seek a breakdown of the sacred/secular distinctions made in religion, they add:

The type of community seen in the emerging church pursues the kingdom in all spheres of reality, overcoming all sacred/secular divisions. Kingdom communities do not function as affinity groups but more like extended families. (44).

However, they ignore Postmodernism’s central premise that one’s particular belief system is a product of his affinity group. Thus, we see that ECM advocates, while affirming the primacy of Postmodernism in culture and the need to relate to it completely, do theoretically acknowledge that there is at least some way in which the church is not bound by and can indeed escape its cultural environment.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Because of this effort to abolish the distinctions between sacred and secular things, it should be noted that emerging churches, while using such terms as *mission*, *evangelism*, *outreach*, *redemption*, and even *salvation*, do not always mean by them what is meant by their use in the Scriptures. Even by the phrase “embracing the life of Jesus,” a frequent catch-phrase of the ECM, there is a hidden idea not readily perceived by those investigating the movement. The central idea is directed predominantly toward *social engineering*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Walter Rauschenbusch, Shailer Mathews, and others from the liberal mainline denominations began advocating the doctrine known as the Social Gospel, which stressed “social justice,” redistribution of wealth, establishment of a welfare state, internationalism, and the secularization of religion. In

later years, environmentalism, radical feminism, liberation theology, and so-called “sexual liberation” were added to its agenda. The rise of the Social Gospel, significantly, came hot on the heels of the social unrest that had swept European society beginning with several popular (if unsuccessful) revolts by Socialists in some of the European monarchies as early as 1848 (e.g., Germany, France, Austro-Hungary, Czarist Russia). As Socialism gained strength both at home and abroad in the latter half of the 19th century, religious leaders in liberal colleges and universities adopted the ideas of Robert Owen, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels wedding them to their already tainted religious convictions. To them the role of religion was to transform society for the good of humanity along Socialist lines.

The ECM is in large part a revival of the Social Gospel theme. In fact, the 100th anniversary of Rauschenbusch’s landmark 1907 book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, which was seminal in defining the theme, was recently observed. The book was re-edited by his great-grandson, Paul Raushenbush (the spelling of the family name having changed in the 1940s), an ultra-liberal ECM preacher. The book’s 21st century edition was greeted with great approval by ECM ministers around the world. The late William Sloane Coffin, Jr. (d. 2006), considered the most influential white liberal preacher of his generation, was a particular fan of Walter Rauschenbusch and a leader in the ECM. He had a special role in encouraging this event though he did not live to see it come to fruition.

This social agenda is seen in the following from Gibbs and Bolger. They state:

The kingdom, or the reign of God, is about our life here and now, and it is concerned not just with individual needs and aspirations but also with the well-being and mission of the community of Christ’s representatives. It is directed beyond the present membership of the body of believers to encompass the world that Jesus came to save from the consequences of its rebellion by turning it in a radically different direction. The gospel of emerging churches is not confined to personal salvation. It is social transformation arising from the presence and permeation of the reign of Christ (63).

They note:

Emerging churches embody the desire to remove secular space. For these communities, there are no nonspiritual domains of reality. This upsurge in spirituality reflects the demise of the secular as society moves beyond rationalistic modernism (67).

In actuality, the opposite occurs. By removing all distinction between what is sacred and what is secular, the ECM leadership tends to adopt a very carnal view of life. Emerging church leaders often, for instance, have little problem with active homosexuality, same-sex marriage, fornication, modern dancing, social drinking, and even abortion. Politically, many of their

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CHRIST?

David P. Brown, Editor

leaders are liberal Democrats, as noted by a sympathetic writer, Scot McKnight, in his own brief overview of the movement in *Christianity Today* (5-6). McKnight states:

A final stream flowing into the emerging lake is politics. Tony Jones is regularly told that the emerging movement is a latte-drinking, backpack-lugging, Birkenstock-wearing group of 21st-century, left-wing, hippie wannabes. Put directly, they are Democrats. And that spells “post” for conservative-evangelical-politics-as-usual (5).

The emerging church leaders tend to support liberal Democrat policies and vote for Democrat politicians, even despite the immorality of some of their ideas, such as abortion and homosexuality as McKnight himself admits though he has problems with these himself. He also bemoans the connection of the ECM with the Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch, by writing:

Sometimes, however, when I look at emerging politics, I see Walter Rauschenbusch, the architect of the social gospel. Without trying to deny the spiritual gospel, he led his followers into the social gospel. The results were devastating for mainline Christianity’s ability to summon sinners to personal conversion. The results were also devastating for evangelical Christianity, which has struggled to maintain a proper balance (6).

Ultra-liberal views on foreign policy are promoted by the ECM. In a section titled “The American Empire,” Brian McLaren rants against his depiction of standard U.S. foreign policy. After misrepresenting the nature of this policy in highly emotive language, he says it means that, “In other words, dominate, intimidate, and refuse to play by the rules you expect everybody else to play by—a classic manifesto of the imperial spirit” (*Everything* 164-165). The latter reference is to the fact that U.S. policy has always maintained that the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction over U.S. citizens in certain areas that are specifically covered under U.S. constitutional law. McLaren obviously intends that the U.S. Constitution be subservient to United Nations rule. Further, his claim that U.S. foreign policy is imperialistic is right out of hackneyed and thread-bare Soviet Russian and Maoist Chinese propaganda.

Environmentalism is also a core dogma for emerging churches. The so-called “greening of America” is part of their sociopolitical agenda. Some churches even provide “green” environmental audits for homes,” as part of their “services” (Gibbs & Bolger 149). Tony Campolo, confidant and adviser to President Bill Clinton, has written:

Christians have let New Agers hijack the environmentalist movement and make it their domain. Environmentalism should be a Christian concern (McLaren & Campolo 187).

What he has bought into the global warming/climate change agenda of the left is seen in the following

statements:

I am convinced that the documented increase in the incidence of cancer today is related to what we have been doing to nature. There is growing evidence, for example, that our use of hydrocarbons has been releasing into the upper atmosphere a variety of chemicals that are depleting the ozone layer, which protects us from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. The diminishing filtering capabilities of the ozone layer means that harmful, cancer-causing rays are getting through to us (188).

For instance, scientists are discovering that centuries-old polar glaciers are melting at an alarming rate due to global warming—causing some to predict that the additional volume of water will raise ocean levels. This will put coastal areas of continents—along which a large proportion of the world’s population lives—under water. As the warming effect continues, areas that are now temperate—again, where most of the world’s population lives—will become tropical, and tropical areas will tend toward desertification(sic) (188-89).

I’m an evangelist out to save the whales, a friend teases me. Guilty as charged: yes, my primary obligation as an evangelist is to tell other people what Jesus had done for them—and I am obliged to do what Jesus said: save the whales (191).

Perhaps it is time for all Christians to overcome their fears of being Christian environmentalists and save the earth without worshipping it. Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation—not only for our spiritual salvation, but also for the physical salvation of all that is in God’s world (193).

Rob Bell claims: “The Bible paints a much larger picture of salvation. It describes all of creation being restored” (*Velvet Elvis* 109). And, again, he writes: “Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems. God’s desire is to restore all of it” (110). “To make the cross of Jesus just about human salvation is to miss that God is interested in the saving of everything. Every star and rock and bird. All things” (161). So Jesus died to save the polar bears and cockroaches!

Listen to Brian McLaren as he blasphemously states:

And I see Christ’s work on the cross as saving all creation, including but not only humanity ... the salvation of humanity and the salvation of the planet ... seem to me inextricably bound together (195).

But the ECM’s view is more insidious than even this. It is Universalism in biodegradable drag.

THE SUBJUGATION OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

The ECM, because of its commitment to Postmodernism, effectually denies the existence of absolute, objective truth. Objectivity involves the idea that truth lies outside the mind of the subject or observer. While some leaders of the ECM will admit that there are *some* absolutes, the majority reject the proposition. Even those who admit that there are some absolutes nonetheless maintain that there is a much larger segment of truth that is purely subjective—thus dependent on the mind of the subject or observer.

Decrying objectivity and calling for a shift in thinking “from object to subject,” McLaren opines: “So we need

to become a new kind of post-objective, intersubjective Christian is several ways” (McLaren & Campolo 266-68). One of these “ways” he declares is to:

... admit that our quest for ultimate and absolute truth is impossible, if not for the reasons post modern philosophers raise, then for this reason: the ultimate truth is not an objective concept, not an objective principle, but rather a Person, the Subject of such splendor, dignity, wonder, winsomeness, and glory that to know him is to love him, worship, enjoy him, and seek to please him with one’s very existence. When God comes to us, God doesn’t say, “Seek for absolute, objective, propositional truth,” but rather, “I am the way, the truth, the life” (269).

It does not dawn upon McLaren that whatever one knows about the Person of Christ he knows by virtue of the “absolute, objective, propositional truth” set forth in the Word of God (John 5:39). Also, McLaren misrepresents Jesus’ claim in John 14:6, which certainly was not intended to militate against the authority of God’s Word (cf. vs. 15, 21, 23; 15:13-14). Finally, McLaren clearly sees his own view as the ultimate truth itself, which entails a self-contradiction.

McLaren asininely advocates what he terms “limited relativism.” He writes:

I am not recommending that we affirm absolute relativism (which is logically an absurdity), but rather honest, limited relativism. Postmoderns have been reared under the post-Einsteinian, quantum knowledge that even time and space are not absolute. So they are justly skeptical of absolutist claims and understandably sensitive to moral ambiguities, including some found in the Bible (*The Church* 180).

But is it absolute that absolute claims are always false? Is it truly the case that truth is in large part only in the eye of the beholder? If so, then why should one even bother to consider McLaren’s own truth claim here that truth is in large measure relative? His own position is self-defeating, which is the very nature of an absurdity.

Or which part of his truth claims are objectively, absolutely true and which part are only subjectively, relatively so? How does he determine which is which? Again, the view is self-defeating and subsequently absurd. In his book, *A Search for What Makes Sense*, McLaren, interestingly, acknowledges that it is a logical absurdity to claim that a given proposition or assertion is true while maintaining that “there is no knowable truth” (63). Yet he seemingly does not realize the same failure befalls those who claim that truth is partly objective (or absolute) and partly subjective (or relative), because it implies that one really cannot determine which is what, because he is always confined to a *purely subjective* frame of reference.

Concerning the nature of faith, McLaren severs faith from knowledge (especially pertaining to the realm of science

and earth origins), in writing: “Faith is a state of *relative certainty*” (*Search* 39). He further confines this relative certainty to “*matters of ultimate concern*” (39). From this premise, McLaren then subjugates the Bible and its teaching to the personal feelings and beliefs of those reading it and arrives at the conclusion that one cannot be dogmatic on any given proposition taught by it. There must be toleration for all the differing opinions about the Bible and its doctrine, according to his existentially-based epistemological rubric.

He writes:

I said earlier that in our post modern times, we are increasingly aware of the limitations of human knowledge. We are aware perhaps as never before of the gap between what we subjectively “know” and what is objectively true. For people like us, boxed in little bodies with narrow portals of physical senses that are interpreted by fallible, limited (yet amazing!) little brains, absolute certainty is a gift we have not been given. We can only aspire to relative certainty, which involves relative uncertainty ... which leaves room for—no, more, actually requires—faith (68).

Thus, he affirms the necessity for “congenial tolerance” on Bible doctrine (*The Church* 180). In his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, he carries the matter farther. His central point is encapsulated by the following statement: “To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed, and mounted on the wall” (293). He adds:

If, for you, *orthodox* means finally “getting it right” or “getting it straight,” mine is a pretty disappointing, curvy orthodoxy. But if, for you, orthodoxy isn’t a list of correct doctrines, but rather the *doxa* in orthodoxy means “thinking” or “opinion,” then the lifelong pursuit of expanding thinking and deepening, broadening opinions about God sounds like a delight, a joy (293-94).

McLaren gives praise to ECM’s Timothy Beal and his recent assault on the verbal, plenary inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible in Beal’s *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book*. Of the book, which asserts that the Bible is flawed and was never intended to be taken as authoritative in religion and ethics, McLaren says: “Under Beal’s instruction, we will lose some of our naiveté, but we’ll gain maturity of insight that will more than compensate. A needed book from a talented writer” (Backcover). It should be noted that Bible-hater, Anglican bishop, John Shelby Spong, who holds that the apostle Paul was a self-hating homosexual, is also equally delighted with Beal’s poisonous tome.

In *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, McLaren, in speaking of the doctrine of Satan and the problem of evil, affirms that it is “maybe no sin to think of Satan as a metaphor, a horribly real metaphor for a terribly real force in the universe.” (145). Thus, Satan is reduced simply to a metaphor for evil. Of course, this is not surprising, as the ECM tends to support the

doctrine of organic evolution and views the first 11 chapters of Genesis as fictional and mythical in nature.

Tony Jones bluntly declares: “We must stop looking for some objective Truth that is available when we delve into the text of the Bible” (*Post modern Youth Ministry* 201). He declares that, “Emergents believe that theology is local, conversational, and temporary” (*The New Christians* 111). Further, he says that “objectivity is as real as a unicorn” (152). Doug Pagitt emphatically states in like vein: “The inerrancy debate is based on the belief that the Bible is the word of God, that the Bible is true because God made it and gave it to us as a guide to truth. But that’s not what the Bible says” (65). Dwight J. Friesent goes so far as to affirm what he terms “orthoparadox theology,” which effectually affirms that all competing truth claims are equally valid and are to be held “in right tension” (209).

ECM folk will amazingly boast of their own self-perceived humility, which they call “epistemic humility.” As Tony Jones writes:

“I’m humble,” an emergent might tell you, “because I don’t know what I’m wrong about today. I’ll speak with confidence, and I’ll speak with passion, but I won’t speak with certainty” (*The New Christians* 140).

SYNCRETISM

The result of this sell-out relative to Biblical truth is religious syncretism. Under the ECM inclusive, multicultural banner all religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, and even raw Paganism, are viewed simply as different ways to the one God (or god). ECM advocates, if they believe in any final judgment at all, maintain that each will be judged in what “available light” they possessed in life. This view ultimately flows into the stagnate pool of Universalism, which some ECM leaders are now fully embracing or are willing to contemplate.

McLaren himself opines: “Universalism is not as bankrupt of biblical support as some suggest” (*The Last*

Word and The Word After That 103). He also states:

I must add, though, that I don’t believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus *and* remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts. This will be hard, you say, and I agree, but frankly, it’s not at all easy to be a follower of Jesus in many “Christian” religious contexts, either (*A Generous* 260).

He claims that Christ “did not come to create another exclusive religion” (109). He says elsewhere, “The Christian faith, I am proposing, should become (in the name of Jesus Christ) a welcome friend to other religions of the world, not a threat” (*A Generous* 260). In fact, there is seen an almost venomous hatred of Christianity as a religious system. Erwin McManus, lead pastor of the Mosaic Church in Los Angeles and author of *The Barbarian Way*, boasted in an interview: “My goal is to destroy Christianity as a world religion and be a recatalyst for the movement of Jesus Christ” (*Christian Examiner*). He further stated, “Some people are upset with me because it sounds like I’m anti-Christian. I think they might be right.” He also declared, “*The Barbarian Way* is resorting to the progressive ‘change-agent’ status Christianity enjoyed in the first century.”

McLaren blasphemously ascribes to Islam’s Mohammed a legitimate religious experience with God. He writes:

During his lifetime, Abraham—like Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed—had an encounter with God that distinguished him from his contemporaries and propelled him into a mission, introducing a new way of life that changed the world (*Finding Our Way Again* 22).

Thus, according to McLaren, Mohammed was a prophet of God as he falsely claimed.

Phillip Gulley and James Mulholland, liberal Quaker theologians, have written two books, *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* and *If God Is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World*, promoting full-blown Universalism. Others have authored books attacking the Bible doctrine of Hell by teaching either the false doctrines of Annihilationism for the wicked or Conditional Immortality for the righteous in efforts to take the fury out of God’s wrath. The most popular among the ECM churches is Rob Bell and his blasphemous book, *Love Wins*. Edward Fudge, among our brethren, has become the leading exponent of conditional immortality in his book, *The Fire That Consumes*. Al Maxey and other lesser lights have latched onto this popular message that seeks to remove the terror of Hell from Sacred Writ.

Mysticism is also a sidelight to this new syncretism, as mysticism is an essential aspect of most of the Eastern religions, New Age groups, and sects rooted in Gnosticism. Leonard Sweet, quoting liberal Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, proclaims that, “The Christian of tomorrow will be

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a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing” (*Quantum Spirituality* 76). This particular work was endorsed and praised by Rick Warren of the Saddleback Church. In the book, Sweet praises New Agers for helping him come to realize his inner “New Light.” He also states: “Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology” (76).

Out of this mystical hoodoo has arisen the practice of using candles, bells, prayer beads, contemplative mazes and labyrinths, and other nonsense to promote a special, mystic feeling of spirituality in ECM worshippers. They incorporate Hindu yoga, Buddhist meditation, and “contemplative prayer” into their observances. They also claim to observe the Hebrew Sabbath, keep special feast days, and observe practices drawn from the old Gnostic heresies and other religious sects from the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. Monasticism is also praised and observed. They like to delve into the mystical practices also of the Grecian and Anatolian “Mystery Religions” of paganism. Many advocate the use of so-called “power words” that are repeated over and over in meditation similar to the Hindu mantras. In this they merge with the Word of Faith Movement (or Third Wave Charismatic Movement) of C. Peter Wagner.

SITUATION ETHICS

A corollary to the inclusiveness of the ECM is its observance of situation ethics, especially as pertains to the practice of homosexuality. This flows from Postmodernism, which implies that ethics are culturally based and individually determined. Whatever protests ECM leaders may foist against any specific act as “evil” is clearly negated by their acceptance of the basic premise that Postmodernism is, at least for this time frame and culture, true. This also includes sexual sin and other forms of immoral behavior.

Tony Campolo states, “I believe strongly that homosexuals did not and cannot choose their orientation” (McLaren & Campolo 203), but strangely admits that, “... I believe the Bible tells us that same-gender eroticism is wrong” (200). He is caught in an inescapable self-contradiction, which ultimately will lead to either acceptance of homosexual behavior as a legitimate lifestyle or else a complete rejection of Biblical teaching on the subject.

Tony Jones expresses the ultimate conclusion that many ECM advocates will be compelled to adopt. He states,

... I now believe that GLBTQ [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & questioning] can live lives in accord with biblical Christianity (at least as much as any of us can!) and that their monogamy can and should be sanctioned and blessed by church and state (“Same Sex Marriage”).

Ultimately, his own belief that truth is not objective

will force him to conclude that not only “monogamous” relationships among homosexuals are okay but also unbridled licentiousness is equally valid for one professing to be Christian.

Other practices are condoned, such as cursing and social drinking. In fact, the premise that the Christian is to engage post modern culture from “the inside” implies that there can be, according to ECM thought, no real objective reason as to why these, as well as many other activities, are sinful. Some ECM leaders talk about the value of “doing theology” in a bar or even strip club. Fred Peatross, a good buddy of the apostate Al Maxey, boasts about discussing life issues “over a glass of wine or a latte” (*Missio Dei* 9). Peatross also details a few other experiences in practicing his form of emerging religion including vacationing “with three young women from Colorado in Costa Rica whose vocabulary was frequently sprinkled with colorful metaphors,” and also with three couples at the El Castillo where drinking alcoholic beverages was commonplace. Peatross writes, “Drinking was part of the group’s day, but we never raised an eyebrow; we even joined them for an occasional beer” (75-76). He notes later, “We had created a safe place on their dominion where life was lived by their code of conduct” (77). It should be noted that Peatross reproduces an endorsement for his book and work by Al Maxey, which gives us more insight into Al’s fuller allegiances. Peatross is an unabashed proponent of the ECM agenda. It thus must follow that Al Maxey belongs to that same heretical camp, despite his attempts to portray himself as a religious conservative.

CONCLUSION

The ECM is a real threat to the historic Christian faith. We have considered: (1) Its SURRENDER to Postmodernism; (2) Its ties to the SOCIAL GOSPEL; (3) Its SUBJUGATION of Bible Doctrine to Personal Opinion; (4) Its insipid SYNCRETISM; and (5) Its promotion of SITUATION ETHICS.

The Emerging Church Movement seeks to undermine confidence in the Bible and the necessity of faith even in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. It is a pig-slop mishmash of false doctrines, vain philosophy, amoral platitudes, and perverted ethos. It will create a generation of Biblically-ignorant, intellectually-vapid, and morally-degenerate pseudo-Christians, if adopted by our brethren. In fact, this process has already unfortunately begun in many churches of Christ. By God’s help let us work to see that there will rise up a generation of Biblically-informed, mentally-astute, and ethically-grounded saints to oppose this pernicious error!

ENDNOTES

¹ The term *emergent* is often limited to one specific form or branch of the ECM, particularly Tony Jones’ Emergent Village

network. Jones advocates a reformulation of theology that entails a rejection of many cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

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A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, 'darkness' on the walls of his cell. —C. S. Lewis

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DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH

Roelf L. Ruffner

HOME SCHOOLS FORBIDDEN TO CALL HOMOSEXUALITY SIN UNDER NEW ALBERTA POLICY

(Friday Church News Notes, March 2, 2012, www.wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org, 866-295-4143)— The following is excerpted from “Homeschoolers Can’t Be Taught ‘Gay’ Sex Sinful,” *WorldNetDaily*, Feb. 27, 2012:

Homeschooling families will soon be forbidden from teaching that homosexual sex is sinful as part of their schooling program, according to the government of Alberta, Canada. Under the province’s Education Act, homeschoolers and religious schools will be banned from ‘disrespecting’ people’s differences, Alberta Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk’s office told LifeSiteNews just last week. ‘Whatever the nature of schooling—homeschool, private school, Catholic school—we do not tolerate disrespect for differences,’ said Donna McColl, Lukaszuk’s assistant director of communications. ‘You can affirm the family’s ideology in your family life, you just can’t do it as part of your educational study and instruction.’ ... Patty Marler, government liaison for the Alberta Home Education Association ... wondered how the government would stipulate the difference between homeschoolers’ school and family time. ‘We educate our children all the time, and that’s just the way we live. It’s a lifestyle,’ she said. ‘Making that distinction between the times when we’re homeschooling and when we’re just living is really hard to do.’ She added, ‘Throw in the fact that I do use the Bible as part of my curriculum, and now I’m very blatantly going to be teaching stuff that will be against [the Alberta Human Rights Act].’

OBAMA INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS RELIGION

The following interview with President Obama was reported in the *Baptist Press*, a newspaper operated by the Southern Baptist Convention since 1946. In it Michael Foust, associate editor of Baptist Press, reports on a 2004 one-hour interview by Cathleen Falsani with the then senatorial candidate Barack Obama. At the time of the interview Falsani was a religion reporter for the Chicago-Sun Times.

In the interview Obama reveals that there are many roads to God (whatever or whomever he thinks constitutes God). Foust quoted the following from the Falsani interview with Obama.

FALSANI: “Do you believe in heaven?”

OBAMA: “Do I believe in the harps and clouds and wings?”

FALSANI: “A place spiritually you go to after you die?”

OBAMA: “What I believe in is that if I live my life as well as I can, that I will be rewarded. I don’t presume to have knowl-

edge of what happens after I die. But I feel very strongly that whether the reward is in the here and now or in the hereafter, the aligning myself to my faith and my values is a good thing. When I tuck in my daughters at night and I feel like I’ve been a good father to them, and I see in them that I am transferring values that I got from my mother and that they’re kind people and that they’re honest people, and they’re curious people, that’s a little piece of heaven.”

FALSANI: “Do you believe in sin?”

OBAMA: “Yes.”

FALSANI: “What is sin?”

OBAMA: “Being out of alignment with my values.”

FALSANI: “What happens if you have sin in your life?”

OBAMA: “I think it’s the same thing as the question about heaven. In the same way that if I’m true to myself and my faith that that is its own reward; when I’m not true to it, it’s its own punishment.”

Obama said:

I am a Christian. So, I have a deep faith. So, I draw from the Christian faith. On the other hand, I was born in Hawaii where obviously there are a lot of Eastern influences. I lived in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, between the ages of six and 10. My father was from Kenya, and although he was probably most accurately labeled an agnostic, his father was Muslim. And I’d say, probably, intellectually I’ve drawn as much from Judaism as any other faith.

Foust reported that Obama added,

So, I’m rooted in the Christian tradition. I believe that there are many paths to the same place, and that is a belief that there is a higher power, a belief that we are connected as a people.

The article reports that Obama said “he ‘committed’ himself” to Christ in the late 1980s during a Sunday morning service at Trinity United Church of Christ. He went to the altar, he said.”

Faust wrote that in answer to a question concerning who Jesus was, Obama answered:

Jesus is an historical figure for me, and he’s also a bridge between God and man, in the Christian faith, and one that I think is powerful precisely because he serves as that means of us reaching something higher. And he’s also a wonderful teacher. I think it’s important for all of us, of whatever faith, to have teachers in the flesh and also teachers in history.”

No questions about Obama’s beliefs on the deity of Christ or the resurrection were put to him by Falsani during the interview.

The full interview can be read on the following web-

site at <http://sojo.net/blogs/2012/02/21/transcript-barack-obama-and-god-factor-interview>. ☺☺

COURAGE OF CONVICTION

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19: 4, 6). This passage seems up front to even the casual reader. Marriage is to be between a man and a woman; not a man and a man or a woman and a woman. Yet for many in our increasingly intolerant society this concept is antiquated at best if not downright bigoted.

A case in point happened on March 2nd on the Piers Morgan Show recently on CNN. He was interviewing actor Kirk Cameron who claims to be a Christian. The question of same-sex marriage came up. Mr. Cameron said, “Marriage is almost as old as dirt, and it was defined in the garden between Adam and Eve. One man, one woman for life till death do you part. So I would never attempt to try to redefine marriage. And I don't think anyone else should either.” He added that homosexuality is “unnatural,” “detrimental,” and “destructive” to society. Hooray for Kirk!

But as the old saying goes, “no good deed goes unpunished.” His words have caused a firestorm in the entertainment industry and the media. Celebrities have fallen over each other trying to condemn his remarks as “bigoted.” The truth is that Hollywood has been a vile, vindictive moral sewer for years. They are only engaging in the “McCarthyism” they claim to hate. Hang in there Kirk! **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Heb. 13:4).

(March 6, 2011—<http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/kirk-cameron-receiving-support-anti-gay-comments/story?id=15851731>)

PLAYTIME AT ACU

Abilene Christian University (ACU) announced a change in its policy regarding dancing by students. Students will now be allowed to dance on campus at dances chaperoned by the University. Last year they began to allow students to drink alcohol off campus.

The ACC of old had a strict policy which forbade dancing by students because it was considered lasciviousness, a **“work of the flesh,”** and a sin according to the Bible (cf. Gal. 5:19-21).

In the article I read, ACU Dean Jean-Noel Thompson said the change was part of their effort “to be more real with our students who are young adults” and that the school approved dances would be in a form that “honors us, those around them and God.” This is sickening to the faithful Christian! How in the world can the modern dance “honor” God or the people who participate, who are made in the im-

age of God? **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”** (Col. 3:17). I wonder if they will hypocritically offer a prayer before each dance.

One commenter on this article wrote, “Welcome to the 20th or rather now the 21st century.” I thought, “Welcome, ACU, to the 15th Century B.C. and the worship of the golden calf.” **“...and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play”** (Exo. 22:6). The apostasy at ACU continues!

(March 16, 2012—http://www.christianchronicle.org/article2159601~ACU_revises_long-held_policy_prohibiting_dancing_at_events)

“REPORT ON THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) COMMUNITY PRESENT AT ACU”

On 2/23/2012 Samantha Sutherland filed the following report under News in the student Abilene Christian University newspaper *The Optimist*. She reported that a live online 77 page magazine known as *Voiceless* was recently launched. It was begun with one purpose in mind—to permit the discussion of same sex attraction issues at ACU.

Sutherland said that the editor of *Voiceless*, who calls himself Stewart Headlam, said that although the magazine is for students or recent ACU alumni it is not endorsed or sponsored by ACU. She went on to report that Headlam said *Voiceless* specifically exists to give past and present ACU Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, and Homosexuals in general the opportunity to express their views.

Sutherland reported that Headlam was inspired to begin his online magazine when he heard that Harding University students had earlier published a website called “HU Queer Press.” Although it received much attention, within 24 hours the university firewall stopped it from going live, Sutherland said. She reported that because Headlam had a number of friends that were homosexuals, he thought he would do so something like the Harding students did.

Headlam said this year’s issue concentrates on those who are attracted to those of the same sex, but if he publishes *Voiceless* next year he wants the online journal to have more diverse views presented, Sutherland reported. She also reported that Headlam wanted to hear from students parents and other non-homosexuals

Sutherland quoted Headlam saying, “I thought the best way to bring the topic of faith and sexuality to ACU was to get some students and alumni to share stories of their experiences at ACU, and that’s what the second half of the zine does.” Hadlam wrote the first half of the magazine, referring to it as “the four prevailing voices on homosexuality in the church,” Sutherland said.

The Voiceless editor commented that some of the writers think God made them homosexuals, although other writers are not sure, Sutherland wrote. Sutherland reported Headlam saying that one student married his wife even though he was attracted to other males.

Sutherland also reported that a senior Christian ministry major from Chattanooga, TN, Michael “Fish” Van Huis, had organized a group led by students but not connected with ACU. It is called the Beyond Agreement to Love Movement (BALM). It meets weekly and exists for the open discussion of homosexuality and related subjects, Sutherland said.

There is a blog attached to the site that will be updated weekly with stories of more ACU students. The website also features a list of publications at other Christian colleges and universities with similar missions.

“Voiceless” is one among many online forums that facilitate discussion about the LGBTQ community at colleges.

Although everyone else is openly talking about homosexuality and related topics, Van Huis thinks that churches are failing to discuss them, Sutherland reported. She went on to report that Van Huis thinks there are people who remain uninformed regarding the terminology used and, therefore, do not know what is being said.

Van Huis said *Balm* exists to allow a proper mediated discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity by conservatives and liberals in a loving spirit, Sutherland reported. According to Van Huis, *Balm* is a place for those who may not agree about homosexuality to reconcile with one another and have a good relationship even though they do not agree with each other’s theology, Sutherland reported. She went on to report that Van Huis said he hoped all could respect one another’s humanity and more than ever love their neighbors as themselves (<http://www.acuoptimist.com/2012/02/lgbtq-zine-opens-dialogue/>).

[God would have all people to be saved (John 3:16; Mark 16:15; 2 Peter 3:9). Some in the church at Corinth had been homosexuals, etc. (1 Cor 6:9, 10). But they were not homosexuals at the time Paul wrote his letter to them. Paul said those engaged in sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9). If they cannot inherit the kingdom of God, there is only one other place left for them to inherit and that is eternal torment in Hell.

How long does it take anyone to come to the knowledge of the truth regarding natural or unnatural sexual sins if they can read, understand, and believe the Bible to be the Word of God?

Homosexuals and other immoral people ought not be allowed to be students, or serve as staff, faculty, administrators, or board members of schools operated by the brethren. But when one thinks about the other flagrant disregard for the authority of the Bible in such schools of higher education, we are not surprised that homosexuals and the like are

found in them. If ACU and her sister institutions are opposed to immorality, they ought to fire any teachers/administrators/staff guilty of the same and expel any student engaged in any sin along with all those who defend and advocate the same.

Yes, if they can be converted from the error of their ways, every scriptural effort ought to be put forth in an attempt to bring them to repentance. But, as the attempt is being made to convert them, they have no business being a part of the schools—the federal government or anyone else not withstanding.

Assuming that all of these people referred to in the previous *Optimist* article believe the Bible to be the infallible, inerrant, complete, final, plenary and verbally inspired revelation of God to man, why not have a fair public discussion of Homosexuality in a four night oral debate? ACU with her sister institutions of higher learning certainly have the facilities for such a discussion. Nevertheless, because of their long time devotion to and zeal for the great gods “Political Correctness,” “Subjectivity,” Liberal Theology,” “Feel Goodism/The Warm Fuzzies,” and “Money, Money, Give Us Your Money,” they are not about to touch any kind of discussion they think might expose and overthrow their academic pantheon of modern idols crafted by their own devices.—**Editor]**

Empty Minds

It is amazing to see the lengths that some so-called archeologist and scholars will go to show their outright contempt for the New Testament. Such is the case with archeologist and filmmaker Simcha Jacoboviki and his partner James Tabor. A few years ago they announced that they had discovered Jesus’s tomb. An ossuary or bone box in a 1st Century tomb in Jerusalem had the name “Jesus” scratched on the side. This proved nothing since “Jesus” or was a common name in Palestine in the 1st Century A.D.

They now have gone back into this discredited tomb and, using a robotic arm camera, discovered more “evidence”—a fish with a stick figure in its mouth scratched on the side of the box. They maintain that this proves that Jesus’ remains were in that box (now empty). (The ancient Jews would often exhumed remains after a year and placed the bones in a stone box.)

Their contention is that Jesus did not literally rise from the dead. And His early Jewish followers believed that only his “spirit” was resurrected. According to them, the writers of the New Testament later claimed that He physically rose from the dead.

Mr. Jacoboviki, an Orthodox Jew, is notorious for making spurious claims based on laughable “evidence” in his television show “The Naked Archeologist.” While upholding the historicity of the Old Testament, he only casts aspersions on the New Testament.

Compare this to the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus found in the New Testament. It has survived the acid test of history. As the inspired physician and detailed historian Luke wrote, “That thou mightiest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:4).

(February 29, 2012—http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/02/27/10521007-new-find-revives-jesus-tomb-flap)

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The Challenge of Same-Sex Unions

Albert Mohler

In the world but not of the world? From the very beginning, the church has faced the challenge of responding to external events, trends, ideologies, and controversies. By definition, the church does not get to choose these challenges, but they have been thrust upon Christians by the world. The question always comes down to this: What now?

That question seems especially urgent in light of the emergence of same-sex unions and marriage in the United States and the world over. How must the church answer this challenge?

To answer that question, we need to think about the speed of the moral revolution that has pushed this question to the forefront of our culture. In less than a generation, homosexuality has gone from being almost universally condemned to being almost fully normalized in the larger society.

We are facing a true moral inversion—a system of moral understandings turned upside down. Where homosexuality was even recently condemned by the society, now it is considered a sin to believe that homosexuality is wrong in any way. A new sexual morality has replaced the old, and those who hold to the old morality are considered morally deficient. The new moral authorities have one central demand for the church: get with the new program.

This puts the true church, committed to the authority of God’s Word, in a very difficult cultural position. Put simply, we cannot join the larger culture in normalizing homosexuality and restructuring society to match this new morality. Recognizing same-sex unions and legalizing same-sex marriage is central to this project.

Liberal churches and denominations are joining the project, some more quickly and eagerly than others. The cultural pressure is formidable, and only churches that are truly committed to Scripture will withstand the pressure to accommodate themselves and their message to the new morality.

What, then, is the true church to do? *First*, we must stand without compromise on the authority of the Bible and the principles of sexual conduct and morality that God has revealed so clearly in His Word. The Bible’s sexual moral-

ity is grounded in the creation of humanity in God’s image; we are created as male and female and given the gift of sex within the marriage covenant—and only within the marriage covenant between one man and one woman for as long they both shall live.

The easiest way to summarize the Bible’s teaching on sexuality is to begin with God’s blessing of sex only within the marriage covenant between a man and a woman. Then, just remember that sex outside of that covenant relationship, whatever its form or expression, is explicitly forbidden. Christians know that these prohibitions are for our good and that rejecting them is tantamount to a moral rebellion against God Himself. We also know that the Bible forbids all same-sex sexual acts and behaviors. Thus, we know that homosexuality is a sin, that blessing it in any way is also sin, and that normalizing sin cannot lead to human happiness.

Second, we must realize what is at stake. Marriage is first and foremost a public institution. It has always been so. Throughout history, societies have granted special recognition and privileges to marriage because it is the central organizing institution of human culture. Marriage regulates relationships, sexuality, human reproduction, lineage, kinship, and family structure. But marriage has also performed another crucial function—it has regulated morality.

This is why the challenge of same-sex unions is so urgent and important. Redefining marriage is never simply about marriage. It leads to the redefinition of reproduction and parenthood, produces a legal revolution with vast consequences, replaces an old social order with something completely new, and forces the adoption of a new morality. This last point is especially important. Marriage teaches morality by its very centrality to the culture. With a new concept of marriage comes a new morality, enforced by incredible social pressure and, eventually, legal threats.

Third, we must act quickly to teach Christians the truth about marriage and God’s plan for sexuality in all its fullness and beauty. We must arm this generation of believers to withstand the cultural pressure and respond in ways that are

truly Christian.

Last, and most important, this challenge must drive us to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christians must be the first to understand this challenge in light of the gospel. After all, we know spiritual rebellion when we see it, for we ourselves were rebels before God's grace conquered us. We know what moral confusion means because without the light of

God's Word, we are just as confused.

There is no rescue from the self-deception of sin except for the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ. While doing everything else required of us in this challenge, the faithful church must center its energies on the one thing that we know we must do above all else—preach, teach, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. ❧

[EDITORIAL COMMENT—*Dr. Mohler is president and professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. That being the case, why did I print a Baptist's article in CFTF? First, it taught the truth in scriptural terminology concerning homosexuality, et al. The only change I made in the article was to change "pastor" to preacher for obvious reasons and then alter the sentence to accommodate the change. But, there are sound brethren who have, and others who could have, written the truth about homosexuality. So my first reason for using Mohler's article was not the prime reason we printed it.*

*This brings me to the second and major reason I printed Mohler's article. In reading the material in brother Ruffner's *Deviations From The Truth* that precedes Mohler's article, you will remember those portions dealing with homosexuals at Abilene Christian University and Harding University. Along with her departures from New Testament teaching on the church and fellowship, ACU has also lowered her moral standards by allowing students to engage in dancing and drinking beverage alcohol. Now comes the revelation that there are some ACU students who are homosexuals. Having learned of their existence, why does the ACU administration allow homosexuals to be ACU students? Why has the ACU administration remained silent concerning what the Bible teaches concerning homosexuality? ACU is a private institution, making the claim that they are for Biblical morality, do they not?*

As stated, Dr. Mohler is a Baptist, not a Christian. However, in view of ACU's fellowship practices I seriously doubt that ACU's administration and most of the faculty, especially their "Bible, Missions, and Ministry" faculty (undergraduate and graduate), considers Dr. Mohler to be lost in his sins

and in need of believing and obeying the Gospel in order to become a Christian. With that seemingly the case with ACU's views, why would this president and professor of Christian theology at a premier Baptist theological seminary see the importance of declaring in an article meant for public distribution what the Bible teaches on homosexual unions, but the president of ACU remains as silent as an oyster about that important and pressing issue? Would anyone at ACU write such a clear and concise article dealing with homosexuality as did Dr. Mohler? Moreover, in view of the fact that ACU has invited denominational theologians to speak at the school, if none of their resident intellectual lights will speak to the subject of homosexuality, why not invite Dr. Mohler to speak to the timely topic? It is a sad day in Zion when a Baptist preacher/doctor has the courage of his convictions that puts to shame those brethren (such as they are) who are conducting an institution of higher education .

*The preceding gives the reasons I chose Mohler's article for publication. Please note that my chief reason is this—ACU has not written for public consumption what the Bible teaches on homosexuality and published it as has Dr. Mohler. Where is their love for God and the things of God, their Biblical convictions, and the courage of those convictions concerning what the Bible teaches on morals in general and homosexuality in particular? What hinders them from writing at least as boldly and clearly as a non-Christian denominational theological school professor and president of a denominational seminary did regarding the teaching of God's Word about homosexual unions? **Where does the ACU board, administration, faculty, and staff stand concerning the right or wrong of homosexuality (1 Peter 3:15)?** —DPB]*



TAKE NOTE—Dr. Judith A. Reisman in her extensive *Crafting "Gay" Children* (http://www.defendthefamily.com/_docs/resources/6390601.pdf), reports that Harvard homosexual Toby Morotta, PhD, stated that in the 1970s, members of the Gay Activists Alliance—who were trained in the "zapping" of any who rebuffed homosexuality (Toby Marotta: *The Politics of Homosexuality: How Lesbians and Gay Men Have Made Themselves a Political and Social Force in Modern American*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1981 at 319). ...formed the "Gay Academic Union," (GAU) which was made up of faculty and students in major universities. She states that the GAU has long fought for domination of its worldview within the academic community, and professional journals commonly assigned GAU and other homosexual peer reviewers to research touching on homosexuality, generally resulting in a quick death to possible unfavorable findings (See extensive reports in regular NARTH Bulletins as well as Ray Johnson, "American Psychology: The Political Science, at 53-57).—**Editor**

(Continued from page 3)

brethren into two categories. The first I will designate as *category A* and the second one as *category B*. I know there will be some overlapping of beliefs between those in both categories. Furthermore, due to their beliefs some persons could fit into either category, or possibly in a third category. So, although I am studying digressive brethren by dividing them into two categories, each category remains somewhat generic, overlapping, and not all inclusive.

Category A Digressives—This group is composed of erring brethren who are best represented by the false belief systems held and taught by false teachers such as LeRoy Garrett, Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Jeff Walling, Mike Cope, F. LaGard Smith, Edward Fudge, John Mark Hicks, C. Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, Michael R. Weed, the Richland Hills Church, Ft. Worth, TX, the Garnet Church, Tulsa, OK, Pepperdine University, Abilene Christian University, Lipscomb University, etc.—*some of the false brethren who have repudiated about every semblance of New Testament Christianity*. In belief and practice they are for all practical purposes denominational in their concept of and approach to Christianity.

They have rejected the true hermeneutical study of the Bible and opted for a “New Hermeneutics.” However, they have a difficult time explaining exactly what it is. But they think they know what it is not. Primarily, it rejects the fundamental communicative element of language—direct statements, examples, and implication by which any language guides anyone to do anything. Thus, they despise the thought of the New Testament being the only plenary verbally inspired, objective, absolute, authoritative, infallible, complete, inerrant, and final pattern by which God leads, guides, directs, teaches and trains people how to be saved from sin and how live the Christian life in the Lord’s church (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; James 1:25; 2 Peter 1:3-9).

Furthermore, they reject a logical approach to about anything regarding religion or Bible study. They actually think of logic as a man-made system. To them implication is assumption—human guess not supported by adequate evidence or credible witnesses. They teach it is wrong to approach the study of the Bible as one would study wills or contracts (covenants), although the Bible represents itself as both. Thus, they hate the idea of men acting *only* as the New Testament authorizes them to act (Col. 3:17, 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6; Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 24:25).

Category A apostates for the most part believe the Bible is a “meta-narrative” (a term borrowed from Post Modern philosophers who repudiate absolute, objective humanly attainable truth as well as logical thinking). Their view of truth is, “Whatever you consider to be the truth, that is the truth to you.” They, therefore, think the Bible is only a story (a narrative) about God’s love for man and how Jesus died to save us from our sins—it is a “love letter.” According to them, when

people affirm their love of and belief in Christ, God will save them and that is all there is to one’s being saved from sin by Christ. It seems that some of them think that God’s love will save all men no matter what one does or does not believe or do.

They claim the unity of believers in Christ is found in the “Core Gospel”—God loves lost mankind, Jesus died to save the lost, when we acknowledge the same, God saves us. Thus, the different churches in which we hold membership have nothing to do with our salvation. How we think God saves us, and when or whatever we think about the organization, worship, and work of the church, or whether we are Calvinists, Pentecostals, Catholics, etc., does not bear on a sinners salvation. We are all acceptable to God through the “Core Gospel.”

Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett and others were pushing this false view of the gospel and unity over 50 years ago, but it made very few inroads into the churches at that time. However, their spurious doctrine found a home and a breeding ground in the schools of higher education operated by the brethren. They then channeled their error back to the churches. This happened primarily because those churches did not and do not believe any error could come out of such schools. Sadly and to the great hurt of the church, many church members ignored the signs of half a century ago that pointed to the early departures from the truth and thereby they fell victim to Satan’s devices. For the most part, these false brethren have gone so far into error they feel quite at home in denominational churches. In fact, some denominations may be too conservative for some of them.

Today, their doctrinal errors are entrenched in many if not most of the numerically larger and wealthier churches throughout the land and are fully believed by nearly all of the schools of higher education operated by members of the church of Christ. These false brethren have been fed human theology so long (those who have grown up under the influence of apostate churches have never been exposed to anything else, except to have it strongly criticized and condemned) that they label the preacher, the preaching of the pure unadulterated Truth of God’s Word, and those churches that support the same, to be hateful, unloving, unkind, harsh, judgmental, crude, sectarian, and mean spirited. *Of course, when these apostates label us with such endearing terms they have not judged us at all, have they?*

Category B Digressives—These are brethren who have not digressed from New Testament Truth to the same degree as those in category A. Category B digressives are already occupying ground that will serve as a basis for them in time to arrive at the same place category A presently occupies. They are helping bridge the gap presently existing between the faithful remnant of the church and those apostates of category A.

Doctrinally speaking, many category B brethren are at

present about where those in category A were around 35 years ago or earlier.

People are not strong Christians on one day and thoroughly apostate on the next. Digression takes place in increments, sometimes very small increments, over a period of time that involves years of conditioning on the part of those who are departing from the faith. For the most part, category A apostates have isolated themselves from those churches that were not originally drawn away by the apostasy that began in earnest between 40 and 50 years ago.

Because many of those in category B have not departed from the truth to the extent that category A has, a number of faithful churches have let their guard down and, thus, are being greatly influenced by them. They are being drawn into error by the same means and methods so well employed by category A digressives some 40 or more years ago. *Remember, Rubel Shelly originally opposed the very apostasy he finally joined, becoming one of its chief leaders.*

So, what are the identifying marks of category B digressives?

1. *They are highly critical of those of us who continue to preach against error (some of those errors many of them at one time opposed), call the names of false teachers whether they teach one or a multiplicity of errors.* In other words they have lost the love for the truth they at least appeared to once have, which love caused them to see that even one error in an obligatory matter will cause one to be lost.

Please consider the following example. In about 1998, Buster Dobbs, editor of the *Firm Foundation*, Jess Hall, and some other brethren began to push the false doctrine of “except for sin, all of life is worship.” We had the documentation proving that Hall and Dobbs had taught the doctrine publicly. We, therefore, opposed the doctrine and its teachers as publicly as they taught their error. Many brethren stood with us in upholding the truth and exposing the error on that issue. But whether brethren had stood with us or not made no difference to us as to what we or any faithful child of God must do in that or any other case like it.

In the latter part of 2002, we learned that for the second time the Brown Trail Church of Christ (BT), Hurst, TX had practiced the erroneous re-evaluation and the reaffirmation (R&R) of elders. (The first time BT engaged in the R&R of elders was in 1990.) Thus, we rose up to face that error too. Between 1990 and 2002, several brethren spoke and wrote against the R&R of elders error. One of the most thorough studies of the R&R of elders false doctrine is brother Dub McClish’s lecture presented at the 1998 Bellview Church of Christ Lectureship and printed in that year’s lectureship book. We also printed it in the January 2003 issue of *CFTF* to further deal with BT’s 2002 practice of it. Although BT had never stated they were wrong in engaging in the practice of the same in 1990, after leaving the practice of it alone for

over ten years, it seemed they had forsaken it, but we were wrong.

In 1990 the BT elders requested Dave Miller and the late Johnny Ramsey to present sermons to persuade the BT church that the R&R of elders was authorized by the Bible and to explain how it would be practiced at BT. In 2002 Miller was a member of BT when the congregation engaged in the erroneous practice again. However, he was in the process of moving to Montgomery, AL to work with Bert Thompson in Apologetics Press. But Miller never opposed BT’s practice of the R&R of elders in 2002 and he has not opposed it or admitted it was error to this day.

In the 1998 Bellview Lectureship and in 2002 and 2003 when we were dealing with the R&R of elders error at BT in *CFTF*, not one time did the following brethren breath one syllable of protest against what we said and wrote in opposition to the R&R of elders error. In 1998 Curtis Cates, Randy Mabe, Keith Mosher, and Bobby Liddell were some of those in attendance at the Bellview lectureship. If they did not hear brother McClish’s lecture on the R&R of elders, they had a lectureship book with the lecture printed in it. Not one word did they utter against McClish’s lecture. Beginning in 2002, and going into 2003 we published several articles in several different issues of *CFTF* dealing with the R&R of elders, including brother McClish’s 1998 Bellview lecture on the R&R of elders error. Again, none of the previously named brethren and others who oppose us said anything in opposition to our efforts to expose and refute the R&R of elders as it was practiced twice at BT. And, at that time sister Annette Cates, the wife of Curtis Cates, was a regular writer in *CFTF*. Never did these brethren indicate in the slightest way that we were in error in our opposition to the R&R of elders, etc.

For many years before 1998 and until the summer of 2005, the previous named brethren and many other brethren continued in fellowship, speaking on one another’s lectureships, recommending one another, printing each other’s articles, supporting each other—*until July of 2005*. What was not wrong before July 2005 became wrong at that time. We who continued to oppose the R&R of elders, several other errors, and their propagators now were labled with every kind of vile name. To this day no effort has been made to prove we were wrong in doctrine, but a full broadside was and continues to be delivered against our characters.

When in September of 2005 Miller wrote an explanation of his involvement in the R&R of elders at BT without one word in it indicating he had repented of believing, teaching, and/or supporting BT in their practice of the R&R of elders, we were/are severely castigated by some of these “kinder and gentler” category B digressives for not accepting Miller’s document as a statement of his repentance. However, there were others among the category B digressives who admitted that Miller did not admit to any error in said docu-

ment, much less repent of it. And, that last sentence brings us to the second identifying mark of the category B digressives.

2. *Category B digressives arbitrarily choose what errors they will expose and refute and which ones they will not—since July of 2005 they have rarely opposed any error or false teacher, but they have opposed us who have exposed their duplicity. Mind you, they have rarely said anything publicly and they have repeatedly turned down our pleas with them to meet with us to discuss our differences.*

Concerning Miller's September 2005 explanation about his involvement in the R&R of elders and his "marriage intent doctrine" on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR), there were certain category B digressives who, as previously noted, admitted that Miller indicated no repentance in said document, but they opposed our efforts to expose him on the flimsy basis that Miller's error was too small a matter to cause a division in the church. If anything, the Dobbs' error of "except for sin, all of life is worship" had not *influenced* as many brethren, who at that time continued to ask for the old paths, as did Miller's and BT's doctrine of the R&R of elders did. *Why oppose one sin and those who advocated it and give a pass to another sin and those who practiced and taught it? But such are the ways of the category B digressives.*

What was (is) the difference that made a difference in the above two cases as to why some opposed one false teacher and his false doctrine and why many of those same brethren would not oppose another false teacher and his false doctrine? Any one who can see through a ladder can clearly see the difference in the two cases—that is if they want to see it. And, the difference that makes a difference to the category B digressives has nothing to do with whether a doctrine is true or false. Their decision not to oppose Miller, et al., for teaching the false doctrines of the R&R of elders and his "marriage intent" error on MDR *was decided solely on the basis of who was friends with whom, what contributors would be offended, and what brotherhood works would be hurt.* The Truth of God's Word regarding the R&R of elders, etc., had no part to play in the decision of Curtis Cates, Garland Elkins, Bobby Liddell, Barry Grider, the Southwest Church, Austin, TX and their School of Bible Studies, the Brown Trail Church and their school of preaching, Bear Valley church and school, Florida School of Preaching, and on and on we could go. The MSOP, et al., wanted Miller left alone and the matter dropped because of the trouble it would cause them with those in their entangling alliances with other brethren that supported Miller, Apologetics Press, GBN and their overlapping circles of fellowship. This brings up the question of who is it that will decide what error should be opposed and what error should the church ignore? This last question moves us to the next identifying mark of the category B digressives.

3. *Category B digressives believe if error is taught by*

members of a para-church organization and that organization is supported by one's friends, family, supporters and the like, the false teacher(s) is(are) not to be opposed because of the repercussions of those who follow the political guideline of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." However, if those who support your favorite brotherhood work stand in opposition to someone or something, then that someone or something is to be opposed, but not necessarily through honorable means such as public discussions. In other words, if we will not get hurt in this action, we will join in for some of the glory, but if our opposition or support of something or someone will backfire on our own para-church work, no matter how close we may have been in the past and how right their cause is, we will forsake them faster than the apostles did our Lord at the time of His arrest. These are the basic guidelines whereby category B digressives determine the brethren they will oppose and those they will support. Thus, they are guilty of practicing respect of persons, allowing false doctrine to go unexposed, unopposed, and for false teachers to go unmarked.

These brethren have forgotten the Old Testament examples of what happened to Nadab, Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7) and Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6, 7) when they sinned. No doubt among men the foregoing matters were not a "big deal," but to God they were a very "big deal." You may also rest assured that it was a "big deal" to Nadab, Abihu, and Uzzah. Paul said these Old Testament accounts were written for our learning, those brethren that ignore them notwithstanding (Rom. 15:4).

4. *Category B digressives also bear the mark of teaching the truth on fellowship, but not consistently practicing it.* Here are some examples of their Biblically unauthorized fellowship.

Curtis Cates spoke and wrote against Mac Deaver's error concerning the direct work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. Neal Pollard, a friend of Cates, is the preacher for the Bear Valley Church of Christ, Denver, CO. Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver (BV) is an integral part of this congregation. Weylan Deaver is the preacher for the Sherman Drive Church of Christ in Denton, TX where his father preached for several years. The Sherman Drive congregation is one of Mac Deaver's biggest supporters in helping him spread his false doctrine on the Holy Spirit. Weylan attended BV, obtaining a masters degree from that institution. Weylan also believes and teaches what his father, Mac Deaver, teaches about the direct work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian as well as Holy Spirit Baptism continuing today. In May 2011 Neal Pollard preached a gospel meeting with the Sherman Drive Church of Christ during which he declared his appreciation of and fellowship with Weylan and the Sherman Drive Church of Christ. Curtis is in fellowship with Neal Pollard and Neal with him, but Curtis is not in fellowship with the Deavers. Is there something wrong with the Curtis Cates, Neal Pollard, and Weylan Deaver fellow-

ship equation?

5. *Another identifying mark of category B digressives is their practice of unity in diversity with brethren who are guilty of transgressing Biblical matters of obligation.* Consider Barry Grider's compromising edition of the *Forest Hill News (FHN)* (2/10/09). In that *FHN*, Grider printed one of Tyler Young's articles, published the old erroneous subjective article on the "fellowship circle," and published one of his own articles.

Tommy Hicks, the director of the Southside Lectureship in Lubbock, TX, preacher for the Southside Church of Christ, and board member of the *The "new" Gospel Journal*, edited by Curtis Cates, removed Tyler Young's manuscript from the Southside Church of Christ lectureship book because of error he found in it. However, in Tyler's oral presentation he taught the error anyway. This caused the powers that be at the Southside congregation to remove Tyler's oral lecture and no copy of it can be acquired.

But, guess what article Barry Grider printed in the 2/10/09 *FHN*. It was Tyler's article containing the errors that caused Tommy Hicks to remove it from their lectureship book. *Thus, category B digressives are happy to practice their own brand of "unity in diversity" with certain brethren on certain errors.*

Over the years, the "fellowship circle" article has been printed in all sorts of denominational church papers and by every kind of digressive in the Lord's church. Now why did brother Grider print such a thing in *FHN* except to say that we need to extend the size of our fellowship circle? And expand it they are working feverishly to do.

Then in the July 12, 2011 issue of *FHN*, brother Grider printed another article. It was written by a Freed-Hardeman University graduate, Rob Hatchett. Hatchett is a member of the Clear Creek Church of Christ in Hixon, TN. Grider picked the article out of *Think* magazine, edited by Brad Harrub, Glenn Colley, David Longley, and David Shannon. If anyone desires to read about the details of Hatchett's article you may do so in the August 2011 *CFTF*.

The information on the Clear Creek Website proves the congregation to be way out in left field regarding New Testament Christianity. Clear Creek extends fellowship to and invites such liberals as Randy Lowry, president of Lipscomb University, Johnathan Stormont of the apostate Richland Hills church near Fort Worth, TX, Randy Harris of Abilene Christian University, and others to speak to them. Also, Clear Creek recommends books written by denominational authors, one of those books is written by Francis Chan who is a part of the Emerging Church movement.

When elders such as the Forest Hill elders continue to give false brethren, the category B kind, a platform to carry out their work, there is really not much we can do, but continue to warn those brethren who are not so mesmerized with

being able to sit in what they consider to be a chief seat in a great brotherhood project, and hope they will be warned.

Other matters of like nature as the preceding could be documented concerning the fellowship practices of other preachers who are in category B, but the previous accounts are sufficient to prove that category B digressives are using their associations and connections to bridge the gap between what have been sound churches and those churches that fit into category A. It is being done by those of category B participating on programs with category A apostates. In actuality, they ever so gradually are drawing Barry Grider's fellowship circle larger and that is exactly what the category B Barry Griders intend to do.

I do not claim that the identifying marks of this second category of digressives herein noted are all of the marks that identify such brethren, but they are some of the more obvious ones. One thing that needs to be emphasized about this latter group of digressives is that they will not remain where they are. They will move farther to the left and will continue to draw their fellowship circles larger and larger to include more and more liberal brethren until the day comes that the category B brethren will have merged completely into category A, and we know how large those brethren have drawn their fellowship circle.

As the older folks in these congregations who continue to have some desire for the Old Paths fade away, and younger brethren come to the forefront, the category B digressives will move more rapidly into the extreme apostasy of category A. That is exactly how it worked when Rubel Shelly was a young man and that is the way it will work today. As the elderships go so goes the churches, because as the elderships go, so goes the pulpits, the class teachers, the preachers schools, etc. Of course, this has always been the case and there is no reason to think anything has changed in the way Satan goes about accomplishing his work.

Category B brethren do their work through their political parties. On grounds other than the authority of the New Testament, they make themselves bosses of who is in and who is out regarding fellowship. When a person takes a stand for the truth and it offends one of their friends, or stirs up their political organization, that person is immediately blacklisted as a troublemaker and they immediately attempt to destroy that person's influence for good. Adequate evidence, credible witnesses, and the truth mean nothing to them! But this is the way of the digressive—deceiving and being deceived, waxing worse and worse.

May God help us not to move to the right or left of the truth of God's Word on any topic or issue. This is the true balance that the church needs in order for her to remain faithful to God. To that end we will continue to labor.

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued from page 1)

ing its implicit approval to said activities and brethren. It encourages sheep to visit the dens of wolves, instead of being wary of them (Mat. 7:15). At the very best, this practice sends confused signals to the members of the congregation and to all others (including liberals) on their mailing lists or in the assembly. This careless attitude sometimes produces ludicrous results, with the same church bulletin opposing and promoting error. When the preacher writes an article on page 1 against change agents and fellowship compromises, but an announcement on page 4 urges young people to attend a “youth rally” across town, hosted by a liberal church and featuring a “dynamic” change agent, mixed signals prevail.

Likewise, elders who invite a false teacher for a Gospel meeting on the basis that “he won’t teach any error while he’s here,” either do not know or do not respect 2 John 11.

Liberals must do high-fives when they see bulletins of otherwise faithful churches aiding their efforts.

We are to “**have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**” (whether moral or doctrinal) (Eph. 5:11a), and encouraging people to attend the activities of apostates undeniably implies fellowship. Rather than encouraging people to attend the programs of apostates (and thus engage in fellowship with them), we are commanded, “**even reprove them**” (v. 11b). May we ever be careful to promote only those activities and teachers that support and advance the Truth. May we always oppose all activities and teachers that are otherwise.

—908 Imperial Drive
Denton, TX 76209



DILEMMA OF A GODLY WOMAN

Martha Bentley

(Completed a few days before her death)

It is becoming more and more difficult to find a sound congregation with which to work and worship. Domineering women who rebel against godly elders and wimpy spineless men, who have too little conviction to take a stand, are tearing apart congregations all across our land today.

A godly woman moves with her children into a new area and places her membership with a congregation of good reputation in the community. She soon finds the preacher preaches to please the feelings of the members rather than to save souls. Also, the women conduct their own business meetings then advise the men of their plans and no man has courage to stop such.

This godly woman leaves and goes to another congregation where she finds her children are expected to be taught in children’s church. Again she moves and there the teens are being urged to attend Winterfest, an ultra-liberal gathering with Jeff Walling as teacher. Besides this there is a so-called “staffed nursery” which is nothing more than a play room for children whose parents don’t want to teach them how to behave in worship services.

She continues to search and finds a large congregation which has a group of elders, well-taught classes for all ages, a full-time preacher in the pulpit, and, in addition, they have a lectureship every year which attracts thousands from all over the country. This woman thinks, with such a good program of work and a group of elders to oversee it, she has found a church home where she can serve acceptably. Alas, such was not to be!

She finds the so-called gospel preacher in the pulpit, apparently with authority and full support of the elders, ap-

proves the dividing of Sunday night services into small groups meeting in homes, permissible to miss certain services to attend sporting events, would re-schedule or cancel altogether Sunday night services on Super Bowl Sunday, serve coffee and doughnuts in Sunday morning Bible class and so on and on.

What is a godly woman to do? She realizes the weak elders would not take kindly to any criticism of any of these practices. She would be accused of causing trouble and sowing discord among brethren (Pro. 6:18). I can think of only one answer and it is found in a song we often sing in worship services: “Where Could I Go But To The Lord?”

—Deceased

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Terry Hightower: *The Apostasy of the First Century Church*

Terry Hightower: *The Emergence of Catholicism from the Apostate Church*

Dub McClish: *What is the Restoration Principle and is it Scriptural?*

Dub McClish: *Has the New Testament Church Been Restored?*

Roelf Ruffner: *One Can Know One Is a Member of the Lord's Church (Identifying Marks of the Church)*

Wayne Blake: *What is the Organization and Work of the New Testament Church?*

Johnny Oxendine: *What is the Worship of the New Testament Church?*

Geoff Litke: *Are Pious Unimmersed Persons Christians?*

Roelf Ruffner: *Is the New Testament Church a Denomination?*

Bruce Stulting: *Are Faithful Children of God Found in the Denominations?*

John West: *What is the Independent Christian Church?*

Michael Hatcher: *What is the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?*

Daniel Denham wrote the chapter in the book. Skip Francis delivered the lecture, *What is Dispensationalism?*

Bruce Stulting: *Does the N. T. Authorize the Church Revealed on its Pages to Fellowship Denominational Churches?*

John Rose: *What is the Lutheran Church?*

Gene Hill wrote the chapter in the book. Ken Chumbley delivered the lecture: *What is the Presbyterian Church?*

Danny Douglas: *What is the Baptist Church?*

Gene Hill wrote the chapter in the book. Ken Chumbley delivered the lecture: *What is the Methodist Church?*

Johnny Oxendine: *What is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)?*

Jess Whitlock: *What is Christian Science?*

Jess Whitlock: *What Makes JW's, Mormons, Christian Sci., and 7th Day Adventists Different from Other Denominations?*

John West: *What are the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches?*

Michael Hatcher: *What is the Salvation Army?*

John Rose: *What is the Unitarian/Universalist Church?*

Danny Douglas: *What is the Community Church?*

Daniel Denham wrote the chapter in the book. David P. Brown delivered the lecture, *What is the Emerging Church?*

Sonya West: *Give Your Daughters To Husbands (Choosing a Husband)*

Sonya West: *Thy Desire Shall be to Thy Husband (Having a Successful Marriage)*

Videos of the lectures are archived at the following web address: www.churchesofchrist.com.

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ORDERING: To order the lectureship book, the CD of the lectureship books, or audio/video recordings contact *Contending For The Faith*, P. O. Box 2357, Spring, TX 77383-2357, or (281)350-5516, or dpbcftf@gmail.com.

FORGIVE AS GOD FORGIVES

Charles Pogue

Once there were two brothers who were a couple of years apart in age. One day the older brother became very angry and in his moment of rage took a club and beat his younger sibling. The younger man recovered from his wounds, and his older brother experienced deep sorrow and contrition. Subsequently he begged his brother to forgive the physical attack. The younger brother said he indeed forgave the older, but he took the club and hung it on the living room wall where it served as a constant reminder to the older brother of his cruel act. The sight of the large stick kept the older brother's guilt against himself continually stirred. It would be hard to convince any thinking person that the younger brother actually forgave the attack.

Oh that we would forgive as God forgives! When the Hebrews writer quoted the Prophet Jeremiah regarding the new covenant God would make with His people, these unforgettable words describe the boundless grace and forgiveness of God, **"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"** (Heb. 8:12). Those familiar words do not mean that God is incapable of remembering, but that once He forgives He will not bring up sins committed in the past anymore. They are blotted out, as it were, from His book of remembrance, and the previously guilty party stands justified in God's sight once more. Someone has said that justification means just-if-I'd-never-sinned. That is the forgiveness of God.

How many times has a brother committed an offense against another, and he too, like the older brother asks for, and is told he is forgiven, but at times when the relationship is strained again, old reminders surface and are voiced to

hurt once more? Oh that we would forgive as God forgives! When we learn to love as God loves, we will learn to forgive as He forgives!

When we hang on to old reminders of the sins of another (even if they are not clubs), we might as well be saying to the offender, "I expect you to commit the same sin again," and our incomplete forgiveness may just guarantee it. If the sorrow of the offender is real, and the repentance is genuine, so what if he does in his human weakness commit the same or a similar blunder again? Regarding that point Matthew records the following exchange between the Lord and Peter. **"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven"** (Mat. 18:21-22).

While it was tragic that the older brother beat the younger with a club, the younger brother's hanging it on the wall stood between him and forgiveness. Old reminders, old memories held in reserve to bring up past indiscretions are stored like ammunition in an arsenal, and when a new conflict arises, firing them again points up the fact that the shooter has not forgiven as God forgives. You know what? My guess is that for a long time in his life, the older brother did not need to see the club hanging on the wall to feel remorse, but I am relatively sure that its presence stirred up another "R" word, resentment!

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What The Bible Says About: 37th Annual Bellview Lectures June 9-13, 2012

Saturday, June 9

7:00 pm Truth David P. Brown
7:45 pm False Teachers John West

Sunday, June 10

9:00 am Morality Gene Hill
10:00 am Worship Ken Chumbley
Lunch Break
2:00 pm Bible Translations John West
3:00 pm The Tongue Dennis "Skip" Francis
Dinner Break
7:00 pm Holy Spirit Charles Pogue
7:45 pm Satan Gary Summers

Monday, June 11

9:00 am Inspiration of the Bible Michael Hatcher
10:00 am Home Tim Cozad
11:00 am Works of the Flesh Roelf Ruffner
Lunch Break
1:30 pm Emotions Charles Pogue
2:30 pm Conflict Gene Hill
3:30 pm Open Forum:
Dinner Break
7:00 pm Christian Growth Wayne Blake
7:45 pm Baptism Dub McClish

Tuesday, June 12

9:00 am Authority Ken Chumbley
10:00 am Divorce and Remarriage Don Tarbet
11:00 am Love David P. Brown
Lunch Break
1:30 pm Christian's Fruit Lynn Parker
2:30 pm Hate Tim Cozad
3:30 pm Open Forum:
Dinner Break
7:00 pm Modesty John Rose
7:45 pm Salvation Dennis "Skip" Francis

Wednesday, June 13

9:00 am The Second Coming Dub McClish
10:00 am God the Father Wayne Blake
11:00 am Drinking Alcohol Don Tarbet
Lunch Break
1:30 pm Covenants John Rose
2:30 pm Christ Roelf Ruffner
3:30 pm Open Forum:
Dinner Break
7:00 pm Hell Gary Summers
7:45 pm Heaven Lynn Parker

Bellview Lectures Information

Housing

The Red Roof Inn (2591 Wilde Lake Blvd; Pensacola, FL 32526) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$59.99—single bed and \$69.99—double bed. Their phone number is 850.941.0908. **Tell them you are attending the Bellview Lectures when making your reservations.** If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early.

Meals

The women of the Bellview Church of Christ will provide a free lunch Monday – Wednesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants will be available at the registration tables.

Books

The lectureship book, *What The Bible Says About*, will be available for purchase. The price of the book has not been

determined yet. The book will contain 29 chapters. This will be a soft-cover book. Everyone will want to purchase a copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

Books-on-CD

The Bellview lectureship books (1975-1976, 1978, 1988-2005, 2007-2011) will be available on CD in Adobe PDF. The price of the CD has not yet been determined. The CD also includes the *Defender* (1970, 1972-2011), *Beacon* (1972, 1974-2011), and other material.

Questions For Open Forum

If you have questions for the open forum you may email them to: mhatcher@gmail.com.

View Lectures Live on the Internet

If you cannot attend the lectureship in person, please view them live on the Internet: www.bellviewcoc.com.

Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

Holly Pond—Church of Christ, 10221 Hwy 278, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 507-1776, (256) 507-1778.

-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) 535-5807.

-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. Keith Sisman, Gospel Preacher. Contacts: Keith Sisman [By phone inside USA (281) 475-8247]; Inside the U.K.: Cambridge (England): 01223-911243]; Alternative Cambridge contacts: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Postal/ mailing 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.

-North Carolina-

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

-South Carolina-

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

-Oklahoma-

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

-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 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 387-1429; dubmcclish@gmail.com.

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

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, and the internet school, Truth Bible Institute. 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.

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.