

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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When the Floodgate Was Opened

Jerry C. Brewer

The flood of error in which mainstream churches of Christ are awash had its inception in a single heretical concept as old as Cain's, Nadab's, and Abihu's offerings. That concept says that whatever God does not forbid in religion is permitted to man's discretion as an **expedient**. After all, "God didn't tell Cain **not** to offer the fruit of the ground, or Nadab and Abihu **not** to offer strange fire."

Resurrected by W.K. Pendleton 150 years ago, that concept, intoned by mainstream churches today, opened the floodgate of error. It found expression in the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849, but not until 1866 was it articulated and adopted as the official position of the new sect emerging from the church. That was the year Pendleton saddled up and rode out on his horse called *Expediency*.

From 1849 to 1866, the Missionary Society had its opponents but was, in a large measure, successful in supplanting the work of the church across the world. That began to change in December, 1866 when one of its chief advocates, the *American Christian Review's* Editor Ben Franklin, finally recognized that it could not be defended by God's Word and began opposing it on that basis. Reaction to Franklin's change was vitriolic from the society's defenders. To that, he replied:

At all events, we have come to the time to rest the question whether *love and devotion* to the creation of a few individuals, in the form of an outside society, with laws and names unknown to the law of God, is sufficient to sink a man with more than thirty years' labor and devotion to the spread of the gospel, *solely because he will not go for the Society* [All emph. his, JCB] (West, 2:49).

West said Franklin's new opposition "found the American Christian Missionary Society in 1866 badly in need of repairs and rapidly losing in popularity" (2:49). To repair the Society and counter its loss of popularity, it turned to the man whom West called, "its great apologist W.K. Pendleton to defend it." Pendleton's apologia at the Society's convention in 1866 was a watershed event, opening the floodgate of errors that have inundated the church from then until now.

His argument was based on Thomas Campbell's motto, first enunciated in 1809: "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." Pendleton focused on the last phrase—"where the Bible is silent, we are silent"—and Moses Lard printed his full speech in the *Millennial Harbinger's* Nov., 1866 issue, in which Pendleton said, in part:

You say, 'your Missionary Society is not scriptural'—and you mean by this, that there is no special express precept in the Scriptures demanding it. We concede this without a moment's hesitation. There is none; but what do you make of it? Is everything which is not scriptural therefore wrong?...Does he say that it is not *positively and expressly* commanded; then we demand by what canon of interpretation does he make mere *silence* prohibitory? [All Emph his, JCB] (501).

Pendleton used Scriptural **silence** to justify the Society and his interpretation of "Where the Bible is silent, we are silent" became the mantra of every innovator in the church from that time forward. Upon Pendleton's interpretation is based every unscriptural innovation adopted by mainstream churches. The floodgate was opened and human opinions in the guise of expedients became **another** source of authority in digressive mainstream churches.

To try to sweep back the avalanche by calling for divine authority was like trying to dry up the the ocean with a sponge. Pendleton's interpretation was picked up by Isaac Errett and

the *Christian Standard* and then by J. H. Garrison and B. W. Johnson in the *Christian Evangelist* to resound down through the ages to the present. Nevertheless, an element remained to whom the call for divine authority still meant something (West, 2:54).

Pendleton's words still "resound down through the ages" as authority for the endless array of Social Gospel ministries in mainstream churches of Christ. Asked for divine authority for their "ministries," they reply, "They are **expedients**. The Bible **doesn't** say we **can't** create them." There are probably few people in mainstream churches who ever heard of W.K. Pendleton but they are still riding his same old, tired, worn out, swaybacked nag called *Expediency*.

Typical of Pendleton's progeny is Lynn McMillon. In a meeting with a large group of Gospel preachers at the 8th and Lee church building in Lawton, Okla., Nov. 17, 2003, McMillon, who was at that time President and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle* and an elder in the mainstream Memorial Road church of Christ in Edmond, Okla., represented Oklahoma Christian University (OCU). The meeting was requested by Oklahoma preachers to voice objections to rank liberals who were included on OCU's lectureship. Among those liberals were Mark Henderson of the apostate Quail Springs church in Oklahoma City and Randy Harris, co-author of *The Second Incarnation* with Rubel Shelly. Both Henderson and Harris consider the church a denomination and freely fellowship denominations.

It was pointed out to McMillon that Quail Springs uses mechanical instruments of music in its worship and the meeting's moderator, Rick Popejoy, asked him—not once, but **three times**—"Is the silence of the Scriptures permissive or prohibitive?" He refused to answer the question. Had he truthfully answered, it would have ruined his defense of Quail Springs and Henderson.

Those of us to whom the call of divine authority still means something **know** that Scriptural silence is **not** permissive and **we** can answer that question from God's word. Nadab and Abihu are prime examples in the Old Testament:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace (Lev. 10:1-3).

As priests under the Law of Moses, their responsibility was to offer incense by taking fire, putting it into their censers, and offering it "before the Lord." But the Scripture says they "offered **strange** fire." What was strange about it? It was fire that "God commanded them **not**." The significance of this passage is that God had commanded them to take fire from the source which **He** chose, but they chose one about which He was **silent**. In essence, they argued that, "God did **not** say we couldn't."

If that is not sufficient to explain the **prohibitive** nature of God's silence, the writer of Hebrews affirmed the superiority of Christ's priesthood over Aaron's, proving by God's **silence** that Christ could **not** have been a priest under the Law of Moses:

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Heb. 7:11-14).

Jesus Christ could not have been a priest while He was on earth—**not** because God said He **could not**, but because God commanded priests under the Law of Moses to be from the tribe of Levi. Christ was **prohibited** from being a priest on earth because, "...our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake **nothing** concerning priesthood."

God's **silence** concerning Judah and the priesthood did **not** permit a member of that tribe to be a priest. God's silence was **prohibitive** in the case of anyone other than a Levite serving as priest under the Law.

Directly related to Pendleton's "permissive silence" doctrine, is that **anything** churches devise

falls under the classification of expediency and is, therefore, permitted. The Bible authorizes us to act in one of three ways—direct statement (command), approved divine example, and implication.

Direct statement (“Repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins”) is obvious. **Approved divine example** is illustrated in Acts 20:7 when Paul tarried at Troas to assemble with the church and observe the Lord’s Supper. That is an approved apostolic example of assembling on the first day of each week to observe the Lord’s Supper. **Implication** means that when Scripture implies an approved action it is accepted as approved by God.

That is seen in Philip’s preaching to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. In neither instance is it explicitly stated that he preached baptism to anyone. But it is **implied** when the Samaritans “believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12), and when the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36).

Opposition to unauthorized programs, like so-called “ministries” in the work of the church, is often met with a stock reply: “The Bible does not authorize things like church buildings, pews, and song books, either.” From whence comes this sophistry? From W.K. Pendleton who asked, “Is everything which is not scriptural therefore wrong?...by what canon of interpretation does he make mere **silence** prohibitory?” They ignore the fact that buildings, pews, and song books are **not added elements** to the work or worship of the church, but are **implied** expedients in the commands to assemble in one place (1 Cor. 11:18, 33; Heb. 10:25), and to sing (Eph. 5:19). As such, they are **authorized** expedients. For a thing to be expedient, it must **first** be lawful (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23) under one of those three sources of Bible authority.

Expediency plays an important role in the place where God designed for it to be. However, to say that the realm of human judgment (expediency) is *not* a *source* of New Testament authority is *not* within itself a denial of the importance and proper role of expediency. Having said that, it may be said emphatically that **expediency is not a fourth source of authority** (Grizzell).

Commenting on brother Grizzell’s article, Kent Bailey and Charles Pogue wrote:

The logical consequence of the authority by expedience doctrine is enough to falsify it. Basically all one has to do is engage in any activity that he desires and then justify it by claiming that such is an expedient to evangelism, edification, or benevolence. The sad reality in the denominational world at large is their whole religious existence is based on expediency which is another way of saying I am my own authority.

This is a post-modern world. This is where the idea of expediency as a source of authority will lead the church if those who hold it never admit to its implication and do not give the idea up (Ibid).

Neither the silence of Scripture, nor expediency is Biblically authoritative. To claim expediency as a **source of authority**, is a false doctrine and as brother Grizzell wrote, “Any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is false within itself.” To say that **anything** man adds to the work and/or worship of the church is “an expedient” if it is not expressly forbidden is absolutely false and incurs the anathema of God (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Expediency as a source of authority for whatever mainstream churches may concoct and call *ministries*, is their hallmark and **that** identifies them as an apostate component of the newly emerging denomination.

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The Courage to Act Upon Truth

Marvin L. Weir

One's conscience must be correctly informed and then one must faithfully and constantly **act** upon the knowledge and truth in his possession. To do otherwise is to violate the conscience and sin against God! The devil knows that a Christian's convictions are useless unless he has the courage to act upon his convictions. The Word of God cannot be heard and ignored and one be counted faithful to the cause of Christ. The Bible clearly teaches one deceives or deludes himself when he hears but then fails to do what he knows to be true (Jas. 1:22). The courage to act upon God's commands is one of the most needed things both inside and outside the Lord's church.

The words that will haunt many people throughout eternity are these: "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17). The primary application of these words within their context is clear, but the principle "extends to the whole theater of faith and the obligations incumbent upon men" (*Coffman's Commentary on James*).

Every person must answer one simple question: "Is it good to obey the Lord?" Peter and the apostles demonstrated and taught one "must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Paul also taught this truth, saying, "his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). Jesus admonishes, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). There can be no doubt but that it is always good to obey the Lord and always bad (sinful) to disobey Him!

People Outside The Church

The Bible teaches that salvation is "in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:10). Christ is the "saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). The church and the body are the same (Eph. 5:22-23). There is only **one** body (Eph. 4:4). One is baptized **into** Christ (Gal. 3:27) and the Lord adds that one to His body which is His church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

Peter taught baptism has a part in saving one's soul (1 Pet. 3:21). Saul of Tarsus remained in his sins until baptism washed them away (Acts 22:16). Jesus stated, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). The conclusion is inescapable—one **must** be baptized in order to "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27) and be saved!

Do those outside of Christ have the courage to act upon what God's Word teaches? To know what to do to be saved and not do it is sin! The gospel plan of salvation demands that one hear the Word (Rom. 10:17), obey (Matt. 7:21), repent (Luke 13:3), confess (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized for the remission of sin (Acts 2:38). God will render "vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:8). The courage to act upon God's truth is essential if one is to become a Christian!

Brethren Inside The Church

It is a shame and disgrace that many who once obeyed the gospel no longer have the courage to abide by the Word of God. Liberalism, cronyism, and brotherhood political correctness has wrecked havoc with the Lord's church. Elders and preachers boldly declare they will stand foursquare for truth and right until they discover **who** the guilty sinner is! Brotherhood status has become much more important to some than God's Word! Talk is bold until an **untouchable** preacher or **sacred cow** (school of preaching, Christian University, Apologetics Press, etc.) is involved and then the courage to act upon truth disappears. Dave Miller's false teaching and practice of Elder Revaluation/Reaffirmation and Marriage Intent is one well-documented case in point and yet many continue to fellowship this one who steadfastly refuses to repent of his wrongdoing. Some who might not invite Dave Miller to speak on their lectureship nonetheless prohibit speakers on the lectureship from mentioning Miller and his false teaching.

This writer submitted a requested manuscript on repentance to Southwest School of Preaching in 2006 and was cancelled for refusal to agree to delete a paragraph and footnote in the manuscript proving Miller's involvement with the false elder "reaffirmation/reevaluation" process at Brown Trail church of Christ. Southwest also wanted a promise from this writer that Miller and his wrong-doing would not be mentioned in the oral presentation of the lecture. The actions of many brethren indicate the Lord's church can be splintered and mockery made of truth, but one dare not endanger the head of a sacred cow!

Congregations of the Lord's people can fail to have the courage to act upon truth. Instrumental music is sanctioned and implemented in worship in an attempt to please people (Eph. 5:19). Elders give ladies leadership roles in the church that God forbids (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Members, instead of assembling together, split up into cell groups in different homes on Sunday evenings (Heb. 10:25). Entertainment and recreation replaces worshipping "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Spontaneity is encouraged in the worship service and disdain is shown for doing things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Sin is tolerated and overlooked instead of being rebuked and fellowship withdrawn from the guilty (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:7, 11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). No effort is made to restore a brother or sister who errs from the truth (Gal. 6:1).

Will you and I have the courage to act upon what we know to be true? To sin willfully after knowing the truth will result in spiritual death (Heb. 10:26)!

Preachers—Then and Now

Jerry C. Brewer

When the foundation of the temple was laid in Ezra 3, the younger folks shouted for joy, while the older ones (who remembered Solomon's temple) wept. Those who were "ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes" (Ezra 3:12) and they knew something was different.

As I look back across six decades at the church, I think I know how they felt. There was a time in Western Oklahoma when a preacher could be asked to preach on any given Sunday and he was there with Bible in hand. Our country out here was filled with lots of young men who had a desire to preach the Gospel, and, because of that, W.R. Craig began the Elk City, Oklahoma School of Preaching in 1968.

No church in this surrounding area had to be without a preacher. Brother Craig's "boys" "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4) and they drove more than 100 miles to school each Saturday to spend the day in classes. In that day, there were dozens of young men who had a desire to give themselves to preaching the Gospel and they prepared for that task. That does not seem to be the case around here any more.

That lack of interest in preaching may be the case where you live, as well. Are many young men clamoring to preach the Gospel, or are they just caught up in "church work," "camps," "youth rallies," "teen centers," and such like? There is a dearth of sound preachers in our part of the world and even those who are sound sometimes do not have the fire in their bones to grasp each opportunity to preach. I cannot recall the last time that I heard a young man express the desire to give himself to preaching the Gospel, but I know it has been a lot of years.

I know there are bigger preaching schools today who are turning out a lot of preachers. But to what end? I have personally found that many young preachers coming out of preaching schools today are focusing on works where they are paid handsomely, with benefits, and who seemingly look upon Gospel preaching as a profession and themselves as "clergy."

That is a far cry from the men's and boys' training class in a small congregation where I was first introduced to preaching. I fear local churches have shirked their responsibility in this matter and now look to "preaching schools" to turn out preachers. In fact, one of the elders at Phillips Street in Dyersburg, Tennessee, once asked me, "If it weren't for Memphis, where would we get our preachers?" When churches absolve themselves of the responsibility to train young men to preach and turn that task over to "preaching schools," they are traveling a dangerous path. That is what churches once did in the 20th century, relying on colleges to furnish preachers. There is not a sound college among us today and in the last century those very colleges furnished churches their liberal preachers who headed up the apostasy that now engulfs us. The same thing will happen with today's schools of preaching who have compromised the Lord's teaching on fellowship.

I grieve for the lack of dedicated churches, elders, men, and boys who will see to it that the Gospel is "committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." I weep as did those "ancient men" who beheld the restored temple foundation and remembered the glory of the former. The church today is still the one Jesus built, but as this "ancient man" beholds it, he remembers "the former house."

The Operation of the Holy Spirit

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Many in the brotherhood have fallen into the same errors that the denominations find themselves in, on the subject of the Holy Spirit and how He operates. It is evident in our public prayers and it is not uncommon to hear those who lead prayers, petition God to let His Holy Spirit “fill” the preacher and put His words on the tongue of the preacher. Now, what are those who offer such prayers petitioning God for, if not the “direct operation” of His Holy Spirit on the heart and mind of the preacher? My position is that the doctrine of the **direct operation of the Holy Spirit** on humans today is borderline blasphemy and that brethren, if only they knew and understood the implications of this teaching, would not offer such prayers and would in no way teach or bid Godspeed to this doctrine. The following is a defense of my position.

When David said, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, **and his word was in my tongue**” (2 Sam. 23:2), David had not spent one week, reading the Bible, reading study materials and preparing a sermon outline. David was speaking about inspiration. Jeremiah, also, in speaking about his inspiration wrote: “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, **Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth**” (Jer. 1:9). Of the apostles, Luke wrote: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Their being **filled with the Holy Spirit**, coincided with the miraculous ability to speak in tongues and as they spoke, they did so **as the Spirit gave them utterance**. In other words, they spoke by inspiration. They had not spent the week, reading the Bible and study materials, and preparing a sermon outline. Peter also wrote; “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). Thus, to petition God to allow His Holy Spirit to **put His words into the mouth of the preacher** or into anyone’s mouth, is to teach that verbal inspiration is still ongoing.

Is that the case? That cannot be for the Bible plainly states that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Tim. 3:16). And not only is all Scripture inspired, we are emphatically told that we have been given **all things** we need in Scripture (see 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). Hence, with Scripture complete, inspiration has ceased. Therefore, anyone who preaches Scripture is not speaking by inspiration but is simply preaching God’s inspired word that has been written down once and for all time.

I even once heard a brother say that whiles meditating on Scripture one time, he began to feel like the Holy Spirit was descending on him. How this brother knew that it was the Holy Spirit, I would never know. However, it is more than evident that brethren are falling into the same “better-felt-than-told” errors of the Pentecostals and Charismatics. I have my guesses why this is happening. Probably we are drinking from denominational wells. The fruit of our teaching indicates its source. A fig tree cannot bear olive berries, remember (Jam. 3:12)? However, above all, I strongly believe that this error is due to a lack of teaching and study on the Holy Spirit, His personality, His mission and His medium of influence.

What does the Bible teach about how the Holy Spirit influences or operates on people today? The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit influences the heart and mind of man, in conviction, conversion and sanctification, **indirectly, through the word of God**, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). There is not a single influence that He exerts on man directly in conviction, conversion and sanctification. If the Holy Spirit operated directly on the hearts and minds of men today, no one would be able to resist. Anyone with the ability to resist the direct operation of the Holy Spirit would be worthy of worship for only one more powerful than the Omnipotent God of the world could do that. Those in denominations have for years taught this blasphemy. Take for example, this statement as a case in point:

We believe the Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, men must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the Holy Spirit, **in connection with** divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel... (Hiscox 63; emphasis mine).

According to Baptists, not only does the Holy Spirit operate directly in addition to the word, in giving **a holy disposition to the mind**, He does it in an incomprehensible manner in order to secure our **voluntary obedience** to the gospel. We however see in Scripture that when men

were operated on directly by the Holy Spirit, they had no control over this direct influence and could not resist it. Contrary to the teaching in the Baptist manual, when the Holy Spirit operates directly on a man's mind or heart, there is no opportunity for **voluntary obedience**.

When Balak sent for the gentile prophet Balaam, in order that the prophet would curse the people of Israel, Balaam wanted to do it for the money that was offered him. Yet when Balaam went to Balak, the Bible says "the Spirit of God came upon him" (Num. 24:2). When that happened, Balaam under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, in that instance, blessed Israel four different times (Num. 23:3ff). Balaam could not resist saying what he said, even if he wanted to.

Also, in one of the series of persecutions that David underwent in the hands of Saul, David fled, went to Samuel and told the prophet all what had happened. When Saul heard of David's location, he sent three groups of men to murder David. In each instance, "the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (1 Sam. 19:20 NKJV). Saul therefore went to the place himself and the Bible says,

the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night (1 Sam. 19:23-24).

We see therefore that, under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit on Saul and on his men, they could not resist even if they wanted to. They had gone down to commit murder but the Holy Spirit influenced them, to do what He wanted them to do and these men could not resist His influence.

Therefore, if like the denominations teach, the Holy Spirit operates directly in conversion and sanctification, then there would not be a single sinner because the Holy Spirit desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). However, we are told that not everyone will be saved. In fact, the majority will be lost (Matt. 7:13-14, 21-23). With this being the case, one implication of the **direct operation** doctrine is that, the Holy Spirit has selected some individuals to be saved and has condemned the rest of the world to hell. This is "Calvinism" pure and simple and it goes against the nature of our God, who is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6). In fact, He hates partiality to the extent, He has outlawed it among His people and emphatically calls it sin (Jam. 2:1-9).

Another implication is that, the Holy Spirit is derelict in His work of saving people or that He is not powerful enough to lead people to God. However, if He is and yet is allowing people to be lost, then He is not at all good or wise. This is a reflection on the omnipotence and infinite wisdom of our God. This my brethren, is blasphemy and is the reason why at the beginning, I noted that the doctrine of the **direct operation of the Holy Spirit** is blasphemous to the core. We would do well to think on these things.

Now back to the discussion, it must be noted that when the Holy Spirit influenced directly, the men that we discussed above, He did not "convert" them from their dispositions or intentions against their will. It is evident that if He had converted them from their wickedness directly, they would not have been able to resist. Balaam still went ahead and counseled the Israelites to sin against God, leading to the death of 24, 000 of them (Num. 25:1-9; 31:16; 2 Pet. 2:15; Rev. 2:14). Saul also continued his persecution of David, unabated. Thus, even though the Holy Spirit at one time operated directly on the hearts of men it was not to convert them from sin or to sanctify them. His direct influence on the men had nothing to do with their spiritual states.

This is a Scriptural truth we need to learn and learn again. The direct influence of the Holy Spirit on men never altered any man's spiritual state. There is not a single instance of the Holy Spirit operating directly on the hearts and minds of men in conviction, conversion and sanctification in the entirety of Scripture. When He operated directly, He did not work through a medium. But in conversion and sanctification, He does not work directly but through a medium. Also, when He operated directly, men did not have a choice and so they could not resist the Holy Spirit. But in conversion and sanctification, He respects the choices of men (Deut. 30:19; Jos. 24:15) and thus men can resist the Holy Spirit if they so wish (Acts 7:51).

We know this to be especially true because even though the Holy Spirit desired the salvation of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:29) and Cornelius (Acts 11:12), He did not operate directly on the hearts of these men to convert them but rather sent preachers to them to preach the word to them.

Why did the Holy Spirit not convert them directly? To know this answer is to know how the Holy Spirit converts and sanctifies men.

What then is the medium through which the Holy Spirit works in converting men and sanctifying them? **It is the word of God.** My thesis is that, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit influences the heart and mind of man, in conviction, conversion and sanctification, **indirectly, through the word of God**, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Where the word of God has not gone, there has not been any Christian.

Jesus Christ said, “Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel** to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be **saved**; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Paul also wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the **gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto **salvation** to everyone that believeth...” (Rom. 1:16). He also wrote,

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you **the gospel which I preached unto you**, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **by which also ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1-2).

It was by the word of God that Paul preached, that the Corinthians were saved. It was not by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, neither was it the preaching of the word plus the direct operation of the Holy Spirit like the Baptist manual asserts. It was or is by the preaching of the word and the preaching of the word alone that men were or are saved.

The gospel not the direct operation of the Holy Spirit is God’s power to save. Thus, the psalmist could say, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Psa. 19:7). The word not the direct operation of the Spirit. Also, regarding sanctification, Jesus Christ said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). It is only by taking heed to the word that a young man can cleanse his ways (Psa. 119:9).

Know this dear reader. The Holy Spirit has put forth His converting and sanctifying power in words. When those words are preached or directed to the hearts or understanding of men, and men by their own freewill obey the gospel, they shall be saved and they shall be sanctified. We see then that the Holy Spirit is the one who begins, continues and consummates the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints. But He does not do that directly. Rather, He does that indirectly, through the gospel, when men obey it (Eph. 6:17).

An even serious implication of the direct operation doctrine is that, it makes Satan more powerful than God. Satan’s words when heard believed and obeyed by Adam and Eve were enough to lead them astray from God (Gen. 3:1-7). There was no direct operation by Satan on the hearts of Adam and Eve because Satan does not have that much power and yet his words when believed and obeyed were powerful enough to lead astray the first human beings. Yet, according to the direct operation doctrine, God’s words when heard, believed and obeyed by the sinner do not have enough power inherent in them to lead the sinner back to God unless God does something in addition to the word, that is, operate directly on the heart of the sinner before that person can be led back to God. If Satan’s words have much more power than God’s word in conversion, then what is the implication but that Satan is more powerful than God?

Yet, this error has found its way into the Lord’s fold. You might want to read the documentation of this and the manifold errors of so-called mainstream churches of Christ in Jerry Brewer’s book, *The Thing That Hath Been*. We hear of brethren teaching some supposed illumination by the Holy Spirit on the heart and mind of man before the word of God can be understood. The Bible teaches no such doctrine. God’s word when studied can be understood by both the Christian and the sinner without a direct influence by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 13:14-15; Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Cor. 1:13). The psalmist wrote, “**Through thy precepts I get understanding**: therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104).

We hear of brethren petitioning God to let His Holy Spirit strengthen the saints. The Bible teaches no such doctrine. The Christian is spiritually strengthened by study and application of Scripture and by prayer. Listen to the word; “...increasing in the **knowledge** of God; **strengthened** with all might, according to His glorious power...” (Col. 1:10-11).

When Paul admonished the Saints in Ephesus to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10), he proceeded to teach them how. It was by putting on the whole armor of God. Now folks, every single one of the elements in the armor of God is supplied by the word of God, except prayer. The word of God is truth (John 17:17), which is the gird. The word of

God is righteousness (Psa. 119:172), which is the breastplate. The word of God is the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-2), which is the feet guide. The word of God supplies faith (Rom. 10:17), which is the shield. Those who obey the gospel receive salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Heb. 5:9), which is the helmet. The sword of the Spirit is emphatically called the word and the last of the elements is prayer (Eph. 6:18). **We do not receive spiritual strength directly from the Holy Spirit but indirectly when we study scripture, apply it to our lives and pray earnestly.**

Some brethren even think the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of the Spirit in them directly. While the source of this fruit is the Holy Spirit, spiritual fruit can only be borne in our lives and abound when we diligently (2 Pet. 1:5, 10) apply God's word to every facet of our lives. Thus says the word of God; "...whereof ye heard before in **the word of the truth of the gospel**; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and **bringeth forth fruit**, as it doth also in you since the day we heard of it and heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:5-6).

We believe we can prove this to be the case with regards to things like wisdom and knowledge and whatever influence that the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit exerts on the hearts and minds of men. I reiterate that there is not a single influence that the Holy Spirit exerts on the hearts and minds of men, which He does directly today. Every influence or operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and minds of men is exerted indirectly, through the word of God.

I have also heard of some supposed direct "leadings" of the Holy Spirit. In discussing an unscriptural practice with a brother, when I pointed out that there was no authority in Scripture for the said practice, he said we need to be "led by the Spirit." This brother supposed that we can follow some so-called inner **leading** of the Spirit and thus do whatever we want, so long as we are sincere. If we allow this buncombe into our midst, we would all end up in eternal destruction. This is the kind of theology that makes some gullible souls end up chewing green grass like farm animals and drinking poison in the name of religion, all because their so-called preacher told them he had a nudge, which proved that he was being **led by the Spirit**.

The Bible says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). The one who is **led by the Spirit is a son of God**. From where do we get information in order to live lives so as to become **sons of God**, if not the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17)? To be **led** is to be **guided**. How then does the Spirit guide or lead us? Listen; "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa. 73:24).

It is disheartening to read statements like this one from those who should know better: "It is the word of God which brings the believer to the Spirit. But as faith is nurtured by the word, the believer experiences a relationship with the Spirit which **transcends the printed page**" (qtd. in Brewer 58; emphasis in original).

I would to God that brethren would open their Bibles and study these issues for themselves. If we do, we might not be in the mainstream of the church but we will be in the mainstream of the faith.

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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 men 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.**

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A Deadly Mixture in Mainstream Churches of Christ

Jerry C. Brewer

The deadliest mixture in religion is an infinitesimal amount of error intermingled with a large amount of truth. That was the serpent's tactic in the Garden of Eden when he **added** a single three-letter word to God's prohibition and changed its meaning: "Ye shall **not** surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Mainstream churches of Christ do the same by couching what bit of truth they offer in generic language to make it palatable to the religious world at large. That formula makes their doctrines as deadly to the soul as a few drops of arsenic in a glass of pure water is to the body.

Behind their facade as faithful churches of Christ are their oft-repeated core shibboleths. Among them are, "our singing is a cappella" and "baptism for the remission of sins." Hard Shell Baptists sing without mechanical instruments and Mormons, Latter Day Saints, and Pentecostals baptize for the remission of sins. Harding University has adopted mainstream churches' shibboleths and added another:

Though we live in a time of significant confusion over our brotherhood's identity, we are determined that Harding University will become captive to neither a rigid legalism on the right nor a formless liberalism on the left. "With gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:16) we affirm such distinctive convictions of the mainstream churches of Christ as baptism for the remission of sins, a cappella music in worship, and male spiritual leadership (www.harding.edu).



As a child, I learned simple Bible truths from my grandmother, my mother and my aunt that still echo through corridors of my consciousness: God's people "call Bible things by Bible names;" it isn't "my church," or "our church," but "**Christ's** church," and it isn't "our kingdom," but "God's kingdom." Sound speech that cannot be condemned has been exchanged by mainstream churches of Christ for a modern Ashdodic cacophony. One example is the Second and Adams church of Christ in Elk City, Okla. whose electronic sign recently displayed, "Welcome to **Our Church**."

Mainstream churches speak "half in the speech of Ashdod" (Neh.13:24) and, on rare occasions, "as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Taking care to not offend their religious neighbors, they describe the church of Christ in politically correct euphemisms like "church family," "my church family," or "our church family" (and their pox on any who teach that Christ established **only one church**).

The church is the family of **God**. Paul told Timothy: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God..." (1 Tim. 3:14-15). God's house is **His** family—**not**, "our church family."

The creed on the website of the Fort Cobb, Okla. church begins, "As a church family (a group of imperfect people seeking the Lord), we believe the Bible is God's message revealed to us for the purpose of guiding us toward Him."

Each of their credal statements is prefaced with "**Our family believes.**" In their estimation, the church is not the one Jesus promised to build and established on Pentecost (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:1-47), over which He is Head (Eph. 1:22-23), and which He will save in heaven (Eph. 5:23, 27). It is just a "**church family**," or "**our family**."

And why the parenthetical disclaimer that they are "a group of imperfect people seeking the Lord?" Is this to avoid a charge of legalism? One does not have to be perfect to preach the gospel in simple terms, as the imperfect Paul did (Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 3:12). Neither was Peter perfect (Gal. 2:11-14), but he pointedly preached the gospel without pointing that out to his hearers. (Acts 2:22-23).

The phrase that they are, "seeking the Lord" implies that they have not yet found Him and are not really Christians after all. Is that agnostic language designed to avert the charge that they are being **judgmental**?

To gain acceptance, respectability, and good will in the religious and secular worlds, mainstream churches of Christ choose to express their doctrines in nebulous, non-offensive terms. "The house of God, which is the church of the Living God" is also the kingdom of God, the

body of Christ, the Lord's vineyard, and the temple of God. It is no more *my church family* than it is *my church, my body, my kingdom, my vineyard, or my temple*. The phrases, "my church family," and "our family" belong to Ashdod and betray a lack of respect for the church for which Jesus died. Sinners **need** to be taught that the church— not "our family"—was in God's scheme of redemption from eternity and is Christ's body in which all are saved who will enter it (Eph. 1:7, 11; 22-23; 5:23). When one refuses to preach Christ's **church** he refuses to preach **Him** (Acts 5:12).

Indeed, the church **is** God's family, and to refer to it as that is Scriptural. But when Scriptural language is modified and/or mixed with denominational Ashdodisms as mainstream churches do, it is a deadly combination. When Bible terms are corrupted, they no longer carry the meaning that God gave them. Members of the New Testament church "...are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light..." (1 Pet. 2:9). That does not sound like **our family**—a term found nowhere in The New Testament. Mainstream churches who parrot sectarian language and speak in vague terms cease to be a peculiar people, thereby surrendering their distinction as the church that Jesus built.

If you went to the website of a surgeon and read, "I am **striving to be** a surgeon as taught in medical school," would you have confidence in his ability to perform surgery on you? I prefer a surgeon who says, "I **am a graduate** of _____ Medical School."

The statement that, "We are striving to be..." or "Our goal is..." indicates that we are not yet what we are striving to be or have not yet reached our goal. Mainstream churches of Christ fill their websites with that Ashdodic terminology.

Upon visiting their websites, I am no longer amazed when I see things like this from the Kingfisher, Oklahoma church: "We are striving to be simply Christians who are following Christ and the Bible in belief and practice." Or this from the Southwest church in Ada, Oklahoma: "Our goal is to leave behind man-made religion and follow the Bible." Or this from Southern Oaks in Chickasha, Oklahoma: "We strive to be the same church described in the New Testament. It is our purpose to be identified with the Christians of the first century."

If the church has been restored (and it has) why tiptoe around the Truth? Why not make the plain statement that, "We **are** simply Christians," instead of, "...**striving to be**?" Why can we not say, "We **have left** man-made religion behind and follow the Bible," instead of, "**Our goal is...**"? Why can we not say, "We **are** the same church described in the New Testament," instead of, "We **strive to be...**"?

Garbled Ashdodisms emanating from mainstream churches render it impossible for the world to hear the simple call of New Testament Christianity. We need to emulate Paul and "use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. 3:12). How hard is that?

The Creeds of Mainstream Churches

Jerry C. Brewer

For 2,000 years, the church has suffered unrelenting assault by Satan's agents—the most effective of whom have always been those within. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that after his departure,

...shall grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).

West described the same philosophy that prevailed among liberal, "leading minds" in the 19th century:

There are always those who believe they sense something in the "spirit" of a thing contrary to what may be found in its "letter"...The church appeared to them to be too narrow and restricted, and their ambition was therefore to lift the brotherhood to a "dignified church" in a world of denominationalism, commanding at least some respect from these religious bodies (2:250).

Mark Henderson believes the church is "too narrow and restricted" and expressed that in a speech at Abilene Christian University 24 years ago:

Brothers and sisters, we don't have to live in estrangement and isolation from those who honestly differ with us inside or outside our fellowship. We don't have to agree with them at every point, nor do we have to convince them to agree with us on every issue. All we have to do is look to our left, to those who have felt the sting of our rejection, and everywhere we see one who has surrendered his or her life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we may rejoice that we have discovered a brother or sister, and we may extend to that child of God the same inviting hand of grace and acceptance that we ourselves have received from the Lord Jesus. It won't be easy to do that. It is hard to lay aside the mantle of exclusivity, but I believe it will be worth the effort, if for no other reason, than for the sake of those lost souls who won't ever find Jesus unless they find him through the unity-committed church (*The Unity Committed Church*, Feb. 19, 1996).

The mainstream's desire to be "like all the nations" is as repugnant to the Lord today as Israel's was and presages the rise of **another** denomination from among them.

One of the heresies leading to that new denomination in the 19th century was a written creed. Under the euphemism of a *Synopsis*, Isaac Errett wrote his creed for churches of Christ in 1863.

Errett published what he called 'A Synopsis of The Faith And Practice of The Church of Christ.' the 'Synopsis' consisted of ten articles setting forth the faith and practice of the church, in addition to a series of by-laws, emphasizing the regulations of the order and business of the church, Most brethren felt that the 'Synopsis' amounted to a creed. (West, 2:28).

The ten articles of Errett's synopsis were reprinted in *Lard's Quarterly* in the September, 1863 issue:

For the information of the public, the following statement of faith and practice is put forth by the Church of Christ meeting at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien street, in the city of Detroit.

I. We accept the Bible—Old and New Testaments—as the word of God; as furnishing the only certain and sufficient knowledge of God, of Salvation, of Duty and of Destiny: so that we need no other basis of faith, guide to duty, or bond of union, than is therein contained. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2d TIM. III. 16, 17.

II. While eschewing the metaphysical distinctions and technicalities of philosophies and creeds, on the subject of the Trinity, as being fruitful sources of confusion and strife among Christians, we recognize the tri-unity of the Godhead in the teachings of the New Testament, and accept, in the fullest sense; as a matter of revelation, and not of philosophy; of faith, and not of speculation, every Bible utterance concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit. MATT. XI. 27: JOHN I. 1-5, 14: JOHN XIV. 16, 17; xvi. 7-15: MATT. XXVIII. 19.

III. We regard the Divinity of the Lord Jesus, as emphatically the Christian creed—the truth to be believed; out of which, when believed, flows salvation to the sinner; out of which also, spring the obligations, enjoyments, and hopes of spiritual life. Hence, in laboring for the conversion of sinners, this is the great theme; and in accepting converts to baptism, the only confession of faith to which they are required to assent is, That Jesus is the Son of God, and the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King, through whom we are to obtain "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." MATT. XVI. 15-20; 1st. COR. III. 11; EPH. II, 19-22; JOHN XX. 31; ACTS. VIII. 35-38; 1st. JOHN V. 1.

IV. Not only do we accept as facts, the death of Christ as a sin offering, and his resurrection from the dead; but we regard these mighty facts as constituting the very Gospel by which we are saved. 1st. COR. XV. 1-4. Facts, Precepts, Promises, comprise the Gospel scheme. Jesus, the Divine Saviour, is the center of all these. The facts concerning Jesus, believed; the commandments of Jesus, obeyed; the promises of Jesus, enjoyed; these constitute the essentials of the Christian religion—the marrow and fatness of the Gospel feast.

V. Faith and repentance are the indispensable prerequisites of baptism. An entire reliance on Jesus as a crucified and risen Saviour, joined with such a sorrow for sin as shall lead the heart and life away from wickedness, to the service of the Lord, is enjoined on, and required of every person seeking admission to baptism and church membership.

VI. To such a believing penitent, baptism is "for the remission of sins;" not as procuring or meriting pardon, nor yet as accomplishing spiritual regeneration; but as bringing the believer into contact with Gospel promises, and conveying to him a scriptural assurance of for-

givenness. Hence we teach every person coming to baptism, to trust implicitly the Saviour's promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." MARK. XVI. 15, 16.

VII. In baptism, the believer is immersed "in the name," or by the authority of the Lord Jesus, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" and thus enters into covenant relationship with God as his Father, with Jesus as his Saviour, and with the Holy Spirit as his Comforter. Being buried with Jesus by baptism into death, and rising to walk in a new life, he is entitled to the promises of the Gospel, and is under the most solemn covenant obligations to walk in all the commandments of the Lord. Presuming not to judge those who have honestly mistaken sprinkling or pouring for baptism, but who show in their lives a cheerful conformity to all the known will of God, we nevertheless feel bound to maintain the integrity of this ordinance, First—because we dare not interfere with divine appointments, to change either their form or their design; and, Secondly— because we see in immersion, which all admit, and not in sprinkling or pouring, which but a part accept, a possibility of ending controversy and promoting union among the people of God. We do not wish, however, to place any obstacle in the way of any of the children of God who may desire to partake with us of the Lord's Supper, or to share in any of the privileges of Christian worship...

VIII. Being desirous of returning, as fully as possible, to the purity and simplicity of Primitive Christianity, we have been led, from a careful examination of the Scriptures, to the following conclusions: 1. The first church of Christ was planted in Jerusalem, on the Pentecost succeeding the resurrection of the Messiah. See Acts II. in extenso. 2. Its converts were accepted to baptism and church membership, on their faith in Christ, and repentance toward God—and not upon subscription to any human-creed or articles of faith. 3. "They that gladly received the word were baptized;" (no infant membership) was recognized. 4. " They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers." ACTS II. 42. In the teaching of the Apostles, therefore, as found in Acts and in the Epistles, are Christians to find an authoritative utterance of the will of God. 5. From the apostolic teaching We learn: That all the baptized believers dwelling in one locality, constituted the church in that locality. That every church when organized- by an Apostle or Evangelist, was an independent community, so far as its own affairs were concerned, with a government of its own; dependent on and amenable to other churches only so far as the sentiments of Christian brotherhood, or the demands of weakness or poverty, might allow of a mutual claim for counsel and co-operation. That every church, when fully organized, had a Bishop and Pastor, and frequently a plurality of Bishops, to preside over its spiritual interests; and Deacons, who attended to the wants of the poor, and the temporal interests of the church, and assisted likewise in its spiritual ministrations. That the churches met on the first day of the week for prayer, praise, in-caching, teaching, exhortation, observance of the Lord's Supper, contributions for benevolent purposes, and the cultivation of brotherly love. That as soon as the ability of a church or of neighboring churches allowed of it, Evangelists or Missionaries, duly qualified and approved, were sent forth to preach the Gospel in other regions, foster infant churches, and oversee them until organized. That in accomplishing all these functions, the churches had nothing but apostolic teachings to guide them, in all matters of expediency outside of apostolic teaching, every church acting on its own responsibility. That human leaderships, sects and parties were discouraged and denounced as anti-Christian. That on this simple basis of the Lordship of Christ and apostolic authority, it was sought to unite in one brotherhood, all who received Jesus as their Saviour and King. We seek to return to this standard of the Apostles' doctrine. In this age of division and distraction, we esteem it our especial duty to call Christians from the confusions of the apostasy to the order and harmony of the primitive church; from human creeds and philosophies to the Bible; from party to Christ; from denominational names and interests, to the symmetry and perfection of the Body of Christ; from speculative theology, which divides, to the faith and love of Christ, which unite; from all that tends to alienation and party-ism, to the unity and unity which apostolic teachings present. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Eph. iv. 4-6.

IX. To sum up all in one paragraph: Christ Jesus is our all; without his Light and Love, we perish forever. His Divinity is our foundation; His life our example; His death our salvation; His resurrection our hope; His intercession our foundation of grace and mercy; His teachings our guide; His church our school; His Spirit our comforter; His gospel our reliance for the conversion of sinners; His commandments our life; His promises our rejoicing; so that through faith and obedience, we may be blessed with "all spiritual blessings in

heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” To trust in the Lord Jesus, to love and obey Him—this is salvation here, and life eternal hereafter.

X. This declaration of our faith and aims is not to be taken as a creed. We assume no right to bind the conscience with any stereotyped formula. Vital religion is a thing of growth in the heart of the individual Christian. We design a mere statement, for general information, of the purpose which have induced us to band together, and the principles we propose to develop. We have no sectarian shackles with which to bind Christ’s freemen— no spiritual prison-house for the confinement of the soul. We present no authoritative standard of interpretation of the Bible. The Spirit that indited the word, can best bring home to the heart the significance of its truths. The practice of the divine precepts, furnishes the best interpretation. We repudiate all human authority in spiritual concerns—MATT. XXIII. 8-12. JOHN VII. 16, 17. May the God of grace and truth bless the reading of these pages, that they may assist in giving consistent views of the Gospel to the human inquirer, as well as in dissipating the prejudices of Christians; so that the former may be led to accept the salvation of God, and the latter be encouraged to seek after the simplicity of faith and unity of spirit, which belonged to the church of Christ before sects disturbed her harmony, or treacherous hands rent her seamless garment.

In the same issue, Lard dissected Errett’s “Synopsis” and exposed it as the sectarian creed it was:

THERE is not a sound man in our ranks who has seen the preceding “Synopsis” that has not felt scandalized by it. I wish we possessed even one decent apology for its appearance. It is a deep offense against the brotherhood—an offense tossed into the teeth of a people who, for forty years, have been working against the divisive and evil tendency of creeds. That it was meant as an offense by the brethren who have issued it, I cannot think. Still their work has a merit of its own, a merit which no lack of bad intention on their part can affect. Our brethren will accept this “Synopsis” for what it is, not for what it may possibly not have been designed to be. We are told that this “declaration” is not to be taken as a creed. But will this caveat prevent it being so taken? Never. When Aaron’s calf came out had he called it a bird, still all Israel seeing it stand on four legs, with horns and parted hoofs, would have shouted a calf, a calf, a calf. The brethren “meeting at the Corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien Street, Detroit,” may call their work in classic phrase a “Synopsis,” or gently, a “declaration;” but we still cry a creed, a creed. It is not the mere title of a work that constitutes it a creed, but its matter and form, together with the manner in which it is issued and the sanctions by which it is accompanied. This “Synopsis” is a creed without the appropriate label—a genuine snake in the grass, wearing a honeyed name.

Varied forms of creeds are found on websites of mainstream churches of Christ, listed under such headings as *Beliefs*, *What We Believe*, etc. Compare theirs with Errett’s:

Errett’s “Synopsis” I. We accept the Bible—Old and New Testaments—as the word of God; as furnishing the only certain and sufficient knowledge of God, of Salvation, of Duty and of Destiny: so that we need no other basis of faith, guide to duty, or bond of union, than is therein contained. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2d TIM. III. 16, 17.

Faith We hold the Bible to be God’s inspired word. (2 Timothy 3:16) (Elm and Hudson church, Altus, Okla.).

What We Believe ...the Bible is the inspired word of God - a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119:105) (Lakehoma church, Mustang, Okla.).

What We Believe We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. We are confident God inspired the individuals that wrote each book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation (Edmond, Okla. Church).

Our Beliefs We believe in the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible in matters of life, worship and godliness. 2 Peter 1:3 (Northridge church, Shawnee, Okla.).

What We Believe The Bible, in its original form and documents, is the only inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God, a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. (2 Timothy 3:16, Psalms 119:105) (Adams Blvd. church, Bartlesville, Okla.).

Our Beliefs We believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible in matters of life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) (North MacArthur Blvd. Church, Okla. City, Okla.).

Errett's "Synopsis" II. While eschewing the metaphysical distinctions and technicalities of philosophies and creeds, on the subject of the Trinity, as being fruitful sources of confusion and strife among Christians, we recognize the tri-unity of the Godhead in the teachings of the New Testament, and accept, in the fullest sense; as a matter of revelation, and not of philosophy; of faith, and not of speculation, every Bible utterance concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What We Believe We believe in the one God revealed in the Bible. We believe the one God is made up of the three beings known as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (The Edmond, Okla. church).

Statement Of Faith There is one God, eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 & Ephesians 1:13-14 (Tamarack Road church, Altus, Okla.).

What We Believe There is one true and eternal God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. (John 1:1-5, Ephesians 4:4-6) (Adams Blvd. Church, Bartlesville, Okla.).

What We Believe We believe that there is one God, the creator, sustainer, and ruler of the universe. He has always existed in three personalities—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14 (The South Yukon church of Christ, Yukon, Okla.).

Our Beliefs There is one eternal being who is God, who exists eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (The Bypass church of Christ, Idabel, Okla.).

The published creeds of mainstream churches have a commonality. They generally begin with, *We Believe*. There was never an apostle or gospel preacher in the New Testament who prefaced his teaching with "We believe." What **we** believe may be true or false. What men **believe** does not constitute Bible authority. What **Paul** believed was absolutely wrong. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). The written creed of the Methodist church, the *Methodist Discipline*, says **we believe**:

Dearly Beloved Brethren: It is our privilege and duty to recommend most earnestly this volume to you, which contains the Doctrines and Discipline of our Church, which we believe are agreeable to the Word of God... (*Discipline*, 3).

Isaac Errett's creed said:

...the following statement of faith and practice is put forth by the Church of Christ... **We accept** the Bible... **We regard** the Divinity of the Lord... **we regard** these mighty facts as constituting the very Gospel... **we have been led**, from a careful examination of the Scriptures... We seek to return to this standard...

His statement of faith and practice differed nothing from denominational creeds. For man to **accept, regard** or be **led to believe** any doctrine does **not** establish its truth. Titanic passengers in 1912 accepted, regarded, and were led to believe that ship was unsinkable. Truth is not dependent upon man's belief of it. The New Testament is the Lord's divine creed and is absolute, objective Truth whether anyone accepts, regards, or is led to believe it is such.

Mainstream churches differ nothing from **other** denominations with their published creeds. This comes from the Edmond, Okla. church of Christ's website:

The Bible is God's Word

We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. **We are confident** God inspired the individuals that wrote each book...

The Body of Christ

We believe the church is made up of God's people on earth. Jesus is our head, and we are His body (Gal. 5:23).

Salvation

From our understanding of the New Testament, there are some important elements associated with salvation. Every element is rooted in scripture. These steps are actually a process in which a person grasps them both emotionally and intellectually. The Lord says we must believe in the power and person of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). It is also necessary for us to repent, or change our way of living that is against Jesus (Acts 2:37-38). Jesus has also asked us to be willing to confess to other people that we are His (Rom. 10:9-10). God, through the New Testament, also directs us to be immersed, or baptized, into Christ (Rom. 6:3-11). At that point we become part of Christ's body (Gal. 3:26-27).

Their published creeds mark mainstream churches as apostate. They have become denominations without a single eyebrow of their Biblically ignorant elders and members being raised.

Mainstream Churches of Christ Add Pentecostalism in Their Creeds

Jerry C. Brewer

Consider these samples of websites from mainstream churches of Christ who include Pentecostalism in their creeds.

At the time of our baptism, our sins are taken away and the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in us (Acts 2:38); additionally, we are added to the Church (Acts 2:47). Throughout our lives, we are continually being transformed into the image of Christ by His Spirit who lives in us (<https://www.plainviewcoc.com/beliefs>, Plainview church of Christ, Hazel Green, Alabama).

The Plainview church of Christ, Hazel Green, Alabama elders are **Steve Capps, James Cofer, Davey Gardner, Jay Gates, James Muirhead, Alvie Tielking**

At the time of our baptism, our sins are taken away and the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in us (Acts 2:38); additionally, we are added to the Church (Acts 2:47). Throughout our lives, we are continually being transformed into the image of Christ by His Spirit who lives in us (<https://westsidechristians.org/what-we-believe/>, Westside church of Christ, Midland, Texas).

The Westside church of Christ, Midland, Texas elders are **Lynn Mayfield, Terry Pafford**

The Holy Spirit lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. [Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13-14]. The Holy Spirit provides the Christian with understanding of spiritual truth and guidance in doing what is right. [Romans 8:9-17; Galatians 5:22-26] (<https://mcoc.org/about-mcoc/what-we-believe/> Memorial church of Christ, Houston, Texas).

The Memorial Road church of Christ, Houston, Texas elders are **Frank Devine, Greg Hughes, Robby Robinson, Terry Montgomery Giezentanner, Alan Pence, Philip Bailey, Aaron Deister, Jerry Gerlich, Tom Messick**

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13-14)

The Holy Spirit provides the Christian with understanding of spiritual truth and guidance in doing what is right. (Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 5:22-26)

(<https://www.alameda.church/about-us>, The Alameda church of Christ, Norman, Okla.).

The Alameda church of Christ, Norman, Okla. elders **Barney Blue, Eric Clingan, Jimmy Givens, Brian Jones, Steve Knight, Mike Lee, Keith Lough, Dewayne Mitchell**

The Plainview church of Christ and Westside church of Christ

The Plainview church of Christ in Hazel Green, Alabama and the Westside church of Christ in Midland, Texas must have shared the same Pentecostal creed. Consider what they say about “At the time of our baptism...the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in us (Acts 2:38).” Read Acts 2:38 and see if there is **any statement** in that verse that indicates that “**the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in us.**” They have Deity living “**in us.**” The only incarnation of Deity **in the history of the world** was Son of God dwelling in flesh: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The elders of Plainview and Westside are lying. There is not anything in Acts 2:38 about the Holy Spirit taking “up residence in us.”

Acts 2:38

All of the churches above are proficient in juggling scriptures that have no relation to their doctrines. They are lying and should consider the end of **all** liars: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the

second death” (Rev. 21:8).

All of the churches above say that the “Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in us” or “The Holy Spirit lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation.” Read Acts 2:38 and see if you can find that the Holy Spirit “takes up residence in us.” Can you find those words in Acts 2:38? Read it again: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Those **words aren't in Acts 2:38!**

1 Corinthians 3:16

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” The “temple of God” is the **church**, **not** an individual Christian. This verse does **not prove** that the Holy Spirit “lives in every Christian.”

Ephesians 1:13-14

In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The application of the terms “earnest” and “seal” to the Holy Spirit’s work belong to the apostolic period when the gospel was being revealed in parts and portions and define two necessary aspects of the gospel scheme of redemption—revelation and confirmation. Purposed from eternity and hidden beneath the types and shadows of the old covenant, the scheme of redemption was a mystery that is now revealed.

...how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Eph. 3:3-4).

The word *mystery* in the above passage does not mean “mysterious” or “mystical.” It means unknowable through human reasoning and wisdom.

The word *mystery* in Revelation comports with the same meaning of the word as used elsewhere in the New Testament—that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of secret doctrine, hence prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was brought within human intelligence and understanding. ...The word mystery did not mean mysterious. It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is, in this sense, called a mystery. (Wallace, *The Book of Revelation*, 82).

Undiscoverable by human wisdom, God’s plan could be known only by revelation which required inspiration, and inspiration required confirmation. The scheme of redemption was revealed in words, (1 Cor. 2:10-13), and confirmed by signs and wonders. (Heb. 2:1-4). Inspiration was the means God used to reveal his plan and miraculous gifts of the Spirit were to confirm that those through whom it was revealed spoke the word of God. This was the function of the Holy Spirit whose work of revelation and confirmation is expressed in the terms “seal” and “earnest.”

The “earnest of the Spirit” relates to those gifts of partial revelation of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 13 and is used only in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14. From the Greek word *arrhabon*, it is defined as, “a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest: - earnest.” (Strong, 16). That which was given as an “earnest” was **not the Holy Spirit, but that which the Spirit gave** and that was partial knowledge of God’s word. The earnest of the Spirit constituted a partial revelation until the “redemption of the purchased possession” which was the completion of divine revelation.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The partial revelation of the gospel, that was imparted to Christians in the first century, was an earnest or pledge of the full revelation to come. That partial knowledge would cease when

those parts were gathered into the whole, which Paul styled “that which is perfect.” The revelation we now possess in the New Testament is the sum of the parts extant in the apostolic age. The word “perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 means “completeness” and when the parts of the mystery were gathered into the whole, the full price was paid of which the earnest was a pledge.

The Holy Spirit **was not** the earnest in the hearts of men in the first century, except in a metonymical sense where the cause was put for the effect. When Paul said God had “given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” he referred to that which the Spirit revealed, not the Spirit himself. Neither is the Holy Spirit an earnest in the hearts of Christians today. Besides, to say that God must make a “down-payment” on salvation is tantamount to saying we cannot trust him to fulfill his pledge to us!

When Paul said God had “given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” (2 Cor. 1:22), he distinguished between himself and the Corinthians. The pronoun “you” in this passage refers to the Corinthians and the pronouns “us” and “our” refer to Paul. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was Holy Spirit baptism which the apostles received. He made the same distinction in the Ephesian epistle.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-14).

The Ephesians were sealed with the gift of tongues and given the earnest of prophecy when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized. (Acts 19:1-6). Paul explains the purpose of the earnest and seal of the Spirit in the Ephesians in the following statement:

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened... (Eph. 1:15-18).

The earnest of the Spirit was revelation which came through Holy Spirit baptism, and the seal of the Spirit was the confirmation of that revelation. When gifts of revelation were imparted through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, they were accompanied by miraculous powers for confirmation. The genuineness of the earnest of the Spirit, or the gospel that resided in inspired men, was attested by the Spirit’s seal of “signs and wonders and divers miracles” upon them. From the Greek *sphragizo*, the word “seal” is defined as, “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation...to keep secret, to attest... The stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy or genuineness), lit. or fig. : - seal.” (*Strong*, 70). This seal or sign was a visible attestation of the authority by which inspired men spoke. Those who claim this seal for Christians today cannot produce any visible sign of it. The great seal of a state attests to and confirms the genuineness of documents issued by the state’s authority and is visible to all who read them. The seal of the Spirit were the signs worked by inspired men of the first century and visibly attested to their authority from God. The seal of the Spirit was not some invisible thing placed upon them for God’s benefit. Why would God have to attest ownership of Christians to himself? Does he not know them that are his without having some sort of mark placed upon them? The visible seal of the earnest of the Spirit was what Paul called “the signs of an apostle.” (2 Cor. 12:12). That was the sign or seal of his apostleship.

Thus, the apostles of Christ were special ambassadors sent by Christ to carry His message to the world. In so doing, He endued them with authority to speak in His name by sending the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 2:1-4) and giving them miraculous powers as credentials of their calling. The apostles were, therefore, special representatives of Christ, personally called and commissioned by Him, and through whom the word of God was revealed and preached in the world. Paul had the same authority and credentials possessed by the other apostles (2 Cor. 12:12) and was not inferior to them in any way (2 Cor. 11:5). Like the other apostles, he was an “ambassador,” a “witness” of Christ, an “earthen vessel” containing the truth of God, and he could impart the “seal and earnest of the Spirit.”

Pauls Valley, Okla. “Mainstream” Church of Christ “Calls Evil Good” and Sponsors Highschool Prom

Jerry C. Brewer

The letter below was written May 1, 2023 to the Pauls Valley, Oklahoma elders. At the writing of this article (May 31), brother Jess Whitlock has not heard a single word from the elders.

May 1, 2023

The Elders
The Pauls Valley church of Christ
Post Office Box 476
1509 West Grant Ave.
Pauls Valley, OK 73075

Brethren:

I do trust that you are having a good day and a good week. It is needful for me to write to you concerning an ad that I read over the weekend in the April 28th edition of the Garvin County, Maysville, Oklahoma *News Star*. The large ad read:

The 2023 PV junior class parents would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their contributions to the Pauls Valley promenade and after prom party. These contributions were essential in making these events successful. Thank you!

Then, in large print: “**Prom Sponsors...**” About one hundred businesses, i.e., banks, drug stores, restaurants, recreational shops, et al. were listed, along with three churches: the House Church, the Compassion Church, and the Pauls Valley Church of Christ. Brethren, I was dismayed and appalled.

Promenade is defined: “A promenade dance, commonly called a prom in American English, is a dance party for high school student” (*Wikipedia*). “...traces the word *prom* to the Ivy League tradition of a ‘presentation week’ during which formal dress and dancing accompanied a promenade concert” (*The Oxford English Dictionary*).

Sponsor is defined as, “(2) one who assumes responsibility for some other person or thing (3) a person or an organization that pays for or plans and carries out a project or activity” (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

Being elders in the Lord’s church, I do not presume to preach to you (1 Tim. 4:6). Perhaps I can put you in remembrance of some Scriptures. Paul writes of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. Paul concludes that those who do such things “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Surely, we desire to see souls saved and have no desire to see more souls lost in eternity.

Lasciviousness comes from the Greek *aselgeia*, defined as: “...absence of restraint, indecency...indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females...” (*Vine’s & Thayer*).

Revellings comes from the Greek *komos*, defined as: “...a revel, a carousal...jovial feast with music and dancing, a festive lascivious feasting...” (*Vine’s & Thayer*).

Jesus said: “By their fruits ye shall know them...” (Matt. 7:16). The modern dance has brought forth a multitude of evil fruits. Christ stated: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father...” (Matt. 5:16). Does the dance glorify God, and if so, how does it do that? Paul wrote to: “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). Scriptures abound showing the sinfulness of the modern dance.

Brethren, my question is a simple one: How can the Lord’s church **promote**, **sponsor**, and **approve** of the prom and the practices thereof? I would be anxious to hear your response and would be willing to meet with you and discuss these matters at your convenience.

In His service,
Jess Whitlock
Evangelist

When brother Whitlock phoned Chris Kidwell, the Pauls Valley preacher, his cavalier reply to brother Whitlock was, “This is not a fellowship issue.” Does Kidwell know that a sin of presumption will cause a soul to be lost?

To presume that one may unilaterally say that **sin is not** “a fellowship issue” is as deadly as Is-

rael's presumption to attack the Amalekites and Canaanites **after** God told them they would wander in the wilderness 40 years because they did not believe the report from Joshua and Caleb, despite Moses' warning that their attack would fail.

Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp (Num. 14:42-44).

The Israelites went forward with their plans to attack the Amalekites and Canaanites. Keil and Deltizsch explained what their sin of presumption did.

Whereas at first they had refused to enter upon the conflict with the Canaanites, through their unbelief in the might of the promise of God, now, through unbelief in the severity of the judgment of God, they resolved to engage in this conflict by their own power, and without the help of God, and to cancel the old sin of unbelieving despair through the new sin of presumptuous self-confidence,—an attempt which could never succeed, but was sure to plunge deeper and deeper into misery (e-Sword, Num. 14:39-45).

Chris Kidwell has presumed to speak for God, but John says that Kidwell is lying. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). Kidwell is an example of mainstream apathetic preachers, elders, and naive members who blithely ignore God's warnings.

They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace...Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is* among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it (Jer. 6:14, 17-19).

Does the “Oracle of Pauls Valley” have any other works of the flesh that are **not fellowship issues**? Will Kidwell issue **another fiat** with a list of **fellowship issues** not covered in the Bible in order to educate the church? Did the inspired apostle Paul write a list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 which wasted his and the Holy Spirit's efforts in order to negate them by Kidwell?

Do any faithful Christians remain in the Pauls Valley church? If so, do they have the courage to heed Paul's exhortation “to come out from among them?”

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The elders and preachers of the churches listed below have fellowship with Pauls Valley with their participation in the monthly singing and monthly preachers' studies: Purcell, Elmore City, Wayne, Maysville, Lexington, Lindsey, Wynnewood, and Noble.

One preacher has said that he would no longer attend the monthly preachers' meeting at Pauls Valley. Will others also do what is right? Or will they overlook the Pauls Valley church of Christ's sponsorship of the highschool prom because one **uninspired man** says that it is **not a fellowship issue**?

FREE!

**“The Thing That Hath Been...” Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised
By Jerry C. Brewer**

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