

# The Watchman

O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me (Ezekiel 33:7).

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## An Emerging Denomination

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A new denomination is emerging from mainstream churches of Christ. Like the Amorites, their “iniquity is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16) but it is rapidly filling. We define mainstream churches as follows:

1. Churches who have incrementally and fundamentally altered the doctrine of Christ in varying degrees (Gen. 3:4).
2. Churches who may not preach error, but willingly fellowship churches and preachers who do (1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9-11).
3. Churches who still preach the gospel plan of salvation, but in less distinctive terms than those expressed in the New Testament and neglect to preach “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).
4. Churches who, with their money, time, and resources emphasize seminars, social gatherings, societies, meals, ladies’ days, youth activities and social services to the neglect of preaching the gospel to save the lost (Mark 16:15).
5. Churches who may not agree with error but remain silent when it arises and refuse to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3).
6. Churches, like number 5, with long standing reputations for being “sound in the faith” and exert a wide influence among churches of Christ (Rev. 3:1).
7. Churches who disdain and repudiate the exposure of doctrinal error and its teachers—whether among denominations or within the body of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18)—and pejoratively refer to those who expose error as **witch hunters**.
8. Churches who have neither preached error nor fellowshipped those who do and previously opposed them, but have developed a **new** approach to fellowship with mainstream churches of Christ and preachers. These have arisen since 2005 as “Neo-mainstream churches of Christ.”

These definitions are by no means exhaustive, but they generally describe churches who consider themselves—and are considered by the general public—as **mainstream** churches of Christ. They have multiple views of religious authority that stretch across the spectrum from those who are taking their first small steps into apostasy to those who have reached its final stage. That journey is not completed in leaps and bounds but incrementally, from small to great. Apostasy begins with the **attitude** that human wisdom is equal, or superior, to Biblical authority, then blooms in the guise of **expedients** or **options**. That is a hallmark of liberalism.

I am using the term liberalism to refer to a certain attitude and approach to religion that is unwilling to be as strict and definitive as God is in His Word. It is called *liberalism* due to its misplaced *generosity* in *giving away* that which it does not possess. It refuses to bind things that God has bound. This approach treats matters of Scriptural obligation as if they were matters of mere option (McClish, “Liberalism and Anti-Isms—Two Erroneous Extremes”).

*Liberalism* is created by any doctrine that looses men from what the complete, final, authoritative, infallible, rightly-divided Word of God binds upon them (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom.

10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:17)...a liberal doctrine is any doctrine that allows human beings greater liberty than God permits them in, by, and through His word (Col. 3:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 John 9-11). It confuses an **obligation** (the thing that must be done) with an **option** (a way or method for an obligation to be discharged that circumstances and situations may change). Thus, *liberalism* covers a broad spectrum of doctrines [All emphasis, his] (Brown, 2).

Substituting what they call *expedients* for Scriptural obligation describes mainstream churches of Christ. Their **expedients** are human innovations that manifest their departures from the faith.

*Dictionary.com* defines *mainstream* as, “The principal or dominant course, tendency, or trend” and *freedictionary.com* says it is “The prevailing current of thought, influence, or activity: Representing the prevalent attitudes, values, and practices of a society or group” Among synonyms for *mainstream* are *dominant, average, common, current, general, normal, primary, standard, accepted, and regular*.

Nine years ago, Charles Pogue identified, dissected, and described what mainstream churches of Christ truly are:

The word “mainstream” refers to the present prevailing thought, condition, or activity enjoined by the majority of a particular class or group. The mainstream of thought includes the notion that one who is not in the mainstream is an extremist...Generally, those in the mainstream are identified as those whose position lies somewhere in the middle. That is what Dad would have called a fence-straddler, or a fellow standing on the middle stripe of the highway where his exposure affords him the distinct possibility of a transformation from humanity into the status of an unusual hood ornament for a Peterbilt. The worst thing about the mainstream is this—**it offers no guarantee of being correct, true, or even desirable.**

...The majority of congregations still claiming to be churches of Christ are really no longer identifiable as the church because they have rejected the exclusiveness of the New Testament church, questioned or abandoned the plan of salvation, and deny the pattern nature of the New Testament that sets out the organization, worship, and work of the church...Further, their mainstream of thought bears no resemblance to sound doctrine and practice. Although these assert they are in the mainstream of the Lord's church, they are nothing more than an emerging, if not a fully developed, denomination” (15).

Mainstream churches of Christ project a public image which the **world perceives** as the principal tendency representing the prevalent attitudes and practices of churches of Christ. The world's perception is that these churches are dominant, normal, standard, and regular examples of churches of Christ. That is false. Mainstream churches have departed from the New Testament pattern. They are liberal in their views and handling of Scripture, and have more affinity with Rome, Calvin, Luther, and Knox than they do the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their flirtation with liberalism has led them into spiritual adultery. They are in full fellowship with each other and have become a “progressive” faction that will eventually result in a new denomination. That is already a fact in the case of former churches of Christ like Richland Hills in Fort Worth, Quail Springs in Oklahoma City, and Oak Hills in San Antonio.

Of the latter and its preacher, Max Lucado, the *Baptist Press* glowingly exulted:

Lucado's church is Church of Christ—but not a typical Church of Christ. For starters, musical instruments are used (although there is still one a cappella service). Also, the church has a baptistic view of baptism—that is, that baptism isn't required for salvation. Recently, his church, which has some 5,000 members, even changed its name from ‘Oak Hills Church of Christ’ to simply ‘Oak Hills Church’ ([www.bpnews.net](http://www.bpnews.net)).

History confirms our thesis. In the mid 1800s, churches of Christ traveled the same downward course that resulted in the emergence of new denomination in 1906—The Disciples of Christ. A half-century earlier, Moses E. Lard recognized the liberal straws then carried on winds of change that resulted in that denomination:

He is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things. These men must have changes; and silently they are preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes (*Lard's Quarterly*, “The Symptoms of the Future,” cited by West, 1:131).

In a near-prophetic description of the church's present condition, L.F. Bittle wrote to Benjamin Franklin ten years later:

For the last few years your people have had a great deal of unpleasant controversy, and some harsh wrangling, over matters entirely unknown to the past generation of Disciples. They, too, had their troubles, no doubt, and some of them may have said bitter words in consequence of personal disagreements. But they never had anything like the alienation that now exists in certain places in regard to matters which should not be so much as named among a people who claim to stand before the world as the representative champions of the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the rule of faith and practice (Ibid., 132).

The same trends exist today and “he is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things.” For more than five decades, change agents have been “silently preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes.” Those changes are now part and parcel of mainstream churches of Christ.

Fifty years ago, the tip of the spear consisted of heretics such as Logan J. Fox, Thomas P. Hardeman, Carl L. Etter, Cecil L. Franklin, William P. Reedy, and other essayists whose works were published in the radical *Voices of Concern*. In their wake, came notables like Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, F. LaGard Smith, Royce Money, Joe Beam, with their coterie of ovine disciples.

The history of the church is a history of warfare between the forces of God and Satan and, so long as generations of men come and go, it will never end. It began in Eden when the serpent struck the first blow (Gen. 3:1-6) and was predicted for all ensuing history in the promise of the One who would come of the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15). It raged through the history of the Patriarchs, the nation of Israel, the life of Jesus, the early church, and every century since. It has never abated and never will until the last trump shall sound (1 Cor. 15:24-26, 54-57).

The denominational world offers its brand of “Christianity” as a life of ease. But the faithful know that serving Christ is a lifelong struggle (Matt. 16:24-25)—the life of a soldier who must “endure hardness” (2 Tim. 2:3-4), put on the “whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:13-18), and fight “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). The Christian soldier wields the sword of the Spirit in an endless war for men's souls. He **must** know the history of those who fought the same war before him, learn its lessons, that he serves for life, and must **never** compromise.

There is no neutrality in the kingdom of God in the battle between truth and error, right and wrong. It's not a question of our “going into battle.” God has already made that decision for us. The very day that we were raised up from the waters of baptism, that very day we were enrolled in the army of the Lord and pointed toward warfare and we have fought a thousand battles and the struggle goes on; and the battle today is not just for today, but for a vast future (Brownlow, “The Preservation of the Faith”).

History is cyclical. It not only recounts the past but portends the present. The philosopher said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That men have forgotten the past is obvious. The church in our century is in the midst of the same apostasy of a century and a half ago. What **has** happened not only **can** happen, but usually **does**—again and again. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. noted that fact 78 years ago:

If history repeats itself in the rise and the fall of empires and in the destinies of nations, it is nonetheless true in the development and the declension of the church. This antecedent thought dates back to Israel, God's Old Testament church, whose mistakes have been repeated in the history of the church of his Son through the ages of its existence. Israel's was a history of gradual departure, the end of which was rebellion against God's way. Moses lifted up his voice of tearful warning against any deviation from the Oracles of Sinai, but the feet of Israel wandered from the way. God raised up prophet after prophet to guide their wayward feet, yet Israel wandered. The end of the story was national decline, captivity and exile, forfeited promises, and rejection.

This Biblical record is not mere ancient history. It was written for the learning and the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the ages are come. The lesson is aptly put in the words of Jeremiah: “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

Jeremiah, the weeping but brave, lion-hearted prophet, struck the vital cause of Israel's ex-

ile. God touched the prophet's mouth and his message flamed forth: "My people have committed two evils." In their idolatry Israel had not committed one evil merely, like the heathen idol devotees who know no better. Besides the evil of idolatry Israel added the sin of forsaking the Living God whom they had known. Forsaking God, "the fountain of living waters," for idol nonentities was like taking cracked and leaky cisterns hewn out by men in preference to the ever flowing supply of fresh waters that a natural fountain could give. In turning from God to idols, Israel had abandoned fountains for tanksman-made, broken cisterns that could hold no water.

How readest thou? Can we not see the application in our own deviations? The denominations, like the heathen idolaters, know no better, but in our departures from the way, the church like Israel commits two evils: first, the evil of the thing done; second, the evil of forsaking what we have known in the doing of it.

Wise and just Samuel was rejected for young and handsome Saul. The choice seems to have been made on looks—mere appearances. Today, many are more concerned about how the church looks to the world—outside appearances—than about what God wants the church to be. The result of such will prove sadder and far more fatal than with Israel, who rejected not Samuel, but God ("The Evils Of God's People," 2).

The bane of the church is that it forgets the lessons of history. In every generation, "pure minds" must be stirred up "by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3:1). Because it has either been forgotten or ignored, 19th century apostasy is now being repeated in mainstream churches of Christ.

As it is today, so apostasy was rooted in heresies of men a century and a half ago. They rejected God's way for their own ways and took their place as a sect among all others. Heresies served God's purpose then and serve it now: "For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor 11:19). Heresies winnow the wheat from the chaff, separate apostates and manifest the faithful. That was true when Paul wrote it, it was true 150 years ago, and it remains true today.

*Heresy* is from the Greek *haireisis*, which Strong defines as, "properly a *choice*, that is, (specifically) a *party* or (abstractly) *disunion*. ('heresy' is the Greek word itself.): - heresy [which is the Greek word itself], sect" (*eSword*).

Robertson says *haireisis* describes a theory that results in division:

Heresy is theoretical schism, schism practical heresy...God's purpose in these factions makes the proved one become manifest. 'These *haireseis* are a magnet attracting unsound and unsettled minds' (Findlay) (*eSword*).

Heresy is a **choice**. It is the father of division and the first step on the road to sectarianism. It begins in the heart (Matt. 12:34), becomes a faction, and results in division. That was the result 150 years ago with the introduction of two human innovations into the work and worship of the church—The American Christian Missionary Society and mechanical instruments of music. From the mid to late 1800s, brethren recognized and exposed the heresy that produced them. Of their "progressive" spirit, West wrote: "The missionary society and the instrumental music...were but two expressions of the attempt at progress. Back of these and underlying them were dangerous trends of thought" (2:130, 131).

Those "dangerous trends of thought" were theoretical schisms that Robertson defined. They were the seeds of schism, factions, and consequent *dichostasia*—"standings apart" (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 3:3).

Another observer of those dangerous trends was Robert Graham. West described him as "ordinarily a man of milder moods" who "saw there was a radical change underway in the church during these years." (Ibid., 132). Graham wrote:

...there is among ourselves a falling off from the simplicity of the gospel, a conforming to the mode of *other* denominations, the loss of zeal for the spread of the gospel for fear people will think us solicitous only to build up a party, the decrease of Bible reading and study among us of late, the growing disposition to recognize the distinction of clergy and laity in our churches, and among much more that might be named, our conforming to the unscriptural phraseology of sects, to say nothing of our adopting many of their anti-scriptural customs. With the uniform experience of past ages before us, the tendency of men to make the gospel popular under the plea of extending its influence, and that, too,

even at the cost of its purity and power to save, should make us keen to detect and fearless in our condemnation of all departures from the faith (West, 1:132).

The missionary society and instrumental music were symptoms, not the cause, of division. The cause was man's age-old failure to respect God's authority. The trends that Lard and Graham saw—*theoretical schism*—were many, and culminated in sundering fellowship between brethren when the Christian Church sect was manifested as apostate in 1906: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

Another sect has been incubating within the church for more than 50 years. In its late embryonic form it is composed of mainstream churches of Christ who have introduced unauthorized practices into the work and worship of the church that are today accepted without question. Allied with them are neo-mainstream churches of Christ who may not **practice** error, but ignore it in the mainstream and remain in fellowship with them.

Apostasy never occurs in one fell swoop. It is silent, devious, cunning, manipulating, and incremental. This incubating sect consists of churches, who were formerly sound in the faith. They preached the gospel to save souls and worshiped according to the New Testament pattern, neither adding to nor subtracting from the faith once delivered. But that incrementally changed. Heresies took root in the hearts of their elders and preachers and they ceased to practice only that for which we have Christ's authority (Col. 3:17).

In 1966, the liberal/progressive magazine, *Mission Messenger* published the book of essays, *Voices of Concern*, edited by Robert Meyers. The apostates who authored those essays vented their spleen against the body of Christ, calling for radical changes in it. The changes they advocated constituted a rejection of New Testament authority, particularly in the exclusive nature of the church. In the introduction, Meyers wrote:

We consider variety itself a significant part of the lesson this book would teach. Free minds cannot be predicted. The Spirit of God really does move at liberty like the invisible air, and it impels men in various ways. There are writers here who believe in the principle of Restorationism, and men who do not; men who believe in what is loosely called Fundamentalism, and men who do not; men who are restrained and analytical, and men who verge upon the mystical in their rhapsodies about the guidance of God's Spirit. The book obviously means to urge no one way of religious expression, but plead from such evidence as is here the need for *unity in diversity* [Emph. his] (Meyers, Introductory, 5).

*Voices of Concern* is the clearest statement of heretical thinking extant in churches of Christ more than 50 years ago. That same thinking is echoed today by those who call for *unity in diversity*. Some of the essayists may be familiar; others may not be. They were, Logan J. Fox, J. P. Sanders, Laurie L. Hibbett, Norman L. Parks, Thomas P. Hardeman, Carl L. Etter, Roy Key, Ralph V. Graham, Margaret Edson O'Dowd, William K. Floyd, Cecil L. Franklin, Charles E. Warren, Ralph Milton Stolz, David R. Darnell, Martha Armstrong, William P. Reedy, and Robert Meyers. They were progressive heretics—the progenitors of modern change agents and their fellow travelers, mainstream churches of Christ. They despised the New Testament pattern for the church, articulated their heresies, and urged them upon churches of Christ as others of their ilk have done in recent years. In 1925, Hitler published his intentions in *Mein Kampf*, but he was largely ignored by the world until his plan became the mainstream in Germany in the 1930s. *Voices of Concern* was the religious *Mein Kampf* of heretics within, but brethren largely ignored it. Its philosophy has now come to fruition in mainstream churches of Christ

But more than six decades ago, **faithful** brethren **could** "discern this time" and warned of those heresies. As early as 1957, E.R. Harper saw that departures from the old paths were taking place and warned:

The church is in danger of another digression. The "innocent things" being practiced today by loyal members of the body of Christ, because they do not think of the harm, are alarming to those of us who have been in the battle line for years. The same cause that took us away in the century just closed [the 19th century, JCB] will lead us into apotasy today; people not familiar with the Truth of the Bible do not know the issues that are troubling the church today. The modern pulpit does not discuss problems, Church members do not have conviction against certain practices, as they once had. We are trying too much to be like the world around us. Too much show and not enough teaching. Too many churches are saying, "We are not bothered with this or that. Why preach on such things? Preach on subjects that

will build the church.”...Digression looks innocent at first, and deceives honest people. It does not look as if it will do much harm. In the beginning of digression, few people see its flower (14).

Another was Ira Y. Rice, Jr. who wrote three volumes entitled, *Axe On The Root*. The first was issued in 1966, the second in 1967, and the third in 1970. In all three volumes, brother Rice documented churches’ departures from the New Testament pattern and warned of their dangers. What he wrote in the introduction to his second volume more than a half century ago was true in 1967 and, to a far greater degree, describes the church in 2020:

As far as I can see, the time has come when brethren generally need to speak up and make themselves known as to just where they stand on the basic issues involved among us. As far as I can tell, we are in the anomalous position of having what *should* exist as *two separate brotherhoods* trying to stay together as *one*. I am for peace and unity, of course, as is every sincere brother and sister in the Lord—but not *at any price!* And when the price of staying together is fellowship with error and those who espouse it, far better that we separate. How well I remember those vicious, miserable heart-rending years of trying to fellowship those who would not fellowship us, leading up to the eventual open break with those espousing anti-cooperation among churches. It was not until our brethren began *marking* those who were causing the divisions and offenses, *withdrawing* from them and *avoiding* them that a measure of peace ever could be restored among the churches. And so I am persuaded it also will be in this present time [All emph. IYR, Jr.] (2:7).

The two separate brotherhoods referenced by brother Rice still exist, except in larger measure. One is the mainstream churches of Christ who have loosed where God has bound. The other is composed of sound churches who still demand a “thus saith the Lord” in faith and practice. These two brotherhoods have nothing in common.

Churches of Christ who still walk in the old paths are marginalized by mainstream churches of Christ. Because of that, the world considers them insignificant factions—as the pejorative term “sect” was hurled at the church by her enemies in the first century (Acts 24:5, 14). The “walking Bibles”—as members of the church were known in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s—are still among us, but far fewer in number. They are shunned as “legalists” and “radicals” by mainstream churches of Christ who long ago surrendered their distinction as the church that Jesus built.

Another was Foy E. Wallace, Jr. who incessantly warned of false doctrines contained in so-called “modern versions” of the Bible. Brother Wallace exposed those in *A Review of the New Versions* in 1973. In it, he covered *The Revised Standard Version (RSV)*, *Today’s English Version (TEV)*—also known as *Good News For Modern Man*—*The New English Bible (NEB)*, and *The New International Version (NIV)*. The adoption of this babel of conflicting versions by liberals in the church fed their heresies during the 1960s and 70s and continues bearing nefarious fruit today.

At Freed-Hardeman College’s lectureship in 1973, G.K. Wallace said, “If the denominations cannot read their creeds out of the Bible, they will write them into it.” That is precisely what they did and heretical brethren bought those pseudo Bibles by the hundreds. In his preface, brother Wallace wrote:

As for me, it is my determination to remain uninhibited, uncontrolled and unintimidated, as many years as providence allows me, to make the churches all over the nation aware of the conditions that imperil us in the midst of the dangers that threaten to envelop us. It is my firm conviction that the greatest immediate danger confronting the churches of Christ is the general acceptance of the pseudo-versions of the Bible (xxxv).

In the Foreword to brother Wallace’s book, Leroy Brownlow wrote:

We have had a rash of translations to break out among us in which very little has been added to truth, faith, and stability, but much has been added to error, doubt, and instability. Consequently many people are confused. Many wonder. Many are insecure. Now when you ask in a Bible class ‘What saith the Scriptures?’ you may get a dozen answers, and many of them are only the theological views of the so-called translators or translator (just one). It is hard to have unity when your thinking is guided by such a source of division. So far as I know, no one opposes a new translation, which is true. The opposition centers around translations loaded with errors that pervert the gospel and hurt the church. It is granted that every man has the right to publish a commentary, but it is also contended that no man has the

right to offer one to the public in the guise of a Bible. The purity of the Bible should not be violated. The recklessness with which it is now being made merchandise of in a multiplicity of outrageous abuses heaps on mankind an insufferable wrong. Our first concern in Bible study is to be sure we have the unmixed word of God—as nearly pure as translators can render it—and then we can go from there to learn its meaning. Surely this comes ahead of spoon feeding which makes much ado about simple expression that is given priority over correctness. What good is a Bible easily understood, if you don't know whether or not it is true? And if truth means nothing, why read it in the first place? (Ibid., xi, xii).

The 1960s witnessed a proliferation of false doctrines, adopted and taught by members of the church. Through that decade, American society suffered a cultural revolution. Led by the hippie movement, it was a stormy, and often violent, period of rebellion against long established civil, social, and moral standards. The same spirit infected the church in a rebellion against **Bible** authority. One of its fruits was a widespread adoption of Pentecostal doctrines that spread through the church like a prairie fire.

Popular singer Pat Boone, who had been the “Poster Boy” for churches of Christ in the 1950s, led the way. Boone published his heresy in a book entitled, *A New Song*, in which he chronicled his, and his wife Shirley's, journey into Pentecostal tongue speaking. *A New Song* explained their rejection of what he called the “cold formalism” of New Testament Christianity for the warm emotionalism, of feel-good Pentecostalism.

Heretics are devious. They do not enter churches announcing their intent to teach doctrines opposed to the New Testament. Instead, like Copperheads lurking in the grass, they strike the faithful with their spiritual poison when their victims least expect it. Boone was no exception. In his reply to Boone's book entitled, *Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues*, James D. Bales exposed Boone's devious nature:

Do some tongue speakers quietly spread their beliefs without letting the church know about it? First, Joyce Dennis was studying with Pat, and seeking the baptism of the Spirit, as early as February, 1969. Well over a year later, Pat was still trying to keep his beliefs from the brethren as a whole...Second, in some meetings of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, people were told to remain in their churches and influence them (225).

In 1967, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. published a refutation of Pentecostal error in *The Mission and Medium of The Holy Spirit*, which he began by defining its nature:

In the realm of religion there is an affectation known as Pietism. It is an estoteric system that originated in Germany as a religious movement in the seventeenth century. The distinctive tenet of this inner circle society was an emphasis on the devotional over the intellectual based on emotional experience. The modern Pietist is an adherent of this medieval theology of Pietism in the form of an excessive religiosity. It is not piety, nor a synonym for it, nor a derivation of it. The term Pietism is the cognomen for that religious belief—the designation for the principles and practices of the class of persons who advocate an immediate experiential sanctification, a sentimentalism that substitutes feeling for intellect, a substitution of a religion of feeling for the religion of the will...The extent to which this “Operation Holy Spirit” has developed is evident in the wave of emotionalism across the nation which is crystallizing into a new movement within our ranks. The promoters of it have had a field day, without significant or effective opposition, through the printed mediums extending from California to Tennessee, in articles full of error, some of which could be adapted and printed without comment or exception in a Holiness magazine and in most of the denominational publication organs. The emphasis of this revolutionary movement is on the activities of the Holy Spirit apart from the word (1, 2).

More than a quarter of a century ago, Perry B. Cotham wrote that, “the church is in danger of another digression...the future of the church is at the turning point” (28). Other faithful men sounded similar warnings but were ignored by mainstream heretics who desired to be “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:20), and “**like** the nations” they have become. In hundreds of places across the world, mainstream churches of Christ can no longer be distinguished from denominations.

Regardless of whether brethren are willing to admit it, mainstream churches of Christ have **already** become another denomination. As Judah of old, they have rejected the old paths (Jer. 6:16) and are under indictment by God Himself: “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cis-

terns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

The doctrinal division that now exists is nothing new. The same division occurred from 1830 to 1880. John F. Rowe addressed it as “two distinct parties...growing up in the church” (West, 2:224):

That there is rapidly growing up among us a new order of things in contrast with the old order of things, as advocated by Alexander Campbell and his associates, is a fact that is becoming more apparent and pronounced every day. Anyone who will take the pains to read the *Christian Baptist*, edited fifty years ago by Alexander Campbell, and continuing seven years, will discover in reading his series of articles on *The Ancient Order of Things* that, when placed in contrast with much of our church literature of the present day, and in contrast with much of our pulpit teaching there is growing up and taking form “The Modern Order of Things.” It pains me to make this statement, but the fact is so patent and palatable that it is in vain to try to longer conceal it. We might as well prepare to meet the issue first as last. We are grieved to say that the line of separation is becoming more distinct every day. There are two classes among us—those who represent “The Ancient Order of Things” and those who represent “The New Order of Things.” It is manifest that these two parties are not only not acting in sympathy, but that the men of the New Order of Things are determined to crush down, if possible, the Ancient Order of Things (“The Old and the New Order,” [Cited by West, 2:224-225] ).

Modern heresies have become division. The ignorant, undiscerning masses may not perceive that fact, but it is an undeniable reality. Mainstream churches of Christ have left the faith. They are the “New Order of Things” in our century, “determined to crush down...The Ancient Order of Things.”

This new denomination of mainstream churches has been a half-century in coming and parallels the emergence of the Christian Church in the 1800s. Rice’s “two brotherhoods” are the modern incarnation of Rowe’s “two distinct parties” and they are far more apparent than when brother Rice described them 50 years ago.

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## From Our Readers

I just received, and am reading the *Watchman*. I receive and read the Gospel Preceptor as well. Please send me a copy of your book “The Thing That Hath Been...” I'm sure it will be a great addition to my library...So much denominationalism is creeping in.

**Dennis Strickland, preacher**  
**Mooreville, NC church of Christ**

Thank you for sending me *The Watchman*. I hope you will continue to send it to me regularly. Thank you very much.

**Noli H. Villamor**

Thank you for the article about the organization of the GSOBS and the Bear Valley Schools. I happen to be a graduate at the arrangements of GSOBS here in Uganda. Having studied and observed how Bible Schools are governed in Africa, I chose to go against them. When a local director is placed, of course he looks at it as a job that will generate him money.

This director will now want all the congregations in his community to be answerable to him. Whatever he says, he wants all the congregations to take it without questioning. If you question it, then you become his enemy and even the congregation where you come from.

So here, we now have two institutions: The Bible School and the Local Congregation. Now the Bible School wants to have authority over the local church because they have foreign financial influence.

There is another Bible School in my area of Kasese here in Uganda. This school is called Rwenzori School of Preaching that was started by Paul Coffman. It operates under the Manna Projects and they have many Bible Schools in Africa. Paul Coffman had issues with Ugandans and was kicked out of it and went to operate his ministry work in Kenya. When it started, Mbusa Benard was placed as a local director and Gregg Knight is the foreign coordinator. Mbusa wanted to be the bishop of the churches in the whole region. Mbusa Benard became strong friend of Alex Barasa the director of East Africa School of Biblical Studies in Busia and both joined in a fraudulent saga and ate the money that was sent as relief to the poor in Uganda and Congo. When the churches learned of it, it did not go well with Mbusa Benard. Though his funders wanted to cover him up, they felt ashamed and removed him and

put a new director called Musisale Tom who was a minor in the fraud.

In a nutshell, the proponents of Bible Schools are like Catholics. They want headquarters on earth but because they can't do it directly, they will use a Bible School project.

About four years ago, Kitswamba church of Christ where I preach learned how the Bible School project is satanic and took on a simple way of training preachers at the local church. However, we still do it with challenges due to limited finances. We believe that the Bible School of God is the local congregation.

**Bisathu William.**

**Kitswamba church of Christ**

## **The Right Kind of Preaching**

**Cled E. Wallace**

Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of hard and soft are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be a difficult thing to determine the kind of both that should be done. A direct appeal to the New Testament, its preachers and its writers ought to settle any question that arises in such a connection. Men who say the most about "the right method of approach," "constructive articles," etc., betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources, rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach. The main idea is getting there anyhow. I shall resort to the rather simple strategy of pointing some Scripture texts at some of the approaching methodists among us who never approach, or do so in such timid manner, they are useless after they arrive. They might as well have stayed at home.

Now, John the Baptizer, was a fairly acceptable preacher considering the time and circumstances of his activities. "There came a man sent from God whose name was John." He was an austere man, simple in his tastes and habits. He was neither clothed in purple and fine linen, nor did he fare sumptuously every day. "Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey." He preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and seemed to encounter no difficulty in approaching his subject. He got there a lot quicker than he would have, had he worn a scissor-tail coat and been called Dr. John. Preachers thus handicapped, seldom get there at all, for they are too busy talking about the method of approach. John was not particularly worried, according to the record, about offending people. He demanded of all that they repent or burn. There were some "honorable men" in John's audience who were highly connected and proud of their standing. They condescended to submit to John's baptism, but John perceived that their motives were unrelated to the personal repentance he was preaching. He made a personal attack on them, called them "Ye offspring of vipers" and demanded of them "fruit worthy of repentance." A questionnaire might have disclosed the fact that a goodly number of very nice people did not savor John's "attacks on honorable men." That did not bother John any. He was not preaching to please the people, but to please God by blasting sin and sinners and leading them to repentance. He even had an invitation to preach to king Herod. This intrepid man of God then said the wrong thing at the psychological moment and got his head chopped off. He told Herod that he was living with his brother Philip's wife and that it was not lawful for him to have her. What would a modern perfumed and manicured preacher think of that method of approach? John was a constructive preacher! That word sounds familiar, doesn't it? He razed the mountains, filled the valleys, and straightened the crooked and made "the rough ways smooth." By his preaching, he built a highway in all the wilderness for the Lord. The constructive preaching described by the baby-talk of modern methodists among us would not have levelled any mountains, filled any valleys, nor constructed a highway for royalty. Softly spoken platitudes in religion, mainly designed to be inoffensive, generally true as they may be, are not constructive of what the Lord wants built up! When a sinner, even a dressed-up sinner, who belongs to "a respectable church," hears a real constructive preacher, he does not feel like he had visited a beauty parlor.

Jesus is by common consent the greatest of all teachers and preachers. He astonished the men

of His time and all succeeding time with the Sermon on the Mount. In it He exalted humility, purity of heart, meekness and mercy. He pronounced blessings on peacemakers and those who could rejoice under persecution for righteousness' sake without compromising or surrendering their loyalty. While holding forth true standards of holiness, He condemns divorce, hypocritical praying, fasting and alms-giving to be seen of men, the love and selfish use of money, all hate and thirst for vengeance, harsh and hypocritical judgments on others, and voiced a stern warning-against "false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." He was pointed in His definitions. A wise man is one who hears His words and does them. All others are foolish and will suffer a great fall. There is no compromise with or winking at sin, either personal or doctrinal, in the Sermon on the Mount. It is famous for the scope of its teaching and condemns as much as it applauds. Jesus was an iconoclast. He demolished the false that He might construct the true. Our present methodists of approach, who admit that they are the very sugar of the earth, are too squeamish to chop down the thorns of error. They expect their scanty scattering of constructive seed to choke out the thorns. "Preach the gospel and let others alone." Jesus did not do it that way! Some of them are strong on letting others alone and preach very little Gospel.

Jesus aroused powerful opposition among "honorable men," met them face to face in hot exchanges, answered their captious questions, directed parables against them, withered them into defeated silence by His repartee, warned His disciples and the people against their teaching, and when it was called to His attention that they had become offended at Him, He said: "Let them alone, they are blind guides." He called their worship "vain worship" and their teaching "the doctrine and commandments of men." He charged them with making void the Word of God because of their traditions. The last days in the temple area were hectic. He charged them with turning the house of God into a den of robbers. He did justice to His subject in highly descriptive language. He attacked some of these "honorable men," chief shepherds of the flock, as whited sepulchers, serpents, offspring of vipers, sons of hell and told them they could not escape the judgment of hell. He called them fools and blind gnat-strainers and camel-swallowers and charged them with all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the days of Abel. He said other nice things like this to them. What do you think of His method of approach? Anyhow, He approached! Yet, when some of us make a comparatively mild attack on the false doctrines of our time, long-faced mourners over the departed, journalistic glory of Zion, wail like children in the market places, that we are utterly void of the spirit of Christ! What a pity that Jesus could not have made a pilgrimage to New Jersey and learned something about the sweet freshness of a right approach! He did not even have the softening benefits of a brotherhood survey! [In *The Christian Chronicle*, JB]. Some of the loudest talkers about the spirit of Christ, know least about it. He was not doctrinally tolerant. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Would it not be better to preach "a positive gospel," make heaven so inviting that nobody would want to go anywhere else? Jesus preached some hell-fire and damnation along with it, and it can be recommended to warm up the modern method of approach. We have the example of Jesus and apostolic precept for preaching the truth and exposing error.

Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Itching ears can be tickled with questionnaires followed up by "higher journalistic standards" diluted to the formula of the proper method of approach. Such methods may please the sects and spoil the brethren. The right kind of preaching ought to **convert** some of the sects, **agitate all of them**, and **put fight in the brethren**. "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

If a man wants to be the right kind of preacher and writer, he should form the acquaintance of Paul and watch him approach. He might also make a side-study of Stephen with profit. Paul expressed a high degree of aversion for "some that trouble you. and would pervert the gospel of Christ." He pronounced an anathema on all who preached any other Gospel than that which he received from the Lord and made known to the people. There is not anything in Paul's record to show that he would be pleased with a man today, who for some twenty years was "lost" to loyal contenders for the faith, found the fellowship of digressives more satisfactory than that of "the alleged loyal church," ["mainstream churches of Christ" JB] and gained sudden promi-

nence among loyal churches by making a survey to find out what kind of preaching and writing the brethren wanted. “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10-11). Paul’s preaching drew fire. Honorably connected men “contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.” Paul met the challenge boldly. “Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Instead of criticizing Paul’s method of approach, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” They did not rebuke Paul by saying, “peace, brother, peace!” Paul was charged with madness, teaching unlawful customs, being the ringleader of a sect, turning the world upside down, and being a pestilent fellow. If he lived today, he would not be sending out questionnaires and making surveys to feel the pulse of the brotherhood. A study of Paul ought to toughen up some tenderfeet among us who tread about over Gospel principles about like a barefooted boy in a grass-burr patch. **“Preach the word. Be urgent.”**

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## Fermented Bible Ignorance in the Plainview church in Henderson, Tennessee

Jerry C. Brewer

After returning from Ukraine in 2017, the Kerry Sword family made a difficult search for a sound church with which to work and worship, opting for one near Freed-Hardeman University—Plainview. It was not long before they regretted their choice:

Since our return to the US in 2017 after working on the mission field of Ukraine for 25 years, we visited numerous congregations here looking for where we might work and serve the kingdom. The preaching and teaching we heard from the pulpit was sickening and a very watered down message. Many “grandpa stories” and anecdotes made up a good portion of the “lessons”...We landed at the Plainview church of Christ, a small struggling congregation about seven minutes from FHU as we thought we could help there and make a difference. It wasn't long before I was asked to teach class. Not knowing where the congregation was at in knowledge, I decided to give a test to find out what they knew and did not know, thereby knowing where to begin and how to tailor my future lessons. For being in the “Bible Belt” the results of the survey test were shocking to me. This was the Wednesday night Adult Bible class, (the cream of the crop), in a “Christian University” community and yet you can see for yourself why the church is in trouble.

**62%** could not name all of the acts of worship (that they are involved in every Lord’s Day).

**45%** believe that culture dictates the standard for modest dress and not the Bible.

**62%** believe that truth is subjective.

**45%** believe that a person can be saved outside of the Lord’s church.

**38%** believe that God still works through miracles today.

**34%** believe that Christians can worship on the Sabbath Day.

**28%** believe that people are bound by the 10 Commandment laws today.

**50%** believe it’s acceptable for the church to support a Missionary Society.

**72%** could not say where the Great Commission is found.

**38%** believe it’s acceptable to raise money for the Lord’s work by bake sales, raffles, or similar events.

**45%** cannot say what book and chapter records the establishment of the church.

**28%** cannot name the plan of salvation.

**72%** cannot name a Bible verse which prohibits instruments of music in worship.

**72%** believe it’s acceptable to use singing groups, solos, choirs, or praise teams in worship.

**45%** believe it's acceptable to participate in joint spiritual activities with denominations.

**45%** believe if an unbeliever divorces a Christian spouse, the believer has the right to remarry.

**55%** believe there's no universal code of ethics, but culture dictates a nation's moral practices.

**66%** believe that all things in a Christian's life are considered as "worship." (Email message from Kerry Sword, Sept. 4, 2020).

His association with the "mainstream Plainview church of Christ" was short-lived because of Plainview's fellowship with the Henderson church and their support of FHU. The Plainview elders were upset because of brother Sword's insistence that Biblical fellowship be followed and expressed that to him in a letter:

This discussion, called by the Elders of Plainview is primarily to cover the many emails you, brother Kerry, have sent out to the brethren. We are saddened that you have used Plainview as your platform to put these emails on the internet, especially to our members without our approval...When on at least one occasion you told Brother Kenton Lancaster, who does our bulletin, to not put something in our bulletin concerning some event that was taking place in the Henderson church of Christ, Kenton came to the elders about what to do. We told Kenton to put the announcement in the bulletin. We are not withholding support from FHU nor are we withdrawing from any congregation that we know of. We told Kenton that if Bro. Sword was not satisfied to see the elders...We would like to have you and your family to worship with us if you will change and not continue to persue (sic) these contentions with FHU and others in the way that you have. We have students, teachers, and others from FHU that may want to place membership here (Letter from Plainview elders Pat Evans and Andy Maness, and Plainview preacher, Terry Johnson to Kerry Sword, Jan. 8, 2018).

The fermented Bible ignorance manifested in the results of the test which brother Sword gave the adult Bible class in the Plainview church, would probably yield similar results across this country. Any church with such ignorance of God's word **cannot have qualified elders**. Their "elders" closed their eyes to pornography in FHU's art classes and surrendered to evil. Isaiah described the Plainview elders:

His watchmen *are* blind: they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, *they are* greedy dogs *which* can never have enough, and they *are* shepherds *that* cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter (Isa. 56:10-11).

Will their members continue to follow dumb dogs like that or will they grow a backbone? Will they choose the narrow way which leads to life or will they continue along the broad way to hell? **Only they** can make that decision.

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## The Church Must Teach the Truth and Oppose Error

Harrell D. Davidson

We live in a world of skepticism and doubt. We are led by Satan to wonder if we can really be Christians, members of the body of Christ, and stay faithful unto the end. As with mother Eve, if Satan can plant the seed of doubt in our hearts, he has gone a long way in winning the battle. He will soon convince no one that we are going to be failures. Look at the drop-out rate in the church today. We say we are losing our young people at an alarming rate, but we wonder if the loss rate is much greater, if any, than the adult loss rate. Rest assured that Satan is busy.

It takes courage to preach the gospel. This is not a place for a fickle person. The men-pleasers seek acceptance through watered down preaching. All too often, watered-down preaching results in a long stay at a congregation and also the ruin of that congregation.

The charge is given by the inspired Paul to brother Timothy in this fashion:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

This may be the most comprehensive charge found for preachers to follow. Likewise, Paul said, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

A number of things are learned from these passages. One of the main features is that gospel preaching must be distinctive. Gospel preaching is not the kind of preaching you could do in just about every denomination in America. This is precisely the problem with those who love not the truth and preach not the truth. The gravity of gospel preaching has escaped so many until we are in a minority.

When we are told to preach the Word, we are not to mince about it. We are to get on with the program and leave nothing undone. The gospel is for every creature (Mark 16:15). It is to be preached to every nation (Mat. 28:19). When this is done, there will be a harvest of souls (Acts 2:41). Without the truth (the gospel), the world is condemned and lost eternally. Without faithful proclamation of the truth, preachers’ souls will be lost. God’s preacher, Ezekiel, was told,

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (Eze. 3:17-19).

Preachers are watchmen. We must deliver the gospel message that has been delivered into our hands and hearts or lose our souls. Notice what would happen if Ezekiel did not tell it all, “because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Eze. 3:20). Isaiah was told, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa. 58:1). Should we proclaim the whole truth? Can we not see what we are doing to our souls if we do not?

We must be careful that we do not go beyond that which is written; in fact, it is fatal to do so. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Duty and responsibility is laid upon our shoulders, in light of all of the above, to tell the old, old story in its completeness and fullness. We must “buy the truth and sell it not.” It is the truth that will make us and others also, free from our sins (John 8:32). The church that is not involved with teaching the whole truth is in serious danger. One might ask, “Which truth?” We reply by saying, “Every truth.” Use of promotional campaigns and gimmicks has brought us so far from the basics of gospel preaching that we have forgotten what distinctive preaching is about. We must go all the way back to Genesis 1:1 and introduce our audiences to God Almighty. We must teach the truth regarding creation. Some schools on the grammar school level are teaching that man evolved. Some might think this is too elementary. My dear friend, nothing is too elementary when it comes to the Word of God. We have to start at “square one” if we are to teach the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Instead of going to the German philosophers and getting our sermon material from their pens, let us go to the Scriptures and get our lessons from the mouth of God. Isn’t this precisely what God told Ezekiel? Get the Word from my mouth. That Word is now in book form, but it is still from God’s mouth and by inspiration given (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What in this old world is better to teach than God’s Word on any given subject? What do our members know about the Word of God? What does the world know about the Word of God? Does the church know it must depend upon God’s orders in order to function scripturally? Many would not recognize the truth on a given subject if it looked them straight in the face. Why? Who is at fault?

The answer may be more complex than one might think. For the first point, listen to the words of Peter.

If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

Preachers have this grave responsibility to speak all the oracles of God. We cannot and must not sidestep this responsibility. A preacher needs to know what to say and then say it. We went to a meeting recently wherein the preacher was celebrating his 50th anniversary of gospel preaching. This sounds good on the surface. However, he did not preach anything distinctive in the entire meeting. He touched not on modesty, social drinking, and a host of other evils. "I'm alright, you're alright, so everything is just fine." Not true! He was preaching to a congregation that had just had a spiritual drought. By spiritual drought, we mean the lack of definitive preaching by the local preacher, who did not love the truth. He always proclaimed his love for the people by politicking and calling off names of individuals who had done some good thing, but never by telling them they were living in sin. He left that congregation in shame and degradation by his own immorality that finally came to light. This church did not have the pure gospel taught to them for a long period of time. Now they must learn all over again what pure preaching is like. They must reacquaint themselves with what the truth is on a wide range of subjects. The preacher in the meeting came so close to "driving the nail home," but failed to hit it.

The second point, and the other side of the coin, is stated also by Peter.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (1 Pet 5:1-2).

Elders need to know what to stand for and then stand for it. They need to get up in the pulpit after a particularly hard sermon from the preacher and tell the congregation that this is what the Bible says, this that has been preached is the truth, and this is where we stand. If we could just get these two matters together, truth would have a much easier course.

### **Opposition is Coming to Come**

You can rest assured that when the church teaches the whole truth on some subject, there will be objections. Look what has happened in the area of marriage and divorce. Someone decided that Matthew 19:9 did not mean what it said. It reminds me of a young preacher who was just starting out. He read a passage from the Bible and then said, "Now that doesn't mean what it says." This is what we have done with marriage, so much so that we have some congregations that are literally filled with people living in adultery. One such congregation through her eldership said that if they disfellowshipped all of those living in adultery, they would not have a congregation left. Brother Franklin Camp gave me some advice in regard to this subject that I have treasured over the years. He said that when folks with marriage problems came to him for advice, he opened the Bible to Matthew 19 and had them read verse 9, which says, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Brother Camp said he asked them if they understood what they had just read. If they replied that they did not, he told them to read it again and so on until they got the point. However, we have multitudes who respond to one preacher in an adjoining state when asked by an eldership where he was scheduled to preach in a meeting, what he believed about Matthew 19:9. He said he had not yet formed an opinion on the passage. This was not the first year of his preaching days. Instead, he was and is preaching for a very large, progressive congregation...but he has not yet formed an opinion on Matthew 19-9. Brethren, we have no opinion to be formed. That is the whole point that brother Camp was making. If the passage does not mean what it says, then what would it have to say to mean what it says? Also, if it does not mean what it says, would it not be the case that any other passage may not mean what it says? Where will it all stop?

A man who puts away his wife for any reason other than fornication and marries another is living in adultery and is lost, as is his new spouse. Now, let the years roll by and the two unscripturally married persons begin to think about death and their souls' salvation. Around them are

gathered their children, some of whom are still dependent upon them. They come to the church (elders or preacher) and ask what they need to do. The answer should be, "Get out of your adulterous state and repent." Then they say, "But we have children and we love each other." Every kind of emotional ploy will they seek to attach to the situation. All of the emotional things make no difference in the sight of God. He still says to put away adultery. This is not popular, but then what subject is when it comes to matters like this? We have had one person (a woman) who was living in adultery to come forward in a gospel meeting and confess this sin. We asked that she meet with the elders and they in turn wanted me to meet with all of them. We all (elders and preacher) told her that, according to the Scripture, she had to get out of this adulterous marriage and pray for God's forgiveness. She went home and the next night she was back in church. She came forward and explained that she had told her husband what must be done. They parted their ways and we had prayer with her. In thirty-five years of preaching, this is the only person that we personally know of who took this action.

This is what Matthew 19:9 indicates as well as what repentance demands. Have we let down our guard in teaching the truth on repentance? Brethren, I plead with you. We must go back to the basics and start all over again. False doctrine is taught, not about repentance only, but almost every subject you want to mention, love being no exception. Remember, one untaught generation and we face apostasy.

We know of a congregation that is now taking people into their fellowship who have been baptized with only a Baptist baptism. They admit they were not baptized for the remission of sins, as Acts 2:38 teaches. Are they in full fellowship with a congregation of the Lord's people? Not on your life! They are in fellowship with an apostate church. This is a hard saying, but it is the truth. We are to the point that we will do just about anything to get numbers. Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr., coined the phrase that we find amusing, but true: "noise, nickels, and numbers." How true and how sad! There is "so-and-so" with whom we have counseled over a drug problem. Are they saved? Oh, no, we didn't talk about the church and salvation, but they are off drugs. They are still lost, mind you, but the person is drug free. How have we left the Lamb of Calvary out of the solution to life's problems? Some of the reasons originate with unscrupulous elders and preachers who are afraid of opposition. "It might hurt someone's feelings," we are told, or "It might run some off." If our congregations have reached this point, we need to run a bunch of people off or teach them all about sin and sinlessness. Let's either show them the truth or cut the numbers back.

We really do not know whether the printing press can print such words as "decreasing in numbers." We have had a half dozen preachers about us in the last six months who have been discharged because of the numbers game. Where did God ever command numbers? Name one restoration preacher who was interested in or worried about numbers. You cannot do it! On the other hand, we can show multiplied scores of congregations that have this as their sugar stick. Preachers of yesteryear preached the Word and left it up to God to give the increase. Until we get back to the yesteryear type of mentality, we are going to go on down the long road to majoring in minors, and finally to apostasy.

Fellowship with the First Christian and Independent Christian Churches is another ploy for numbers-at-any-price. Brethren, the cost is too great. Paul admonished us: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Such fellowship that we are having is unfruitful. It is leading us to spiritual poverty. A leader in the Independent Christian Church showed how they were giving \$75,000 a month for the WBS program to a certain congregation of supposedly God's people. Then we get up and plead with people to sign up to teach in the WBS program. Do you mean we cannot have limited fellowship in this way with these folks? What are we going to do when we get to the matter of instrumental music...or missionary societies...or women as elders and leaders in their churches? Will the teacher tell the truth or will the money talk? Apparently the money, and not the truth, is talking.

God commanded the kind of music that would be acceptable before his throne of grace. He said, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Notice that the Bible says sing. The Bible says sing and make melody "in your heart." We cannot make melody on a mechanical instrument of music. We have forgotten what God's business is and what our business is. Let me ex-

plain!

In Luke 2:49, Jesus said: “wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” It was God’s business in the beginning when He had made everything that was made with the help of His Son (John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3). Christ was in the business of doing His Father’s business. Are we?

It was the Father’s business to look at all the things created and call them “very good” (Gen. 1:31). It was God’s business to tell righteous Noah how to build the ark. Now, you can call me a gopher wood preacher if you want to or laugh at this old, old theology, but it has its application to us today. It was God’s business that faithful Abraham had in mind when he obeyed the commands of God in Genesis 12. It was God’s business to command the kind of worship under the law of Moses that would be acceptable to Him. Nadab and Abihu thought that God’s business was not so important and that He would accept something they wanted to offer instead of what He had commanded. We note how fire came down from heaven and consumed them because they refused to obey God’s business. On and on we could go, but let’s go to Christ. He said He must be about His Father’s business.

In John 4, when the sinful Samaritan woman came to Jesus, He commanded that “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Let your eyes drop on down to verse 31:

In the meanwhile his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (John 4:31-34).

Christ’s meat was to do the will of God. That was his only business. He was here to finish God’s business. It had not as yet been finished or Christ would have had no reason to come to this low land of sin and sorrow.

It was God’s business to give us commands as to how to be saved. Now, you can call me a five-stepper if you want, but until I die I will preach that mien are to hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. This is God’s business and we have no right in conference or convention to change it in any way. Who would want to take away the hearing? Who would want to take away the believing? We will not, for it is the Lord’s business. I cannot and will not tamper with it. Some are putting the death of Christ to an open shame, for they never even extend the invitation of our Lord. One preacher said that if you have any commitment to make to Christ, come by his office and see him. That was it! That is all there is to it! What a shame! My eyes, as with those of Jeremiah of old, run down with water at such ignorance and high disregard for the Word of God. We need to be in business with the Lord.

It was God’s business to tell us how to worship Him acceptably in the Christian age—to sing, pray, give as prospered, preach, and partake of the Lord’s Supper. We dare not change these matters. These things are “holy ground” and we are commanded to keep them or be lost. Listen to the matter from the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prayed, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). I do not believe He was necessarily praying that He not die, for He had already said He came to the world for this purpose. He was here to do the Lord’s will, to be about His Father’s business, to finish God’s work that was began a long time ago when man first sinned. Could He not have been praying that the humiliation and shame, the torture, and the trial be done away with and that He be allowed to just go on to the cross and get it over with? Either way, His plea was for the Father’s will to be done and not His. Through the shame, sorrow, and gloom He had to go, from a mockery of a trial to bearing His own cross. With nails through His hands and feet, He looked down at His mother and her sister Mary Magdalene. Beside them was the disciple that He loved. He committed His mother’s welfare into John’s hands and John’s care into His mother’s hands. His last words were “It is finished” (John 19:30). Finally, God’s business that Jesus came to be involved with and finish was done. He had paid the price. He had gathered up all of the loose ends. It was finished. He came to do the Father’s will. He accomplished it and such pleased God. Can we please God with less than His will? For the church to be triumphant, **we must do the Lord’s will.**

Reprinted From The 16th Annual Bellview Lectures, Pensacola, Fla., May 12-15, 1991, Ed. Bobby Liddell

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## **“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised**

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“*The Thing That Hath Been...*” is now available in a digital format, thanks to Michael Hatcher and the Bellview church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida. They converted the book to a PDF file with searchable chapters. This allows people to request a digital book and receive it by email immediately. For people who do not have email, we will continue mailing hard copies through the United States Postal Service. The book and the postage will still be **FREE!!**

## Biblical Flotsam From Mainstream Websites

(Flotsam: Floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo; floating debris)

Jerry C. Brewer

From the **Parkview church of Christ, Sherman, Texas**, comes this statement on their website, on the “We Believe” page:

“We believe that through our repentance and acknowledgement of our sins, and our baptism (immersion) into Christ, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are justified by the beliefs of our hearts, and are saved by the confessions of our mouths. (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-6, 10:9-10)” (<https://www.pvfamily.org/know/what-we-believe/>).

Do the **Parkview elders, Hubert Baker, Sergio Lopez and Dr. Beryl Mackey**, know what the design of baptism is? It is right there in Acts 2:38. **The design of baptism** is “the remission of sins” **not** “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” If they intended to explain how to be saved, they failed. The phrase, “the gift of the Holy Ghost” is found only two times in The New Testament (Acts 2:38; 10:45) and both times refer to miraculous gifts in the first century. Parkview and their elders are teaching Pentecostal doctrine.

Did the **Parkview church of Christ, Sherman, Texas**, ever read what Jesus said to Peter about building the church? “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). On their “Get to Know Parkview” page, under “Teenager's Education,” they state: “Within our Youth Ministry we have adults involved in leading small groups, sponsoring trips, and ultimately providing an example for our students. We do this so that students have an intergenerational connection at **our church** and see Jesus living in adults' lives” (<https://www.pvfamily.org/our-mission-and-vision/>).

What Jesus promised to build and established (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:1-47), over which He is the Head (Eph. 1:22-23), which He died to purchase (Acts 20:28), and what He will save (Eph. 5:23) is called **our church** by the **Parkview elders, Hubert Baker, Sergio Lopez and Dr. Beryl Mackey**. I learned that the church is **Christ's** when I was a small boy, so I am sure that the **Parkview** elders could easily learn that the church is not “**ours**.” so leave to those Ashdodic expressions like “**our church**” to the denominations.

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From the **South Yukon church of Christ, Yukon, Oklahoma** comes more Pentecostal flotsam from their website on the “What We Believe” and “Baptism” pages:

We Believe that the authors of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit is God living inside of us as our Helper (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:14) (<https://sycoc.org/what-we-believe/>).

In baptism, God gives us His Spirit (Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5), and connects us to the story of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4) (<https://sycoc.org/next-steps/#baptism>).

“The Holy Spirit is God living inside of us as our Helper; In baptism, God gives us His Spirit?” The **South Yukon elders, Jason Engle, Lynn Groves, Stuart Stephens, Barry Stump, Glenn Tunick, Joe Wallace, and John Yielding** are floating **Pentecostal doctrine** down the mainstream. Pentecostalism on their website should disqualify them from elders in a church of Christ. There is not a person alive today in whom the Holy Spirit functions as Comforter (“our Helper”) nor were any others in the first century, except the apostles.

One would think that the **South Yukon elders** would know how to read Bible teaching in its context.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16-17).

Jesus was speaking to His apostles and His words pointed to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4) to guide them into all truth (John 16:13).

To claim that the “Holy Spirit is God living inside of us as our Helper” is Pentecostal doctrine. **South Yukon elders** need to join the Yukon First Pentecostal Church at 1100 Cornwell Dr. in Yukon. Consider the below from the **Yukon First Pentecostal Church**:

We obey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17) by repentance (death to sin), water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (burial), and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (resurrection) (<https://fp-cyukon.org/what-we-believe/>).

The **Yukon First Pentecostal Church's** website makes as much sense as the **South Yukon church of Christ's** website about the Holy Spirit, and neither makes scriptural sense. Are the members at **South Yukon church of Christ** as Biblically ignorant as their elders? What are they studying in their classes and hearing from their pulpit? It is obvious that they are studying something besides the Bible.