

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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“Forging Our Identity...”

A close ally to mainstream churches of Christ has always been the college. Historically, the college has exerted a detrimental influence on the church as a source of apostasy in every era. For nearly 90 years, mainstream churches have been incrementally conditioned to accept the false premise that the church and so-called Christian Colleges are allied or associated—a relationship that was never intended or envisioned by their founders. In fact, they were not even called “Christian” colleges in the beginning.

Bethany College was founded in 1840 by Alexander Campbell. Its charter stated that “nothing herein shall be so construed as at any time to authorize the establishment of a Theological Professorship in said College” (Young, 176-179).

Tolbert and Charlotte Fanning established Franklin College on their farm five miles east of Nashville in 1845. They named it for Gospel preacher and editor Benjamin Franklin.

Probably the most revealing thing about the charter was its silence on the subject of religion. Fanning was a preacher and fully intended to teach the Bible as a textbook in his new college, but he did not propose that his school should be considered denominational. Although in practice the members of the board of trustees and the faculty were, with few exceptions, members of the Churches of Christ no such requirements were written into the charter.(Young, 41).

James A. Harding was a graduate of Campbell’s school at Bethany, Virginia in 1839 and David Lipscomb graduated from Fanning’s Franklin College in 1849. In 1889, the two men began planning the opening of a Bible school and in 1891 the following announcement appeared:

It is proposed to open a school in Nashville, September next, under safe and competent teachers in which the Bible, excluding all human opinions and philosophy, as the only rule of faith and practice; and the appointments of God, as ordained in the scriptures, excluding all innovations and organizations of men, as the fullness of divine wisdom, for converting sinners and perfecting saints, will earnestly be taught. The aim is to teach the Christian religion as represented in the Bible in its purity and fullness; and in teaching this to prepare Christians for usefulness, in whatever sphere they are called upon to labor. Such additional branches of learning will be taught as are needful and helpful in understanding and obeying the Bible and teaching it to others (Ibid.).

Prior to its founding and through the years of his association with it until his death in 1917, Lipscomb adamantly maintained that his school was not established as a preacher training school:

...all notices emphasized the fact that the school was not ‘especially to make preachers,’ but it was to teach the Bible, and with it all the branches of knowledge that would be useful and helpful to the students” (Young, 84).

From the beginning, Bethany College had no problem bidding God speed to denominations. Campbell had pleaded for religious unity upon the Scriptures alone and the dissolution of sectarianism:

I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. This game has been played too long. I labor to see sectarianism abolished, and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded (Campbell, “Reply to ‘T.T.’, *Christian Baptist*, cited by West, 1:70).

Young wrote that, paradoxically, Campbell opened Bethany College’s facilities to denominations on a weekly basis.

Interesting, in view of Campbell's plea for unity, is the provision that the College Hall should be used every Sunday for worship and instruction "to be performed by respectable ministers of various denominations." Ministers in any denomination were permitted to attend the college without tuition charges (28, 29).

Young highlighted the widespread influence of Bethany's (and Campbell's) influence on churches of Christ of that period and on those which followed:

Bethany College, which Campbell began in the fall of 1840, may be called a "mother of colleges" for her influence under Campbell's direction pervaded the restoration movement. Particularly in her early days when the movement was in a formative stage was her stamp placed on that part of the group later to be known separately as the Churches of Christ...Campbell's educational ideas were predominant in the college and throughout the brotherhood. His sentiments on the subject of education profoundly influenced both his contemporaries and his later disciples (26, 27).

Campbell's educational ideas that predominated throughout the brotherhood live on today in his collegiate heirs. Denominational preachers are routinely invited to speak on lectureships, in chapel, and other venues at "Christian Colleges." Women are welcomed speakers at colleges such as David Lipscomb University (DLU) and Abilene Christian University (ACU).

Beyond the doctrinal error of DLU and ACU, Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) has added immorality to its curriculum. All of these institutions are defended, promoted, and supported by mainstream churches of Christ who erroneously believe the college and the church are affiliated.

So-called Christian colleges are neither the church, works of the church, parts of the church, nor adjuncts of the church. Neither does the New Testament church have any affiliated organizations. But the myth that "our colleges" are "affiliated with" or related to the church has been chanted for so many decades that ignorant members now accept it as truth. Observe these statements from four current institutions of higher learning, claiming to be "a resource for" or "affiliated with" the church:

Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts (OCUSA) At the very heart of this university is a desire to be a friend, ally and resource for churches of Christ (www.ocu.edu/churchrelations).

Abilene Christian University was established in 1906 by members of Churches of Christ and has been closely affiliated with this body for nearly a century. The university is committed to biblical principles. Historically we believe these principles were reaffirmed through the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement begun in early 19th century America and expressed today through Churches of Christ. Defining ourselves as a 'movement,' we are constantly in the process of articulating the basic elements of our biblically-based faith for our times—all without the involvement of denominational hierarchy. As an institution of Christian higher education within the movement, we are called to examine how our theological perspectives shape our educational philosophy. We also recognize that the church-related colleges in the Restoration Movement (and ACU in particular in the 20th century) have played a major role in forging our identity as Churches of Christ (www.acu.edu/faith.html)

Pepperdine University is religiously affiliated with the Churches of Christ, of which Mr. Pepperdine, university founder, was a lifelong member. Faculty, administrators and members of the Board of Regents represent many religious backgrounds, and students of all races and faiths are welcomed (www.pepperdine.edu).

Harding University Harding has always been deeply connected with churches of Christ, and we reaffirm this connection (www.harding.edu/about/spiritual_vision).

What do these schools mean by claiming to be church-related, affiliated with, allies of, or connected with churches of Christ? *The Cambridge Dictionary* says *affiliated* means, "connected with, or controlled, by a group or organization." *Merriam-Webster* says it means "closely associated with another typically in a dependent or subordinate position." *Collins Dictionary* says, "If an organization is affiliated with another larger organization, it is officially connected with the larger organization or is a member of it."

Jesus promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), is its foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), the Head over it (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), adds the saved to it (Acts 2:47), and is the Savior of it (Eph. 5:23). Christ's church has no external resources, allies,

or affiliates. The church is the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). He is its Alpha and Omega and neither Christ nor His church need anything outside of Him.

Are colleges, “connected with, or controlled, by a group or organization”—the church? Are they “typically in a dependent or subordinate position” to the church? The New Testament knows nothing of such an arrangement. The church has no dependent or subordinate organizations and it is certainly **not** dependent on, or subordinate to, colleges.

There was a time when colleges understood their places as adjuncts of the home, having neither association nor affiliation with the church. That was clearly stated by David Lipscomb College in the introduction to its 1947 Lectureship Book:

The Christian college is intended to help mothers and fathers bring up their children ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ This includes opposition to digression, to modernism, to premillennialism, to any form of personal ungodliness or impiety, and to any other unscriptural doctrine or practice that may arise in the years to come. No teacher, or other person connected with the institution, has a right to teach, or behave, in such a manner as to undermine the foundation principles upon which the college stands. Lipscomb purposes to continue in the classroom the daily Bible teaching which every child should receive in the home. In no sense does the school propose to supplant the church or to do the work of the church. There is no substitute for the church of our Lord. The relation of the Christian college to the church is the same as the relation of the Christian home to the church. The college strives to be Christian in exactly the same sense that a home or a personal life may be Christian.

Colleges have corrupted and misused the proper noun *Christian*. The Bible says nothing of *Christian* colleges. Nor does it mention a *Christian* restaurant, a *Christian* lumber yard, a *Christian* grocery store, or any other private or public entity called *Christian*. There is no such thing as a Christian **anything**, except a human being. The proper noun, *Christian* is found only three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16), and in none of those does it refer to anything but a follower of Christ.

Secular institutions are not Christians and colleges are secular institutions. It may be reasoned that a college should be called *Christian* because its board, administration, and faculty are all Christians. By that reasoning it could be argued that Smith’s Department Store may be Scripturally called Smith’s *Christian* Department Store if the Smiths and their employees are all Christians. Therefore Smith’s *Christian* Department Store may be advertised as *affiliated with churches of Christ* or *deeply connected with churches of Christ*. If not, why not?

For decades, colleges operated by members of the church have portrayed themselves as associated or affiliated with the church and mainstream churches, their members, preachers, and elders have swallowed that fable, hook, line, and sinker. That error has allowed colleges to “follow the money” and tap an additional source of revenue. Eight decades ago, a battle raged over colleges demanding churches to put them in their budgets and many of them did. It is “no new thing under the sun” that colleges are doing the same today.

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. addressed the so called connection between the church and colleges 80 years ago in *The Bible Banner*. His words could have easily been written yesterday:

In the current controversy among the brethren over the sphere of the school, the college and the church, certain colleges are themselves the aggressors. The controversy will be just as easily stopped as it was started—just let the schools abandon their departures, discontinue their objectionable practices, reform their worldliness, cease to infringe on the divine principle of the independence of the church from all human institutions, and quit imposing on congregations, and all will be well. In short, let the college stay in its place, and let the church alone.

For an example of the aggression mentioned, one of the leaders of the campaign to put the college in the budget of the churches closed an article with the statement that if it is not right to put the college in the budget, then he would join Daniel Sommer and be done with it. In other words, he will have it this way or no way! It is that “this way or no way” spirit that has always driven the wedges, forcing issues upon the brethren, then blaming those in honest opposition to their schemes for resultant dissensions. It was so in the digressive movement that split the church. It has been so in the “Boll movement” which says “we will have our theories.” It is now so in the present controversy with the colleges whose leader and mouthpiece says “we will have the budget or nothing.” In that case the brethren should

see to it that it will be nothing—from the churches. With this announced attitude the colleges can blame no one but themselves for the growing opposition to them, or for any division or alienation that may arise over the discussions.

We are charged with having attacked the colleges, with being anti-college, and withal of an attempt to destroy these institutions. But to the contrary this editor himself attended one in early life, has for several years had his children in them at intervals, and if when his younger children grow up there is yet one of the colleges true to the principles we believe he will likely continue his patronage. Nobody engaged in the present controversy is fighting the college, Neither *The Bible Banner* nor its editor is. *The Firm Foundation* and its editor are not. We are simply opposed to the extremes to which the colleges in question have gone, to their worldliness, to their tendency toward ecclesiastical control, to their doctrinal weakness, and to their general departures. We are not alone in this. Some of the trustees of these institutions admit the things that have been charged, recognize the conditions as they exist and have expressed themselves as desiring to perform the needed reforms. If all those in the high places were of the same mind, and others upon whom they have apparently depended for leadership, were of the same disposition, the institutions could speedily win back the individual confidence and support of that great host of brethren who are now set against their practices.

Since it has been charged that the present writer is creating an issue and his convictions on this question are of recent origin, it will not be considered amiss, perhaps, to reproduce some editorials which appeared in the Gospel Advocate several years ago while the editor of the *Bible Banner* was then editor of the Gospel Advocate. That all may know that no change in positions has been made, and in refutation of such charges as are going around that “thou art mad” and “thou art beside thyself,” and to show that the attitude held now toward the colleges is precisely the same as the attitude held then, the following editorials are resubmitted.

The Church and the School

The subjects of man and education are very intimately related, if not inseparably connected. The interrogation of David, “What is man?” has become the question of the ages and the problem of the sages. But David did not leave it for the worldlywise philosopher, by his own ratiocination, to determine; for he answers: “Know ye that Jehovah, he is God: it is he that hath made us, and we are his.” Man is not the creature of chance or evolution. Made in the image of God, he possesses reason, affection, and conscience. Lifted above the creature of automatic instinct, he is more than a creature; he is a child of God. What, then should his education be? And here, alongside the question “What is man?” is presented another of but little less importance—What is education? The word signifies complete development. It does not consist merely in the art of learning to read and write or to cipher. It is not the acquisition of languages, living or dead. It involves the development of the whole being—body, mind, and soul.

This view of man and his education leads to the subject of the “Bible colleges”—their place and work in the field of education. If education consists merely in the training of the intellect, we need have no concern for the establishment and maintenance of such colleges. But it is the keenly felt need of heart training that has brought the “Bible college” into existence. Education has its degrees; and, grammatically speaking, physical culture is the positive degree, intellectual culture is the comparative degree and moral culture is the superlative degree. Hence the demand for schools that will give emphasis to the moral above every other line of human development. The Bible being the greatest textbook of morals in the universe, it is but a matter of simple reason that it should be prescribed in the course of study by a school seeking to reach the heart, as well as the mind. Because the Bible has thus been adopted by such schools, they have been denominated “Bible colleges,” while in fact, every other branch of learning found in all colleges of arts and sciences is also taught.

But the name “Bible college” has caused so much confusion in the minds of so many that it becomes necessary to discuss the relation of the school and the church. Let us compare the work of the church with the work of the school in seeking to obtain the correct answer to the questions involved. The Bible teaches that the work of the church is two fold. First, missionary, pertaining to the spread of the gospel—the salvation of souls. Hence, the church is called “the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Second, benevolent, pertaining to the care of the poor, orphan, or aged. This is referred to as “pure religion.” The Bible further teaches that the church is all-sufficient to carry out this divine mission without the aid of human machinery. Any organization larger or smaller than

the local congregation is an unscriptural organization through which to do the work of the church, and takes away from it the praise and glory. Therefore, we condemn the missionary society as an auxiliary to the church, a human machine seeking to do the work that God has commanded his church to do. We pronounce it, without further argument here, unscriptural.

What, then, is the “Bible college?” It is an auxiliary indeed, but not to the church. Let us observe in this connection the mission of the home and the duty of parents toward their children. Solomon said: “Train up a child in the way he should go.” Paul said: “Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This is the solemn obligation of the parent and the sacred mission of the home. But when the child reaches a certain school age, when it must pass from the home into the school, does the responsibility of the parent cease? Is it not still the serious duty of the parent to select the school where the influence of the home is continued? In this matter, then, the school simply takes the place of the home and the teacher assumes the responsibility of the parent. So the “Bible college,” or the “Christian college,” or whatever you may please to call it, is no more than auxiliary to the home. It supplements the work of the home. Some who have not made proper discrimination have wrought confusion by associating the “Bible college” with the work of the church. Others have, therefore, opposed it on the ground that it is a “church school,” while others think it is wrong and sinful to teach the Bible in school. Such a conclusion should drive the Bible from our homes also and force the conclusion that it can be taught only in the meeting house on Sunday!

These principles are fundamental. Let us draw the lines clearly. We have pointed out the central thought of the subject—namely, the school as an auxiliary of the home. This being true, it is not the business of the church to run it. The church is not in the school business. The only way the church can Scripturally do its work is through the elders of the local congregation. Appeals made to churches, therefore, in behalf of schools are wrong—fundamentally wrong—wrong in principle. Let the school stand where it belongs, apart from the church, as an aid to, and adjunct of, the home. Let parents and individuals realize their duty and feel their responsibility in the support and maintenance of them, thus making it possible for our children and our neighbors’ children to have the training and influence they so much need and deserve (Editorial, 3).

Dipping into churches’ funds by colleges decades ago still persists and it’s as wrong today as it was then. Modern colleges have no problem begging for funds from church treasuries, but they cannot justify it by authority of the scriptures. One example is Heritage Christian University (HCU) in Florence, Alabama, whose president, Dennis Jones, sent the following letter to churches 15 years ago:

June 13, 2005
Northeast Church of Christ
P. O. Box 267
Elk City, OK 73644-0267

Dear Brethren,

Real World Ministry. That’s what Heritage Christian University is all about. Consider what some of our students, staff, and alumni have done just this year in their ministries in the real world:

- One graduate has knocked every door in the small town he serves...5 times in the past 5 years
- One student has baptized over a dozen inmates in our local jail.
- Some of our students have become foster parents for children in need.
- Another graduate traveled to Asia to offer relief to tsunami victims.
- Two of our campaign workers met a lady who, in a tragic accident, suffered the loss of her three children and sustained a broken back. The HCU student and staff member cleaned her house to pass a HUD inspection and restocked her pantry.
- Our students regularly go to hospitals, to nursing homes, to hospices, and to children’s homes and bring smiles to lonely faces.

As I watch our students and hear from our graduates in the field, I am reminded of James 1:27: ‘Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.’

I see that kind of religion in action daily—sacrificial, loving service.

Besides working to keep themselves and others from being spoiled by the world, our students help the poor and sick, care for the widows and orphans, and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere they go. Pure and undefiled religion! Real service for the real world.

When you support our ministry, you become a part of that. My prayer is that you will choose to become actively involved in helping us fulfill our mission.

Right now, I need your special consideration. Rising fuel prices have led to increased costs on every hand. As a result, our expenses have been higher this year than we expected. We still need to raise \$229,028 to balance the budget before the fiscal year ends June 30.

Will you send \$500.00 now? And will you send it this week? If you can send more, it will be greatly appreciated.

We know that, sometimes, monetary decisions in churches may take a little longer. Please be sure that your gift reaches us before June 30.

Please be generous. Your gift helps to ensure that students are equipped to teach and practice Pure and undefiled religion.

Sincerely,
(Signature)

Dennis Jones, President Heritage Christian University

P.S. We absolutely must balance our budget. June 30 is the deadline. You are the key to our success.

HCU's letter is an example of the college usurping the function of the church. No college can Scripturally do that—even by calling its work a “ministry.” While the good works done by students, faculty, and staff are worthy ones, can “pure and undefiled religion” not be practiced without this school? Where were the colleges when James wrote his epistle describing pure and undefiled religion? Is it the college's place to teach Christians to “keep himself unspotted from the world,” to help the poor, sick, widows and orphans, and to “teach the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere they go?” Where was the college that taught the dispersed disciples from Jerusalem to go “everywhere preaching the word?” (Acts 8:4). It is not the “mission” of Heritage Christian University, nor any other so-called “Christian” school to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That is the exclusive province of the church, and it is a misrepresentation for President Jones to ask for funds to “support our ministry” and help “us fulfill our mission.” There is only **one ministry** known in the New Testament and it was never given to a college.

Upon what Scriptural authority do President Jones and the HCU trustees base their plea for alms from church treasuries? Even a cursory glance at this letter indicates that HCU makes its plea based upon doing what God gave the church to do. It is **not** the function of the college to train workers in the vineyard of the Lord. That is the function of the church. The college is neither associated with, affiliated with, owned by, operated by, an adjunct of, connected with, nor a part of the blood bought church of Christ. Colleges have a right to exist, but they do **not** have Biblical authority to inject themselves into the work of the church, usurp its mission, or supplant it in any fashion. To do so is to create an entity foreign to the New Testament—something Abilene Christian University (ACU) is doing by what it calls, “forging our identity as churches of Christ” on its website:

Colleges “have played a major role”—and **are** playing a major role—in the emergence of a new denomination from within mainstream churches of Christ. That is admitted in the above statement: “... church-related colleges in the Restoration Movement (and ACU in particular in the 20th century) have played a major role in **forging our identity as Churches of Christ.**”

Bethany College and J.A. Randolph's former Add-Ran College at Thorp Spring, Texas—now Texas Christian University—are today in the hands of The Disciples of Christ denomination. The identity of the church that colleges have forged is **not** its identity revealed in Holy Writ. Theirs more closely resembles Jereboam's golden calves at Dan and Bethel than it does the church that Jesus built.

In the last five or six decades, colleges have propagandized mainstream churches to such an degree that they are now regarded as adjuncts of the church. Seemingly innocent things like mission work carried on by colleges, as Oklahoma Christian University (OCU) does, has helped in “forging our identity as Churches of Christ.” From OCU's website comes this:

Summer mission work is a widespread opportunity for OC students. From a mission trip to Australia with OC Missionary in Residence Kent Hartman to a summer with Associate Professor of Youth Ministry Dudley Chancey in Honduras, around 20 different groups participate in summer missions.

“Wonderful,” says one who wouldn’t know if Jesus Christ died on Calvary or was shot at First Manassas, “they’re doing mission work. Why do you oppose that”?

For a most Biblical reason. No human organization was ever charged by the Lord to, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The Great Commission given to the apostles and, consequently, to the church. By what Scriptural authority does any college—a human organization—do the work of the church? There is none.

Who oversees, and is responsible for, the “mission work” of Oklahoma Christian University? Elders oversee the church and its work, which includes domestic and foreign evangelism, called “mission work.” Elders have no oversight of any college, nor should they. Their work as shepherds of the church is spiritual. Neither should any college do the work of the church. What OCU—a secular institution—has done usurps the mission Christ gave His church. This is one of the many ways that colleges are “forging our identity as Churches of Christ” and is another impetus for mainstream churches to become another denomination. But that is “no new thing.” An identity foreign to the New Testament was forged for churches of Christ in the 19th century that resulted in the emergence of the Christian Church denomination from among them.

The historical path of the restoration movement in this country is strewn with the wreckage of colleges that began with high hopes and purposes, but eventually became evil influences in the church. One example is Texas Christian University (TCU) in Ft. Worth which was established by Christians, but is now a Disciples of Christ college. TCU began at Thorp Spring, Texas as Add Ran College in 1873. It was established by J.A. Clark and his two sons, Addison and Randolph Clark, for whom the college was named, all of whom had been faithful gospel preachers in Fort Worth for a number of years. In 1877, Add Ran financially collapsed, but was resurrected shortly afterward. In 1890, it became Add Ran University, and by 1893 Addison and Randolph Clark broke with their father over the use of a mechanical instrument in worship.

For sometime the restoration movement in Texas had been threatened with division. The school at Thorp Spring became the location for one of the first open breaks between the churches of Christ and the Disciples. In the fall of 1893 the issue was brought to the front by the introduction of an organ into the worship during a revival meeting in the college chapel. J.A. Clark and ‘two thirds of the congregation’ arose and walked out when the instrument was used (‘The B.B. Sanders Meeting,’ *Firm Foundation*, April 10, 1894). The organ continued to be used and those who objected were forced to meet elsewhere. From that time the university became recognized as a Disciples school...after trying times the school was finally located in Fort Worth. There it developed into Texas Christian University sponsored by the Disciples of Christ (Young, 72).

A fuller account of the division caused by the organ was given by Don Morris in 1973:

The instrument was first in congregations in Dallas, San Marcos, Waco, Lancaster, Palestine and other places...But the place at which the introduction of the organ received most attention was, without doubt, Thorp Spring, in Add-Ran College. The occasion was a gospel meeting in February, 1894. The speaker was B. B. Sanders, and the song director, E. M. Douthitt. These two often worked as a team and were known to use the instrument in worship. Before the meeting began, there was much discussion—on and off the campus of Add-Ran—about whether the organ would be used. As the meeting began, a crisis at Add-Ran was developing. It proved to affect the church throughout the state. On February 20, 1894, the climax was reached. Before the service began, Joseph Addison Clark—the father and pioneer—and his wife took seats at the front of the auditorium. Their son Addison Clark, the president, arose to begin the service. Joseph Addison Clark arose, walked toward the pulpit, took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to his son. It was a petition. The petition was signed by the elder Clark and more than a hundred others, who asked that the organ not be used, on the ground that it was not authorized in the New Testament. Addison read the petition, conferred briefly with his brother Randolph, and then announced that he had promised the students that the organ could be used in the meeting and that he could not go back on his word. He turned to the organist and said, ‘Play on, Miss Bertha.’ As the organ and singing started, Joseph Addison arose with his wife and led the opposition out of the auditorium. He was a gray bearded man, seventy-eight years old, with a cane. About

140 people, according to Randolph's son Joseph Lynn, followed the elderly Clark out of the building. Many in the remaining congregation wept. My father, who was a student that year, was present, and he told me many times about Uncle Joe Clark—how he appealed to the audience not to use the organ and how he led the group out of the auditorium (Morris, 86, 87).

A strange identity of the church was forged in its work by the establishment of the Missionary Society in 1849. H. Leo Boles made that clear to Christian Church representatives in his address at a unity meeting between churches of Christ and the Christian Church in Indianapolis, May 3, 1939:

It will be admitted by all that the Missionary Society was thus the first departure from the original grounds of the New Testament teaching as set forth by the pioneers when they united; those who made the departure were responsible for the division on this point. The 'Christian Church' departed from the ground of unity and attempted to justify its course in the organization of the Missionary Society.

The colleges' unauthorized incursions into the foreign evangelistic work of the church is parallel to the rise of the American Christian Missionary Society. When it was established in 1849, its first president was the founder of Bethany College, Alexander Campbell.

Though not called by that term, the American Christian Missionary Society had been ruminating in Campbell's mind since he first wrote of cooperative efforts in 1831. Ten years later, the idea had been formed and he concluded that some sort of organization was necessary for the church to convert the world. His rationale for a brotherhood wide organization to evangelize the world came from his view of the church in the universal sense—a view held by the Roman and Protestant churches.

More than 20 years ago, the mainstream church in Cleveland, Oklahoma fired its preacher when he rightly opposed that church contributing to an elder's granddaughter—a student at Oklahoma Christian—who planned a "mission trip" under the auspices of the college. Those are the kinds of elders who oversee mainstream churches of Christ. They have no concept of the church or its mission and are willing to allow colleges be their missionary societies.

Things have changed little in the last two centuries. The historical road that churches of Christ have traversed on the North American continent over the last 150 years is littered with the wreckage of apostate churches who were ruined by the influence of colleges. Begun with high and noble purposes, those schools became forums for the propagation of doctrinal error, ironically aided and abetted by the very churches they destroyed. Nothing has changed.

When churches consider schools as works of the church or their allies, they launch into a stormy voyage that will eventually dash them to pieces upon rocky reefs of error. Schools are adjuncts of the home, first, last, and always. They are neither the church, a part of it, an adjunct of it, affiliated with it, associated with it, nor a work of it.

But now one modern university is "forging" **another** evil in mainstream churches of Christ.....

EDITOR'S NOTE: Reprinted from the "The Thing That Hath Been...", The Cycle of Apostasy Vol. 2.

"Straddling a Fence is Dangerous, Especially if it's a Barbed Wire Fence of Doctrinal Error"

Jerry C. Brewer

Earl West said the wave of liberalism that swept away churches from the mid-1800s until 1880 was "a period of intense trial" during which **fellowship** became the central issue. There is nothing new under the sun. The church has been going through another "period of intense trial" since the early 21st century, and the **central issue** of that time is characterized by the same one from about 1850 until 1880—**fellowship**.

Men arrayed themselves up on the various issues, but the question that now forced its way to the front demanding serious attention was that of fellowship. Many had taken the position that the use of the instrument and the missionary society were wrong, unscriptural and sinful. But, it became evident by 1880 that many churches were going to use the instrument and support the missionary society anyway. ...Whereas one group insisted the instrument was wrong, the other insisted it could be used. Could fellowship remain?

The question forced its way upon the church. There were those who had formerly strictly opposed instrumental music whose opposition subsided. J.B. Briney had stood vigorously behind the opposition to the instrument, but now wavered. So did Joseph Franklin, son of Ben Franklin. What happened with these more prominent leaders happened to many less known. Others remained loyal to old convictions. If instrumental music were sinful, there could be no fellowship with it, and ten million churches using it would not make it any more right than it had ever been (West, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. 2, p. 163).

The **central issue** within churches of Christ today is **fellowship**. It is generally maintained by neo-mainstream churches and their preachers that one may have scruples against what are clearly unscriptural practices and doctrines, but **continue to fellowship** those who preach, practice, and adopt them. That philosophy was expressed by one preacher who said, “I have friends on both sides of the issue.” Straddling the fence is very dangerous, especially if it is a barbed wire fence of doctrinal error. Fence straddlers are modern Jehoiakims:

Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words (Jer. 36:22-24).

Those modern Jehoiakims have presumptuously excised 1 John 1:5-7 and 2 John 9-11 from the New Testament and stand spiritually naked before God and do not care.

Brethren began defending Dave Miller when he refused to repent after he changed the Scriptures regarding the qualifications of elders. His followers were obsessed with saving *Apologetics Press* (AP) in the face of Miller's blatant false doctrines—the false practices of re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders and marriage intent. In the vanguard of that effort to save AP—in spite of what Dave Miller had taught—was the late Curtis Cates who saved Alabama money that came into the coffers of the Memphis School of Preaching. With a constant flow of cash, Cates and Frank Chesser, the directors of *The Gospel Journal*, a consortium of schools of preaching like Southwest, Brown Trail, Bear Valley, prestigious lectureships like Affirming the Faith, Polishing the Pulpit, Southwest, Schertz, Lubbock, Spiritual Sword, et al, flexed their power to control millions of dollars and thousands of members to crush the faithful. Such power concentrated in “mainline churches of Christ” was extremely attractive by hiring preachers who want job security—regardless of what God's word says. Dave Miller's false doctrines can be ignored by preachers (young and old) when it comes to salary. If the money is good those preachers can preach that the world is flat every week.

The following came from Don Smith, who is the son-in-law of Howard Fawcett. Brother Fawcett was one of the elders at Portland, Texas, until the other two elders decided to “straddle a barbed wire fence” and bring Portland into the “mainstream Churches of Christ”—despite what 2 John 9-11 says about fellowship. The below report explains what happened at Portland after the truth was taught there by brother Smith.

At a preacher's luncheon, Larry DeLong presented a lesson on fellowship in which he held the position that if a person preaches on a lectureship or any other program where there is a known and marked false teacher, that person is not in fellowship with the false teacher—all the preacher is doing is giving his lesson and leaving. He believes it is up to the director to vet the participants, not himself. I questioned him on this to make sure I heard him correctly, and then I had some opposing thoughts, but I didn't have much of an opportunity to express them, as everyone seemed to have something to say, and there was no order about it. I think most of the men in that luncheon opposed his ideas, but he did have one man who agreed with him—David Vestal, the son of Mike Vestal (I later learned this was not so surprising).

The luncheon was on a Monday, and the following Wednesday is the day I gave my controversial lesson on the authority of the eldership. However, also included in that lesson was my opposition to Larry's lesson on fellowship, wherein I laid it out that those who speak on programs together, and do not address the errors of one who is speaking and is a false teacher, are working toward the common goal of that program together with that false teacher, in joint participation, and are thereby in fellowship with them. Then I gave the invitation for all to come forward who find themselves in these sins, and Larry never spoke to me again. By the way, Howard was not at that luncheon, but when I told him about it, he

was very angry about it—righteous indignation of course.

Larry also put an article by Mike Vestal in the next Wednesday's bulletin, which Howard pulled him to the side and told him not to do that anymore, as Portland has no dealings with him (Email April 7, 2023).

Brother Fawcett concurred with brother Smith relating the incident which occurred in Sept., 2022.

Dear brother Jerry,

...I believe the Preacher Luncheon was the one in September last year (2022, Ed.). I was not able to be there as I was in the midst of fall cattle work.

As much as I can recall, the topic was not announced prior to the Luncheon (which some times occurs). If I had known the topic was going to be Fellowship, I would have been there for it. It was Wednesday after, when I asked Don how the Luncheon went and was discussed, when it was made known to me what the topic was and what Larry said.

It perturbed me that he said that. Had I been present, I would have stood against that. The preacher questionnaire which Portland has sent out (since 2016) to preachers who have been invited to speak at Portland has the following question: (Larry also filled out this questionnaire before we hired him).

Question #13 reads: "As a gospel preacher, you are charged with the duties to preach the word at all times under all circumstances; to reprove, rebuke and to exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

"Do you believe the New Testament teaches there are limits to with whom we may fellowship? (2 John 9-11).

"What do you believe and teach regarding fellowship with denominational churches?

"Please explain why or why not you would think it permissible to be part of community ministerial alliance with denominational preachers?

"Do you consider it right to participate on campaigns and gospel meetings with those who have been marked as false teachers or liberal congregations? Please explain why or why not you would do so."

I no longer have access to his questionnaire to recall his exact answer, but I know if he had answered that it was ok to do so in regard to the highlighted question, it would have been a deal breaker on his hiring for me.

Prior to our gospel meeting with Lee Moses, Larry used an article by Mike Vestal about the importance and value of a gospel meeting. Once again, I was distressed to see an article by someone tied to Bear Valley in our bulletin who has fellowshipped false brethren, i.e. Dave Miller. The eldership (at least then) has stood opposed to Bear Valley and its liberalism. Larry knew that. He said he used it because it was a good article (it was) and I told Larry, he could have written an article just as good. I also told him we did not want to give any appearance that we approved Mike Vestal because of his ties to Bear Valley. He was not someone we would consider to come and speak at Portland, so do not do so again.

I did not "put it out there" in a public way that he might not have a job for long. I did tell Don that and maybe a fellow elder. Certainly, in my own opinion, and mind, things were heading in that direction, it was not one thing but an accumulation of things bringing it about.

This is all I can really speak to, because so much has happened since last September, 2022, I would not trust my memory to recall exactly all that occurred. I made my decision to step down and leave Portland, and have moved on, still striving to do the work God gave us to do.

I know the battle regarding fellowship still continues and I strive to stand where the Bible stands.

In His Service,
Howard (Email, July 30, 2023)

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Mainstream churches of Christ, elders, preachers, and members" unilaterally have decided that they may fellowship anyone they desire, while they ignore the fellowship "wall" that the Lord built (2 John 9-11). They will have a surprise on Judgment Day when Christ says, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). Read on and heed...

Does the Bible Teach the Principle of Guilt by Association?

Dub McClish

Introduction

Is it valid for voters to question candidates for the office of President of the United States about their close associates? In the 2008 presidential campaign this question came to the fore, especially concerning Barack Obama. His twenty-year membership in the extreme racist and anti-American Jeremiah Wright's Chicago church and his defense of Wright have raised the *guilt-by-association* issue. Additionally, Obama's continued close and amicable relationship with William Ayers, the impenitent early-1970s radical Weather Underground Organization terrorist, further fueled the *guilt-by-association* charge. Political conservatives argue that such associations are reliable indicators of one's convictions and direction. Predictably, liberal politicians have jumped to Obama's defense, denying the viability of the *guilt-by-association* principle.

Is there such a thing as "guilt by association"? Some brethren have for years answered with a firm "No," denying any Scriptural basis for it and classifying it as unfair, prejudicial, and unjustified. Others have just as boldly and staunchly replied, "Yes," arguing that the Scriptures teach the principle, both explicitly and implicitly. Let us define the terms of the disputed principle:

- Guilt: A noun indicating accountability or responsibility for an offense, blameworthiness for wrongdoing, or error in morals, doctrine, or practice.
- By: A preposition indicating the means through which an action, state, or situation occurs.
- Association: A noun indicating a relationship between two or more persons or entities.

Given the foregoing definitions, is one to be held accountable for the sins/errors of his associates? Does one incur *guilt by association*?

Various Usages of Guilt by Association

Guilt by association is the name of a logical fallacy by which one attempts to discredit a doctrine or practice by associating it with one who is in disfavor. To argue that fellowship with denominational churches is sinful because Max Lucado engages in such fellowship demonstrates this fallacy. Another illustration of this fallacy would be the assertion that the use of instruments of music in worship is sinful because the apostate North Richland Hills Church of Christ near Fort Worth, Texas, employs them. The practices in both cases are sinful, but not because of who is associated with them. They are wrong because the Bible forbids and/or does not authorize them, either implicitly or explicitly. Our examination of "guilt-by-association" does not pertain to this logical fallacy.

Another facet of "guilt-by-association" is that wherein one actually may be led to commit a sin or embrace an error through the influence of his associates. Paul referred to this danger concerning the incestuous brother whom the Corinthian church was tolerating among them. He commanded them to purge him from their fellowship, stating the principle, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). He stated it again in the same letter: "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (15:33). While multitudes over the centuries have been led to engage in evil and/or erroneous behavior through the influence of their companions, this is not the "guilt-by-association" with which we are concerned in this study.

The guilt-by-association, which is the focal point of this essay, is that which may or may not be incurred merely as a result of one's favorable association with one who is in error or sin. Does one, though not personally engaging in the sinful practices or holding the errors of his associates, share in the guilt of said sinners by extending fellowship and encouragement to or by defending or endorsing such persons?

Mere Association Does Not Necessarily Imply Endorsement

It is abundantly clear from our Lord's behavior that association alone does not imply agreement with or endorsement of one's associates. He ate with and otherwise associated with sinners (e.g., Mat. 9:10–13; Luke 15:1; John 4:4–42), but such associations never involved Him in their sins or errors (Heb. 4:15). Paul consistently preached in the synagogues (e.g., Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; et al.), not in order to endorse the Jews' doctrine and practice, but to refute, correct,

and convert. None can fairly accuse him of associating with the Jews in these cases in such a way as to be guilty of their errors.

Associations with Those Who Are Not Christians

We cannot avoid all “association” with sinners, including those who are guilty of immorality, theft, religious error, or other sins, without literally becoming hermits. We come in contact with such folk as we work, shop, travel, attend school, and eat in public places, with no means of even knowing of their sins. Paul stated the simple and obvious fact that to avoid “keeping company” with all such would require us to “go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:9–10). Again, we see from the above that merely being in the company of those of the world does not imply complicity with their sins. (However, this fact in no way justifies a Christian to choose 3 people of worldly thinking and behavior as his or her closest friends and companions, as already noted [1 Cor. 15:33].)

One’s Associations with Brethren in One’s Local Congregation

Paul forbade God’s people to “keep company” with impenitent brethren (including eating with them): “But as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named **a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11, *emph. DM*).

Paul gave this order, at least in part, to prevent any hint of further encouragement or endorsement of the brother’s sin, which encouragement had formerly characterized the Corinthian saints (vv. 2–6). The Scriptural proscription of association with the sinful brother is not absolute, however. Concerning those from whom the church must withdraw its fellowship, Paul instructed the Thessalonian church:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.... And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy but **admonish** him as a **brother** (2 The. 3:6, 14–15, *emph. DM*).

The prescribed treatment of the sinful person in verse 15 implies at least some communication, if not association, in order to admonish (i.e., to warn or encourage) the erring brother or sister to repent. From the foregoing material, it is clear that the mere act of association with one in sin, in and of itself, does not cause the innocent party in the association to incur guilt.

Associations with Those Outside of One’s Local Congregation

May one attend a religious assembly to hear for oneself a false teacher (whether or not he is a brother), so that he can perhaps learn better the way to expose and refute his errors? In 1961, two other brethren and I attended an Oral Roberts “Crusade” in Wichita Falls, Texas, specifically to observe and hear this reprobate so that we might better oppose his errors. Several years ago, I attended a “Good Friday” service in the building of the First Baptist Church, sponsored by the local Ministerial Alliance in Denton, Texas. I specifically wanted to observe the actions and words of Don Browning (preacher for the liberal Singing Oaks Church of Christ in our city), who was a member of the Ministerial Alliance and was one of the speakers (along 4 with men from six “other” local denominations) for the occasion. (I later exposed his participation in an article that appeared in the Pearl Street congregation’s bulletin, *The Edifier*.)

May a preacher accept an invitation to preach in a Gospel meeting or lectureship **in order to** confront error in the congregation or in one or more of the speakers? Let us remember that, in principle, both the Lord and Paul did this very thing, as earlier noted. (If one denies that one can do so without engaging in fellowship with error, one must oppose the participation of faithful brethren in religious debates.) Does one sin who speaks on a lectureship with one who is a false teacher or who may be a fornicator or a crook without correcting or exposing him, not **knowing he was such**? (In May 2005, I was one of several brethren who spoke on the Gulf Coast Lectures in Portland, Texas, with brother Joseph Meador. It was subsequently revealed that he was **at that time** engaged in an adulterous relationship with another man’s wife). Although there was “association” with those in sin or error in each of the aforementioned cases, there certainly was no participation in said errors or sins.

The Scriptural Principle of Guilt by Association

While we may engage in associations with those in error and sin without becoming culpable

with them (as demonstrated above), the Bible nonetheless emphatically sets forth the principle of *guilt by association* in certain circumstances. By this I mean that one may become guilty of the sin or error of his associates, even without personally teaching or practicing those errors. As we shall see, the determining factor is one's association with and approving behavior toward those in sin or error, **while fully conscious of their errors**. Don Browning, mentioned above, well illustrates this circumstance. He consciously, knowingly participated with denominational heretics in such a way as to endorse and encourage them. He reinforced their contentment in their doctrinal and practical errors. **He thereby became a partaker** in their errors and sins. One becomes culpable in such cases because he is an accessory, accomplice, collaborator, and abettor to the one in error and to his sin or error. Criminal law has long acknowledged this principle because it is both logical and just to do so. On this basis the driver of the get-away car is as guilty of a crime as is his partner who robs the bank and shoots a teller in the process.

Numbers 16:26

Numbers 16 records the insurrection Korah, Dathan, and Abiram led against the authority of Moses, God's authorized spokesman and lawgiver. In response to their challenge, 5 Moses warned those still associated with them: "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (v. 26). Those who continued their association with these rebels would be subject to the judgments against them because such association implied concurrence in their rebellion. Even if some of the associates of these insurrectionists had not personally cried out against Moses, it is clear that to remain amicably associated with them would have made them partakers in the guilt and consequent punishment of the rebels.

Ephesians 5:6–11

In Ephesians 5:6, Paul wrote of the "sons of disobedience" upon whom God's wrath would be administered. He then warned: "Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (v. 7). He further warned: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (v. 11). To have fellowship with such persons would cause those so doing to partake of their guilt and the judgment against their sins. Such fellowship, with no rebuke of the sins, would result in their guilt by association on two counts: (1) Fellowship with (i.e., partaking in) their errors and (2) failure to rebuke the one in error.

2 John 9–11

John declared the reality of guilt by association explicitly:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works (2 John 9–11).

In recent years, liberals, clamoring to embrace advocates of almost every stripe of error in their fellowship, have conveniently redefined *the teaching of Christ* in the foregoing passage to mean the teaching **about** Christ (i.e., His Deity). However, respect for both the immediate and remote contexts of this passage demand its reference to the doctrine Christ both taught and inspired/authorized others to teach—the entire corpus of New Testament doctrine.

Giveth him greeting (biddeth him God speed, KJV) is from a word that means to rejoice with or wish one well. Thus one who encourages the teacher of doctrines contrary to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), becomes culpable for his errors. The encourager of the sinner becomes guilty of his or her sins. An association/relationship that encourages or implies endorsement of a heretic renders one complicit in heresy. If no other 6 passage relative to this subject existed, this one is quite sufficient to make the case. The honest exegete cannot escape the conclusion that one who **willingly, knowingly, consciously** associates with individuals, congregations, or institutions so as, whether implicitly or explicitly, to encourage, endorse, or otherwise bid them Godspeed is guilty of the error himself by said amicable association.

Some Practical Applications of the Principle Congregational Situations

- A family moves to a new location in a job change. They find a congregation that outwardly seems to be faithful and place membership. After a few months, they discover that it provides financial support for brother Dave Miller, whom they know to be a false teacher. Yet this family

says nothing to the elders about their concerns, presents no evidence of his errors to them, and continues to contribute money, time, and efforts to the congregation. This family is guilty by association.

- A congregation Scripturally withdraws from a brother for divisive behavior, but two members refuse to honor the withdrawal, continuing to associate with him so as to defend him and approve of his sin. They are guilty by association with him, and if they will not repent, they likewise should be withdrawn from.
- A brother receives an invitation to preach in a Gospel meeting where the preacher is a known impenitent fornicator/adulterer. The invited preacher does not hesitate to accept the invitation, making no attempt to restore the sinful brother either before he goes or while he is there. **The visiting preacher thereby becomes guilty by such association.**
- An employee of Apologetics Press is invited to deliver a series of lectures on apologetics and evidences in a congregation with which he is not familiar (although one could easily familiarize oneself with any congregation in advance). He learns upon arrival that the church is very liberal in doctrine and practice. He delivers his planned lessons without any discussion with the elders or preacher of their liberalism and without any other attempt to expose or correct the church's errors. **He is guilty by association.**
- A preacher is invited to preach in a Gospel meeting, and faithful brethren in the same city, learning about the meeting, warn him months in advance and provide dozens of pages of evidence of the church's digression. Said preacher ignores the warning and chooses not to read any of the documents faithful brethren sent him. He not only preaches in the meeting, but he publicly praises the elders and the preacher, bids them Godspeed, and accepts their accusations against the faithful brethren who issued the warnings. **He makes himself guilty of the errors of the liberal church by his encouragement of their errors.**

Brotherhood Situations

- Abilene Christian University invites a preacher generally known for his soundness in the faith to speak on its annual lectureship on some non-doctrinal subject. Faithful brethren beg him not to lend his influence to the school's apostasy and point out that the school is exploiting him as a "token conservative." Faithful brethren also point out that some immature brethren will interpret his participation as endorsement of the school. He insists on accepting the invitation on the premise that he "can preach the Gospel anywhere." He speaks on the subject assigned and does not expose any of the heresies of the faculty and administration. **He becomes guilty by association in his implied endorsement of those involved in grievous error.**
- A brother is invited to speak on the Lake Tahoe Family Encampment. Knowledgeable brethren warn him that the program is stacked with liberals and that its director has long been involved in liberalism. The brother ignores the warnings, accepts the invitation, and speaks the Truth on his assigned topic, but he says not a word about the pervasive liberalism. In fact, he accepts an invitation to return the next year. **He is guilty by such association.**
- A brother is invited to speak on the Spiritual Sword Lectures, the Truth in Love Lectures, and the "Polishing the Pulpit" program, knowing that a well-documented impenitent false teacher and encourager of liberals will also be speaking, and he accepts the invitation in spite of these facts. He preaches the Truth on his topic, shakes hands with and cordially greets the erring brother, sits down and eats with him, and never raises an objection to his errors, publicly or privately. Said speaker makes himself guilty by this kind of association.
- The director of a school of preaching receives an invitation to speak on the Annual Schertz Lectures, Schertz, Texas, knowing that the local preacher has publicly taught gross error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage and that the Schertz congregation has been marked by a faithful congregation for continuing to support its preacher. Said director attends, delivers his speech, never raises any question about the preacher's error, but instead publicly praises and bids Godspeed to the errant Schertz preacher. **Based on 2 John 10–11, the director participates in the guilt of the preacher.**
- A brother has in years past publicly opposed the elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation program as advocated and practiced by brother Dave Miller. With brother Miller's appointment as Executive Director of Apologetics Press (AP), this brother, a dedicated supporter of AP, faces a dilemma. Determined to continue said support, he first suggests that he is supporting only AP,

not its head or any errors of which he may be guilty. However, he soon realizes the folly of this excuse. He knows if he continues to oppose Miller's errors, he cannot support the institution of which he is the head. Likewise, he understands that if he continues to support AP he must cease his opposition to its director. He resolves his dilemma by continuing to support AP, by beginning to defend and endorse Miller, and by claiming to continue to oppose elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation "as the liberals practice it." **He has become implicitly guilty of brother Miller's errors, not to mention of flagrant hypocrisy, by such behavior.**

- A brother is invited to preach in a Gospel meeting at the Phillips Street congregation in Dyersburg, Tennessee, home of Online Academy of Bible Studies (OABS). He accepts, knowing that OABS abruptly broke its contract with the Spring, Texas, congregation to broadcast all of its 2006 lectureship (including its Open Forum) via the Internet because the director of OABS apparently feared the lectureship would expose the errors of certain 8 brethren reputed to be "somewhat" (Gal. 2:6). The invited preacher also knew that OABS unhesitatingly fulfilled its contract to broadcast the entire Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) Lectureship (including its Open Forum) only a few weeks after the Spring Lectureship. He further knew that OABS continued to broadcast the morning worship periods of the Forest Hill congregation, home of MSOP. He preached in the meeting at Dyersburg, thereby giving his endorsement to OABS's squelching of the truth about grave brotherhood fellowship issues and its continued encouragement of those who were/are violating God's law concerning fellowship. **Said preacher was guilty by such association, according to 2 John 10–11.**

- A preacher conducts a TV program, and brethren who operate the Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN) invite him to air his program on their network. This preacher has rightly been opposed to the elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation program and marriage error relating to "intent" as taught by brother Dave Miller. He knows that GBN fellowships, defends, and uses brother Miller in its programming. He joins with GBN and allows his program to become part of its broadcast schedule. Regardless of his claims to the contrary and in spite of his disavowal of the Miller errors, **he incurs guilt by such association.**

Conclusion

All of the above situations reflect specific real occurrences. Every one of them involves and demonstrates "guilt-by-association" as defined and described in 2 John 10–11. We had an expression in central Texas where, in some of my childhood years, my family raised goats: "You can't run with the goats without smelling like them." This earthy expression is not far from the principle John enunciated.

Tragically, many, if not most, of these men who are blatantly involved in "guilt by association" are seasoned men who know better. They are men who for years preached and practiced the Truth found in such passages as Ephesians 5:6–11 and 2 John 9–11. They would doubtless consistently and correctly apply these fellowship principles had Mac Deaver, Jeff Walling, or Rubel Shelly been appointed Executive Director of AP. However, by some means brother Dave Miller seems to have them almost hypnotically in his thrall. A large number of brethren who know better refuse to call him to account for his errors, continuing to embrace him. In the minds of these brethren he **has done** no wrong, **is doing** no wrong, and perhaps, in their contorted view of matters, **can never** do any wrong. They bow before him almost as an idol and are quick to excoriate any who dare call attention to his errors and their encouragement of him.

So far as I know, these brethren who refuse to **practice** what the Bible teaches concerning fellowship still **orally teach** the Truth on the subject. However, I remind them one and all that what we are teaching by our practice is far more powerful than the mere words we utter. The adage is old, but true: "Actions speak louder than words." Brethren who continue to teach the Truth orally concerning fellowship, but refuse to honor that teaching with their behavior, are, plainly put, hypocrites.

For years, liberals in the church have defended those who hobnob with them (when we have rightly accused such hobnobbers of liberalism) by vociferously denying the existence of guilt by association. They have spoken of this Biblical principle with the utmost contempt, barely able to spit the words out they so despised them. Will those who have set out on this latest "unity in diversity" gambit now join these liberals in denying the Biblical affirmation of *guilt by association*? Have they not already done so in deed, if not in word? According to 2 John 9–11, those who engage in this practice will be just as lost and Hell will be just as hot for them as if

they had actually preached and/or practiced the errors of the purveyors of error they have endorsed and are endorsing.

Learning A Lesson From History, No. 1

Earl West

In October, 1849, the American Christian Missionary Society was established in the city of Cincinnati. Alexander Campbell, through the pages of the *Millennial Harbinger*, had, for more than a decade, been laying the groundwork for this organization. He was not present for the 1849 meeting for the reason he suggested, of sickness. Nevertheless, in his absence he was elected president, which position he held until his death in 1866. The last time Campbell was ever present for a convention meeting was in 1862. In his last years, he was too feeble to play any part in the general work of the society.

From its beginning, the missionary society never has been widely accepted among the brethren. There can be no question but that in the first decade after its origin, the society was not widely acclaimed. This fact is sustained not merely by the objections raised to it by its opponents, but more effectively by the fact that the churches simply refused to support the society. The Churches of Christ, in the passing of years, rejected the society. The so-called *Christian Churches*, who have had some devotion to it, have found it to be a boiling cauldron; its existence has been stormy, to say the least.

Twice in the history of society, special efforts had to be made to save it from complete disintegration. During The War Between the States, it was made up entirely of Northern sympathizers. On two or three different occasions, it passed resolutions of a political nature which sympathized with the North. Consequently, when the war ended in 1865, it was at a very low ebb of popularity in the church. Its strongest supporters called upon W. K. Pendleton, son-in-law of Alexander Campbell, to deliver a speech in its defense before the convention. Pendleton saved the society with that speech.

Again in the year 1874, the society was ready to collapse. The Louisville Plan, which had been enacted in 1869, was thought to be the best scheme for uniting the brotherhood behind it; but this plan failed to unite many churches. For a period of a few months, it did appease Ben Franklin, editor of the *American Christian Review*. By 1874, however, something had to be done, and W.K. Pendleton was again called upon to deliver another speech to revitalize the society effort. If Alexander Campbell can be looked upon as the founder of the society, W.K. Pendleton can be regarded as its savior.

In W.K. Pendleton's speech of 1866, the student of restoration history finds the real gist of all society arguments. Many arguments before that day and since have been presented whereby the society was defended. But, in reality, all of them draw their light from Pendleton's speech. Pendleton said, in sum substance, everything in the society's defense that had been said before or has been said since. Some have elucidated more on some parts of his speech, but, as far as the substance is concerned, there is little new to be found. It will be of interest here to notice some of the chief features of Pendleton's defense before going to the core of his major arguments.

First of all, it was suggested by the opponents of the society that "we are departing from original ground." Society advocates were told that their society was unknown to the earlier restoration movement, and that Alexander Campbell had written against it in the *Christian Baptist*. Pendleton's answer to this assertion was simply a charge that the opponents of the society were following human opinion. Suppose the early pioneers did have an opinion that it was wrong to support a society; that should not be binding upon them. This was contrary to the very genius of the restoration movement. This, in sum substance, was what Pendleton said concerning the charge that the brethren were departing from the original ground.

The second line of argument ran, "Your missionary society is not scriptural." The society's opponents argued that there was no such precept in the scripture which commanded it. But Pendleton answered,

You say, 'Your Missionary Society is not scriptural'—and you mean by this, that there is no special express precept in the Scriptures commanding it. We concede this without a mo-

ment's hesitation. There is none; but what do you make of it? Is everything which is not scriptural, therefore wrong?

Thus Pendleton admitted that the scripture was silent about the society, but this, itself, was not argument against its existence. Speaking about the opponent of the society, Pendleton proceeded to say,

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? You reply, the canon which forbids anything as a rule of Christian faith or duty, for which there cannot be expressly produced a Thus saith the Lord, 'either in express terms or by approved precedent.

Here, of course, Pendleton had to elaborate a little more. Thomas Campbell had said, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." It can be safely said that the majority of the brotherhood had interpreted that motto to mean that whatever is unauthorized is forbidden; but Pendleton argued this interpretation down. He positively affirmed that Thomas Campbell never meant any such idea. He cited the fact that Campbell, in establishing the Christian Association of Washington, surely had sense enough to know that such an association was not found in the scripture. Pendleton also affirmed that this association was a human organization with an executive board, secretary, and treasurer. Then he said, "Now it was this organization, which in the very act of forming itself, announced the canon! Did they mean to condemn themselves? Were they simpletons or hypocrites?"

This argument was very telling at that time. Robert Richardson had not yet written his *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, but, later on, when reviewing that early period, Richardson well explains that Thomas Campbell himself did not have a full conception of everything involved in the premises which he uttered. For example, Campbell still believed in infant baptism when he made the announcement of that premise. Actually, Campbell was neither a simpleton nor a hypocrite; as Richardson later explained, he merely knew that something needed to be done. The premise seemed like a safe one, and he uttered it without having thought it through thoroughly.

But in so stating this new interpretation of Thomas Campbell's old motto, Pendleton was laying the ground work for a new conception in the restoration movement. It was this conception concerning the silence of the scripture that Isaac Errett adopted, and that became a vital principle in the editorial policy of the *Christian Standard* and, of course, is still tenaciously held by the Christian church today. W.K. Pendleton was the father of this interpretation of Campbell's motto. To Pendleton it was a tragedy for the church to remain silent where the scripture was silent. He said, "Let it not be said, then, that the disciples of Christ are to take the silence of Scripture on a given subject as a positive rule of prohibition against all freedom of action or obligation of duty. No rule could be more productive of evil than this."

The Pauls Valley Elders Have Spun Their Prom Tale and Hope Gullible Brethren Swallow it

Jerry C. Brewer

Here is a tale of woe from the Pauls Valley, Okla. elders concerning their involvement with that city's high school Prom. After **three months**, they finally answered Jess Whitlock's letter that he sent to them on May 1, 2023. Their response **would have** been to simply ignore brethren, hoping brother Whitlock would shut up like most preachers around them. But his tenacity and willingness to defend the Gospel became a burr under their saddle, so this is their tale:

August 3, 2023

Mssrs. Jess Whitlock

Paul Butler

Brothers,

In response to each of your communications concerning the Pauls Valley Church of Christ's "support" of the Pauls Valley Prom, we would present the following: Did any of your letters ask the following question? "Did the Pauls Valley Church of Christ, in fact, support the Pauls Valley Prom?" Not one of your letters bothered to address this question. Had you come in Brotherly Love and addressed that question, you would have received an immediate response. Instead, all of you assumed what you read in the Garvin County News Star

was gospel and did not consider that it could have been an inadvertent mistake by the newspaper. You then went into attack mode.

We would like to address that question.

1. Did Pauls Valley Church of Christ support the Prom or promenade? *No, we did not.* Not then, not now, nor any time in the future will we support those activities.
2. Did Pauls Valley Church join forces with a denomination to support any activities on prom night? *No, we did not. Again, not then, not now, nor any time in the future will we do that.*
3. Did Pauls Valley Church participate in the “After Prom Event”? *Yes, we did.*

For those who do not know what an “After Prom Event” entails, the event provides a venue where the young people can go to play games, watch movies and play basketball. It has nothing to do with dancing. We provided gift certificates for those young people who won playing games.

This event keeps the youth off the streets and out of harm’s way during the night of the Prom. That was the total involvement of the Pauls Valley Church concerning Prom night.

If our supporting the “After Prom Event” keeps one young person off the streets and out of harms way from drinking drivers, then it is worth our support.

At some time in the future, each of us will stand before the Lord and face judgment for our actions. It is our belief that, as we stand there, our actions concerning this matter will be justified.

If this communication has offended you, we are truly sorry, however, the facts concerning this matter needed to be told.

The Eldership,
Pauls Valley Church of Christ
Jess Brewer, Charles Goldsmith

Brother Whitlock's reply was written **two days after** their letter was written—not **two months later**—and his reply below evaporated their sophistry.

7th August 2023

The Eldership
1509 West Grant Ave.
Pauls Valley, OK 73057

Dear Brethren,

I have received your letter of August 3rd in response to my letter to you from this past May 1st. Thank you for your reply and your questions. You asked: “Did any of your letters ask the following question? Did the Pauls Valley church of Christ, in fact, support the Pauls Valley Prom?” Then, you stated “not one of your letters bothered to address this question.” I beg to differ. If you will restudy my letter of May 1st or June 24th, you will observe that both dealt directly with the sin of dancing! In my first letter of May 1st my final sentence stated: “...I would be willing to meet with you and discuss these matters with you at your convenience.” You may or may not recall my message to the church office asking to meet with you brethren and discuss this matter face to face. I never received a reply from you.

Your letter insinuated that the *Garvin County News Star* may have been guilty of an “inadvertent mistake.” I have spoken to a staff member of that paper. The advertisement was copied and printed word for word as received from one of the parents of the 2023 Pauls Valley Junior Class. The Pauls Valley church of Christ was listed as one of the “**Prom Sponsors.**” The word “sponsor” is defined: (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*). You had three questions along with our answers. I would like to consider those questions along with your answers:

“Did Pauls Valley church of Christ support the Prom or the promenade? No, we did not...” Yet, the advertisement gave thanks to several individuals and businesses for their donations to the “...Pauls Valley promenade **and** after prom party.” The word “**and**” is a conjunction. In English #101, we learned that the work of a conjunction is to “join together words or phrases of equal importance.” As a sponsor of the after-prom party, you made the church to tacitly appear as a sponsor of the prom. The word “**and**” joins the after-prom party to the prom!

“Did Pauls Valley Church join forces with a denomination to support any activities on prom

night? No, we did not..." I looked at the advertisement again. After the note of thanks from the parents, there was centered in large print two words "Prom Sponsors," and the first sponsor named was the "Pauls Valley church of Christ." In a lengthy list of sponsors, we note the "House Church" and the "Compassion Church" were listed as "Prom Sponsors." Let me encourage you to take a look at the websites of those two denominations. It is quite evident that neither one of those groups is the church that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18). Any reader of the *News Star* would have to conclude that those churches are in agreement with the Pauls Valley church of Christ on supporting the prom!

"Did Pauls Valley Church participate in the 'After Prom Event'? Yes, we did." You then explained that such an event provided a "venue where the young people can go to play games, watch movies, or play basketball. Is it the work of the church to use the Lord's money to pay for fun and games? But as you state each of us will stand before the Lord in judgment (Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27; et al.).

May I assure you that I am not offended by your letter, and do appreciate finally, after three months, receiving a reply. Like Paul, "...I am set for the defense of the Gospel..." (Phil. 1:16). It is my prayer that you will think on these things.

Because of a cross,
Jess Whitlock

The Pauls Valley elders, **Jess Brewer** and **Charles Goldsmith** struggled to concoct their rationale for fellowship with sin. It was a pitiful, futile attempt to spin their story. They claim that the advertisement was an "**inadvertent mistake.**" Would any elder worth his salt allow such a grave mistake **to go unanswered—for THREE MONTHS?** If *The Garvin County News Star* had printed an **inadvertent** story about the Pauls Valley elders saying they were arrested for drunk driving, I wonder how quickly they would contact the paper and demand a retraction of that **inadvertent** story?

Elders like those need to repent and confess that they are not qualified to be shepherds over the Lord's flock (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

The Burial of Stephen—Modern Style

Curtis J. Manor

After the first martyr had fallen, bruised, battered and bleeding, the victim of the very Jews he was seeking to save, the scripture tells us that "devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him" (Acts 8:2). With due apologies to these unnamed men of God, let us for the moment assign to them an up-to-date, 2023 model "**Christian**" attitude, and listen in on an imaginary conversation which they might have had as they carried the martyr to his burial:

First Devout Man: "Alas, poor brother Stephen! I kept telling him that his flair for debating was going to get him into trouble some day, but I really didn't expect it would come to this."

Second Devout Man: "Well, you never can tell what people will do if you just keep on criticizing them. I tried my best to get Brother Stephen not to preach so hard, especially about other people's religion. You can't expect to convert people if you're always making them mad, and that's about all you accomplish when you talk about their religion."

Third Devout Man: "How well I know it! You know, my wife was a Sadducee before coming into the church, and her folks still are. Well, we worked on them for months before we ever could get them to come to church with us, but finally we persuaded them to come one time, and of all things, do you know what Stephen preached on that Lord's Day? **The Resurrection!** And you know Stephen!—it wasn't enough for him just to express his views on the doctrine of resurrection—he had to go and say that without the resurrection all religion is vain. And as if that weren't enough, he mentioned the Sadducees by name and said that they do not believe in a resurrection! Well, sir, I wanted to drop right through the floor! My wife was mortified, and her folks were so angry they could hardly speak. They stomped out of the meeting house, and vowed that they would never again set foot in a Christian assembly. They accused my wife and me of telling the preacher they were coming so he would deliberately preach to them. We apologized to them, and assured them that if we had known Stephen's subject beforehand we wouldn't have taken them with us; but they've been pretty cool toward us ever since. I doubt if we'll ever be able to reach them now."

Second Devout Man: "What a shame, after you had worked with them so hard! It really must have been discouraging to your wife."

Third Devout Man: "Discouraging is right! Why, she was so torn up over it that she couldn't bring herself to attend services for several weeks. Instead, she went out to that little synagogue where all the Herodians go. Now, those people out there are broadminded. No controversial doctrines. They wouldn't insult anybody. They believe in being kind to everybody. The rabbi said that preachers who are dogmatic about religion are just narrow-minded bigots who are determined to make everybody do things their way or else."

Second Devout Man: "Do you mean you went to the synagogue, too?"

Third Devout Man: "Well, er, yea. Us...Well, my wife was going over there, and I always felt like a husband ought to share their religion. I heard a preacher say something one time about a husband and wife ought to be "heirs together of the grace of life" or something like that. Yes, I went with her. We enjoyed their services over there, but the people weren't very friendly, so we decided to come back to the church. My wife still won't take the bread and wine, though."

First Devout man: "I know just how she feels, and can't say as I blame her too much. You people aren't the first to be insulted by Stephen. I really hate to say it, but frankly, I feel like the church is better off without him, unless he would change his way of preaching."

Fourth Devout Man: "Oh, he was too stubborn to do that! He wanted to change everybody else, but you couldn't change him! Why, not long ago I gave him a copy of Rabbi Backscratcher's new book, *How To Please People and Persuade the Populace* and told him it would help him to get more additions and fewer subtractions. You know what he said? He figured the word and guidance of the Holy Spirit was enough to enable him to please God, and if that didn't please men too, he was sorry, but it couldn't be helped."

Second Devout Man: "Such nerve! Well, it's the attitude of preachers like him that makes it hard for the church to grow. They can tear down with one sermon all the headway we've made with our friends in a year of our personal work."

First Devout Man: "That's what I told Brother Stephen one time, and he said, "Be thankful, brother, that you've been able to get your friends to hear the gospel one time, at least. You've done that much good. From there it's up to them. You cannot obey the gospel for them, and you cannot force them to obey it for themselves. You have seen that they have a chance to know the truth. You have been a faithful servant. Keep up the good work, and don't be discouraged because all of your prospects don't accept the gospel. After all, look at the converts that even Jesus didn't make." Isn't that a foolish attitude to take?"

Third Devout Man: "Well, like you said, we hate to say it about him, zealous as he undoubtedly was, but the church is certainly better off without him. And I'll tell you another preacher that we could do without, too, if you want my opinion, and that's Brother Peter."

First Devout Man: "Right again! Did you hear about him offending so many people with his criticisms and accusations that they cancelled his free time on the Temple Devotional Hour?"

Fourth Devout Man: "You don't say!"

First Devout Man: "I do say! Every time he got a chance to speak on the Temple hookup he would talk about how the Jews had crucified Christ and couldn't be saved unless they repented, and a lot of other things that offended people. There were so many complaints about it that the Greater Jerusalem Rabbis' Association finally just forbid him to speak anymore. But I thought everyone knew about that."

Fourth Devout Man: "Well, it probably happened while I was on my vacation up at my fishing camp on the Sea of Tiberius. I was out of touch with all the brethren for a whole month. No church within six miles, you know."

First Devout Man: "Oh, I see. Well, it caused quite a stir. Really put the church in a bad light among the outsiders. You know, the church is not nearly as well thought of as it used to be, and —."

Third Devout Man: "That's right; why, I can remember when they used to let us meet in the temple, and we had favor with all the people."

First Devout Man: “Yes, but not anymore, and as I was going to say, it's purely the fault of these narrow-minded preachers like Peter and Stephen, who persist in talking about other people's sins and criticizing other religions. People just won't stand too much of that.”

Second Devout Man: “That's for sure. This job we're doing right now proves that. But how long do you suppose Peter will get away with it?”

First Devout Man: “Probably not long. The people's treatment of Stephen today shows that their patience is just about at an end.”

Third Devout Man: “Yes, and the really sad part of it is that the whole church will probably have to suffer for the crudeness of these few men.”

Fourth Devout Man: “Well, I don't intend to lose all my friends because of their narrow-minded preaching. I have been a Christian for thirty years, but only during the year-and-a-half that I've been in the church have I had any trouble getting along with my orthodox friends. If the church gets much more unpopular, I'll just quit. I know lots of Christian people who aren't in the church, and if they can be good folks outside the church, and I can too.

Third Devout Man: “Now, now, brother! That's no way to feel. The church needs men like you to show the world that we aren't all argumentative, dogmatic and tactless. After all, you do believe in Christ, don't you?”

Fourth Devout Man: “Of course.”

Third Devout Man: “And you aren't ashamed of Him, of His church, or His gospel, are you?”

Fourth Devout Man: “Why, you know I'm not!”

Third Devout Man: “And you do love God's truth, and are willing to stand for it.”

Fourth Devout Man: “Abso-tively!”

First Devout Man: “Them's my sentiments, too!”

Second Devout Man: “Mine, too!”

Third Devout Man: “Fine. Then let's all go and apologize to the council for all those nasty things that Stephen said awhile ago.”

Editor's Note: These men put pressure on their elders and were successful in getting Peter fired.

“We Don’t Want No Trouble”

William S. Cline

We are well aware that the above title is not correct English because it contains a double negative. However, it is totally correct with regard to what is being said by many in the brotherhood, and it perfectly captures the attitude of a great host of brethren who are in the leadership of the church.

It seems that many brethren “**Don’t Want No Trouble**” when it comes to *false teachers*. It absolutely amazes one to notice the freedom that false teachers have today. There was a time when brethren would at least fire a man for teaching false doctrine, and even if they did give him a hypocritical recommendation in order to move him and his false doctrine to an unsuspecting congregation, they at least took *some* stand against the false teacher and his doctrine. What should have been done with regard to such teachers was rarely done. Such men should have been corrected and shown the way of the Lord and if they then refused to repent they should have been marked as false teaches and fellowship should have been withdrawn from them. But most brethren did not do that, even though that is what the Bible teaches because they didn’t **want no trouble**. Today we see even less action being taken against the false teacher. Whereas at one time the false teacher was usually fired, today, in many quarters he is allowed to continue in his false ways and stay *in the pulpit* and *on the payroll*! When questioned regarding such, brethren usually say, “Well he is such a good man in so many ways, and he is so well liked by most of the congregation that we think it wise to let things ride for right now. Our contribution and attendance are doing well and we **don’t want no trouble**.” Literally translated that says, “We are more concerned about *money* and *numbers* and a *camouflage peace* than we are the truth.” Thus, the false teacher continues to have the support and the audi-

ences of the church for his work of spreading the cancer of false doctrine.

It also seems that brethren “**don’t want no trouble**” when it comes to keeping the church pure within its membership. The world has run after the material things of life until the spiritual and moral seem to have precious little left in our lives. This life has had its influence on the church to the point that we think a man’s life **does** consist of the things which he possesses (see Luke 12:15). We value gold far more than we value God, and **seeking the kingdom first** has come to mean “Not missing the Lord’s supper any more than you can help it.” The moral standards in the church have been lowered to where, in some congregations, one can do almost anything his heart desires and still remain in fellowship with the brethren. Things that are accepted today would have caused no small stir in the church 15 or 20 years ago. We have “progressed beyond the doctrine” to the point where deacons can have dances in the basements of their homes and brethren say nothing about it. The moral standard in the church has been lowered to where elders attend social functions where alcoholic beverages are served and in some cases it has been a fact that elders of the Lord’s church have served as *bar tenders* and not one single, solitary thing has been done about it! We have seen the church move away from the Bible in moral standards to the point that one elder held a dance in the basement of his home for the teenagers and allowed beer and whiskey to be served. Several young people got drunk but that man, without one word or act of repentance, still serves as an elder today. In congregations throughout the land social drinkers lead the prayers, wait on the Lord’s table, and teach in the classroom; dancers, gamblers, and people with filthy mouths remain “members in good standing” without one word of rebuke; and whoremongers, fornicators, and adulterers fill every position in the church from elder, preacher, deacon, and teacher to members. Why isn’t something done about it? Why aren’t these people withdrawn from and the church purged of the filth and sin that continues to spot its influence in the community? The answer is truly a preponderance one—“**we don’t want no trouble.**” In many congregations we have men in the leadership and by leadership we are presently referring to elders, preachers, deacons, and other influential men who are spineless amoebas and intestine-less wonders when it comes to standing for what is right. Just as heaven must surely rejoice when God’s people stand for the truth, every saint in hell must have a holiday when God’s people refuse to stand for that same truth.

We likewise seem to have brethren that “**don’t want no trouble**” when it comes to preaching the Gospel. These brethren are evangelistic and want to see everyone in the world converted. At the same time they want everyone in the world to *like* them and to think highly of them. They have not learned that one cannot preach the Gospel as God would have us to and at the same time be popular with every worldly, denominational, and devilish person in the world. Thus, these brethren have “watered” down the Gospel. They are more concerned about the *favor of man* than they are the *favor of God*. They say that we should preach Jesus and leave the church out of our teaching. They say that doctrine is not all that important and that when one stresses doctrine and the church he just drives people away. They have their “Soul Talks” their “Dialogue” meetings and their “Soul Confrontations” but they don’t preach and teach the Gospel. They “ape” the denominationalist and constantly talk about “**sharing Jesus**” to the point that it almost makes one want to vomit. They refuse to note that the Bible speaks of preaching Christ and not of **sharing Jesus**. They do all of this and much, much more to seek the approval of the denominational world. They want to be *accepted* and by all means at any cost they “**don’t want no trouble**” with the religious world. Many brethren are truly in tune with a new song which says, “I want to go to Fantasy Island where everyone’s smiling at me.” Debating is made fun of and those who stand foursquare for the Gospel of Christ are criticized as being dogmatic, legalistic, and unloving.

Brethren, may we always be careful of our attitude and the way we present the truth of God’s Word. But may we also always preach the truth and if that causes trouble then trouble will just have to come, and, if need be, camp on our front porch. Remember it was Elijah, God’s anointed prophet, who stood unwavering for the truth that was referred to by wicked Ahab as the “*Troubler of Israel.*”

Order your Digital Format of
“The Thing That Hath Been...: The Cycle of Apostasy”
By Sending Your Email Address
To jbbsbbrewer@gmail.com

Kerry Sword on Fellowship in a Letter to The Florida Preaching School Director, Brian Kenyon

May 20, 2020

Dear brother Brian,

My greetings and respect to you in the Lord.

Concerning your question, “True or False: It is always sinful for a preacher to speak on a program where a false teacher also appears.” “Always” is a big word, is it not? If one is speaking on a program where a false teacher also appears in order to correct error, the answer is “false.” If one is speaking on a program where a false teacher also appears and does nothing to correct error, the answer is “true.” By joining in joint-participation with the erring (i.e. “fellowship”) one violates of such passages as 2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Titus 1:10-13; 2 Tim. 4:2-5; 1 John 4:1, et al. What does the Florida School of Preaching teach concerning fellowship? If you believe that one can join with false teachers, not correct their errors, and not be in fellowship, you do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures. If that is your position, then what is wrong with Rubel Shelly’s actions of preaching among the denominations? If not, why not? Can one speak among the denominations and correct their errors and not be in fellowship (joint-participation) supporting their error? Absolutely! It would be no different than Paul preaching on Mars’ hill among those who “...spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Yet, if he did not correct their error, he would have shown no concern for their lost state or the teachings of the Lord. What do you believe Galatians 6:1-2 to teach? These are clear direct commands, are they not? Do we not have an obligation to help the erring?

The Holy Spirit teaches in 1 Timothy 5:22 that we are not to “be partaker of other men’s sins” and to “keep ourselves pure;” when Melvin Otey joins in supporting the work of false teachers he, in essence, bids them God speed and becomes a partaker of their evil deeds (II Jn. 9-11). And who is it that he supports and fellowships with? To list a few that I am familiar with:

Faulkner Lectures

- Melvin Otey – Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies.
- F. LaGard Smith – Scholar in Residence Lipscomb; teacher at Pepperdine (Personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No hell or eternal damnation).
- Aarek Farmer – Freed-Hardeman University Leadership and policy studies.
- Dave Miller – Apologetics Press.
- Jeff Jenkins – Freed-Hardeman University Board of Trustees.
- Jerry Elder – Freed-Hardeman University graduate and speaker.
- Jerry Rushford – director of the Pepperdine Bible Lectures.
- Mark Blackwelder – Head of Bible Department at Freed-Hardeman University.
- Ralph Gilmore – professor of Bible Freed-Hardeman University.

Those at Freed (according to David Shannon) all support the pornography used in the art and photography departments. Freed has also been known to promote *Post Modernism*, and compromises on their dress code, student drinking, and homosexuality.

Dave Miller supports the ungodly errors of *Elder Reaffirmation* and *Marriage Intent Doctrine*. Pepperdine promotes open homosexuality and fellowship with denominations.

Harding Lectures

- Melvin Otey – Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies
- Jim McGuiggan - Jim McGuiggan, (advocates a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit)
- Tommy South – Glen Allen church of Christ, Glen Allen, VA. – promoted social drinking and wine on the Lord’s Supper (Zhitomir, Ukraine), uses female translators, in fellowship with “Faith Only” preacher (Timothy Johnson), who used women to lead prayers in mixed assemblies and a choir from a denomination in worship to God.

- Ralph Gilmore – professor of Bible Freed-Hardeman (connected with FHU porn problem, Reconstituted Earth doctrine, praying to Jesus).

Affirming the Faith Lectures

- Melvin Otey – Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies
- Steve Higginbotham – Karn’s preacher/ Teacher (Regular at FHU)
- Stafford North – Oklahoma Christian University (Promotes OCU porn problem)
- Ralph Gilmore – professor of Bible FHU (connected with FHU porn problem, Reconstituted Earth doctrine, praying to Jesus).
- Denny Petrillo – President Bear Valley Bible Institute (expanded role for women in the church, fellowshiping with a denomination in Ukraine)
- Jay Lockhart – former Freed-Hardeman Board of Trustees (connected with FHU porn problem)
- Kirk Brothers – FHU instructor (connected with FHU porn problem)
- Dale W. Manor – Harding professor. (Connected with James D. Bales, James Woodroof, Jerry Jones, Mike Cope, Jeff Walling on numerous errors)
- Bruce McLarty – Harding President (Connected with James D. Bales, James Woodroof, Jerry Jones, Mike Cope, Jeff Walling on numerous errors)
- Tim Pyles – Broken Arrow, OK - Tulsa Workshop, fellowship with denominations.
- Jeremie Beller – Adjunct Professor OCU (connected with OCU porn problem)
- Tommy South – Glen Allen coC VA – promoted social drinking and wine on the Lord’s Supper (Zhitomir, Ukraine), uses female translators, in fellowship with “Faith Only” preacher (Timothy Johnson), who used women to lead prayers in mixed assemblies and a choir from a denomination in worship to God.

Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies Lectures

- Melvin Otey – Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies
- Steve Higginbotham – Karn’s preacher/ Teacher (Regular at FHU)
- Edwin Jones – Commonwealth Bible Academy (Regular at FHU)
- B.J. Clarke – MSOP (connected with Dave Miller errors)
- Tom L. Childers – Minister/elder Finger coC (promotes social drinking & porn problem at FHU).
- Don Blackwell – GBN (connected with Dave Miller errors)
- Denny Petrillo – President Bear Valley Bible Institute (fellowship with a denomination in Ukraine and expanded role of women in the church).
- Doug Burleson – Teacher at FHU (connected with FHU porn problem)
- Kevin Moore – Teacher at FHU (connected with FHU porn problem)

Cold Harbor Lectures

- Melvin Otey – Teacher at Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies.
- Dave Miller – Apologetics Press (Advocates Elder Reaffirmation and Marriage Intent errors)
- Steve Higginbotham – Karn’s preacher/ Teacher (Regular at FHU)

In 1992 the Collierville church of Christ hosted a lectureship entitled *What A Fellowship*. Some of the speakers for this event were as follows: Billy Bland (MSOP), Mike Hixson (MSOP, currently at Olive Branch coC), B.J. Clark (MSOP), John Shannon (MSOP), David Jones, Barry Gilreath, Gary McDade, Johnathan Overcash, David B. Loony, and Steve Ellis. These brethren did an outstanding job defending the truth against the error of joining yourself to a lectureship where false teachers are present. If you have not read this book, I would highly recommend it

to you. You may consider making it a part of the required reading at your school.

Seeing as how you asked me a question, I will in turn ask you one. Are you in support of salvation in denominations, a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, viewing pornography in the name of “art”, teaching advocating *relative truth*, *Elder Reaffirmation*, social drinking, and such like? If not, why would you join yourself to a lectureship where there are others who advocate these things and do **nothing** to correct them? Do you really think God is pleased? There can be no fellowship with error, brother. To teach otherwise is indeed a damnable heresy.

I mean no disrespect towards you, but it is clear that there is an attitude of compromise that has led to the apostasy that is currently going on in the Lord’s church. It is my earnest prayer and desire that the Florida School of Preaching will be a part of the solution and **not** a part of the problem.

With all sincerity in the love of Christ,

Kerry L. Sword

The Tema “Churches of Christ Association” is A Denomination That God Will Root Up in the Last Day

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Decades ago, specifically the year 1992, when Dan Mcvey was serving churches of Christ in Ghana as a missionary, he coauthored a booklet entitled *The Church of Christ in Ghana*, along with brethren Samuel Twumasi Ankrah and Augustine Tawiah. Brother Mcvey’s assignment in this work, which is subtitled *Where Did We Come from and Where Are We Going?*, was to trace “Our Place in the History of Christianity.” In this booklet, which was evidently written with Ghanaian Christians or members of the church of Christ in mind, brother Dan Mcvey would begin to trace our history from the garden of Eden, where “The story of God’s plan for saving man started...” (Mcvey 1).

After speaking a lot about the scriptural origins of the church of Christ, Dan Mcvey then cautioned, “However, we must understand that the church of our King Jesus is made up of people, thus its history is going to be affected by the pressures, stresses, weaknesses and misunderstandings of man” (Mcvey 2). The apostles knowing this, wanted to stem apostasy as much as possible, gave “many warnings about false teachers and corruptions – Acts 20:29-30” (Mcvey 3). Brother Mcvey would then spend time speaking about these corruptions, the first of which was centralized control. He wrote,

Although we may strongly disagree with such organization, we should understand that those terrible pressures and many attacks against the faith of Christians were putting them into difficult situations and their concern was protecting the faith. Therefore, they centralized the leadership to preserve the practice of the faith as they saw it (4; Emph. NYA).

I have highlighted this very point to show that in the 1990s, the churches of Christ in Ghana **strongly disagreed** with centralized control. Mcvey would then point out that as a result of these corruptions, “The Roman Catholic church gradually developed with the bishop of Rome claiming all authority” (Mcvey 5).

But all was not lost, for “From time to time, there were those who spoke out for reform and a return to more biblical ways of faith” (Mcvey 6-7). Certain men,

began to teach that Christianity had been corrupted away from the teachings of Christ and the apostles, and that the truth must be restored. This marked the beginning of what is called *The Reformation*. They began teaching that man is saved by grace through faith, not works of merit. They also began going back to more Biblical patterns of church organization and worship. They did not always agree among themselves, and at times their followers even fought one another. Little by little, they began to understand Christianity more as it had been established by Christ... (Mcvey 8).

These ideas would begin to spread like wildfire in Europe and eventually end up in America. But alas, among these “protestants,” “There were often sharp disagreements..., different interpretations of the Bible and differences in church organization and worship” (Mcvey 10), and, thus, the Protestant Reformation would itself eventually succumb to “human weaknesses and extremes” (Mcvey 11).

However, among the reformers, there were some “who were not satisfied with the progress made toward a pure Biblical practice and faith” (Mcvey 11). These “sincere seekers of truth,” most of them in America, where the landscape encouraged new ideas, “began calling for a more complete return to New Testament Christianity” (Mcvey 11), which necessarily required “a more complete overthrow of manmade doctrines and denominations” (Mcvey 12). These people would come to be known as the *Restoration Movement* among students of religious history.

At this point in the booklet, brother Mcvey inquired, “What issues did they [the Restoration Movement] emphasize?” In response to this question, he wrote,

They realized that we must know what really makes a person a disciple of Christ; also, how should we worship and organize the church so that Christ receives all glory and man’s tendency towards selfishness is minimized. They realized from the Scriptures that the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church...They stressed simple Christianity and the rejection of man-made names, creeds, organizations and doctrines as they were able to identify them...” (12-3).

But, as is common with humans, the *Restoration Movement* began to have problems by the 1870s to 1890s. Mcvey’s assessment of the issue was that,

There were some who insisted on strict congregational autonomy, while others believed the Bible allows a conference or missionary society to see to mission work on behalf of the church. This issue along with instrumental music and certain social issues brought controversy into their ranks. By the year 1900, there was open division. Those who held more firmly to the original ideas of the movement and took a more conservative view of the Bible generally referred to themselves as “Churches of Christ,” while the others took various names and moved into a more denominational pattern of things (13-4).

Dan Mcvey would end his essay with this piece of advice for Ghanaian churches of Christ:

Let us truly do our best to be the church that was founded by Christ and upon Christ. Our loyalty is not to any men or set of traditions, only to our King. Let us be diligent that we do not fall into the trap of denominationalism – that spirit that glories in divisive thought – but rather let us give diligence to be the reflection of Christ’s love and truth in this world of darkness...Let us be committed to truth and the importance of submission to Christ with full confidence that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...Let us be faithful until we welcome our Lord from heaven when He comes to take us away... (16-7).

You would be forgiven for wondering the rationale behind the aforementioned review. I have deliberately gone through brother Dan Mcvey’s essay on church history for three reasons: first, because of how much he is held in high regard among Ghanaian Christians; second, to show what the churches of Christ in Ghana believed at one point in time; and, finally, to prove that history is wont to repeating itself and that those who fail to learn from it are bound to repeat it. Just as some in the American Restoration Movement moved away from **the original ideas of the movement**, and thus brought controversy into a movement, which I believe with all my being was a providential intervention of God in history, some churches of Christ in Ghana have appropriated some of those same **controversial** ideas, having fallen in love with **a more denominational pattern of things**.

I have in my possession a document with the title *Momeranda (sic) of Understanding for Tema Region Churches of Christ*. At the tail end of the first page of this document are the words *Tema Region Churches of Christ Cooperation MOU*. Then there is the preamble which states,

We, members of the Tema Region churches of Christ, united in our quest for improved spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development of our various congregations and its individual members, hereby agree to be bound by the tenets of this memorandum of understanding [MOU from hence] for our common good (2).

I know that someone is probably thinking, “What could possibly be wrong with churches cooperating and being united and seeking improvement?” I can assure you that if it were all about cooperation and unity and seeking “improvement,” I would not be writing this article. If I know my heart, then I am not scared to say I am a stickler for unity and cooperation. The Psalmist wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1). So, surely, being united is a good thing. However, even though we have a responsibility

to seek unity, we also have an equally God-given responsibility to be concerned about how local churches of Christ are to engage in such co-operation and unity practices. We need God-given authority in the way we act in these matters, for not all unity movements are pleasing unto God (cf. Gen. 11:1-8).

What the churches of Christ in Tema have come up with isn't merely about cooperation and unity and seeking improvement but is actually **a headlong dive into rank apostasy and denominationalism**. It is a plan that centralizes their cooperative and unity efforts in an organization that the Bible has not authorized and knows nothing about. It is the exact kind of organization that Dan Mcvey said churches of Christ, at least at the time he was in Ghana, **strongly disagreed with** and exactly the kind that stoked controversy in the American Restoration Movement and brought about **open division** in its ranks.

Under Article 1 of this MOU, the originators of this document note that "The name of this association shall be called *TEMA REGION CHURCHES OF CHRIST ASSOCIATION*." Then, in Article 2, they state their aims and objectives, which include, among other things, improving membership in the Tema region churches, enhancing cooperation in finances and edification, improving infrastructure of churches in the region, conflict resolution among churches in the region, helping members with employment, promoting "the image of the church through marketing and public relations," etc. As a member of this association, you are to contribute dues (specifically 5% of your weekly giving) to the association, attend meetings, and abide by the MOU.

So well-oiled is this machine of an association that it comprises nine organs – a general assembly, a coordinating committee, a benevolence committee, an infrastructure committee, a financial committee, an evangelism committee, an arbitration committee, an edification committee, and a secretary – with the functions of each organ very clearly stated.

I do not need to delve further into this document for the discerning Christian to be alarmed. This association isn't just about cooperation and unity and improvement; it actually is rivalling the church of our Lord in its mission. Not only that, but it wants to treat the church of Christ like a "Fortune 500 company," since it wants to **promote the image of the church through marketing and public relations**. How in the world anyone (elders, preachers, deacons, so-called "church leaders") can read the Sacred Writings and think this is Scriptural is simply beyond me. Is this what Jesus Christ died for and what the early faithfuls were martyred for?

If, as Dan Mcvey noted in his essay, we **strongly disagreed** with this kind of organization back in the 1990s, then what changed? If back then we **realized from the Scriptures that the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that, like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church**, then where has God made changes to His requirements in His word today? Or did we pretend to believe something we really didn't believe? If we were right then, then we are wrong now. And if we were wrong then, then we really have a lot of apologizing to do to the denominations, whom over the years we have denounced for organizing themselves after the "commandments of men."

I do not believe we were wrong. I am certain the Bible teaches that **the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that, like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church**. And thus, the so-called *Tema Region Churches of Christ Association* is an unauthorized, yea, **sinful institution** with no right whatsoever to exist. Please take note of this. The issue is not about whether churches of Christ should be united or can cooperate. **Rather, the issue is about whether churches of Christ have Scriptural authority to form associations in order to centralize their cooperative and unity efforts, with those institutions supplanting the local churches in the work that God has given them to do**. I believe the Bible's answer is a great, big, no, and, thus, the path our forebears in the faith traveled was the right one.

What is wrong with the Tema Region Churches Association? Following are the reasons why it is wrong:

First, it is not authorized by God's word. Paul wrote, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). To do something **in the name of** someone is to do that thing by the power or authority of

that person (cf. Acts 4:7). Thus, we see from this text that whatever we teach and practice must be by the authority of Christ. Where God has authorized in His word, He has done so explicitly (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12), implicitly (e.g., Matt. 22:29-32), or by example (e.g., Acts 20:7). Where is the explicit statement in the Scriptures for an association of churches of Christ? Where is it taught implicitly? And where is the example of the early church in this regard? Then again, Scriptural authority necessitates **respecting God's silence** or not going beyond the things that are written (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). God is not an idol who cannot speak for Himself. Hence, His silence or the silence of the Scriptures is not permissive. It is prohibitory (cf. Mark 7:1-7 – notice that God was silent on the issue of religious handwashing in the OT). The *Tema Region Churches Association* does not respect the silence of God or the Scriptures.

Second, it presumes to do the work of the church or act as a church when it is not the church in any sense of the word but a denomination. The association calls itself *Tema Churches of Christ Association*, thus, applying a Scriptural name to an unscriptural thing. The old restorers were wont to saying, “we should call Bible things by Bible names.” This association is doing the exact opposite. The word *church* is **never** used in the Bible to refer to a man-made organization. It is used to refer to the blood-bought body of Christ, either in a universal sense (cf. Matt. 16:18) or a local sense (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). Other uses of the word to refer to the Jews or an assembly are irrelevant to this discussion. The universal church is all of those whom Christ has saved in the entire world. Of that number, only God knows certainly (2 Tim. 2:19). The churches of Christ in Ghana alone do **not** constitute the universal church. I do not think those preachers who say we should go beyond the local church and set our sights on the universal church really understand what it is they are saying. The universal church comprises all whom Christ has saved in the **entire world** and not just in Ghana alone.

Furthermore, the universal church is a combination of heaven and earth (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:14-15). And so, the very idea of working through the universal church is as possible and feasible as counting the number of hairs on your head. It is for this reason why in the New Testament, the universal church is given no collective function. “It does not have a collective work, time of assembly, or meeting place” (Bailey). And certainly, it does not convene to decide its affairs or clamor “for improved spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development of our various congregations and its individual members.” The only religious organization in the New Testament is the local church (cf. Php. 1:1). And as I have already pointed out, the word *church* is used in reference to the universal church or the local church alone. The Tema Association is neither the universal church nor a local church. It is an association of churches, larger than the local church but smaller than the universal. Hence, it is a denomination. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a “denomination” as, “A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and administratively organized.” This is an accurate description of the Tema Association. Yet, it goes by the name *churches of Christ* and presumes to act as the church.

Third, since it presumes to act as a church, it also presumes to be the realm where God receives glory when God has already specified where He wants to receive His glory. Paul wrote, “unto him, be glory in the church [not in the association] and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

Fourth, it presumes to improve the efficiency of the work of the local church. The association says its quest is “for **improved** spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development” (Emph. NYA) of the churches in the association. However, it goes without saying that any organization designed to give greater efficiency to the work of the local church is an attempt to improve on God's plan, which makes humans wiser than God and also makes God a liar for saying the Scriptures thoroughly and completely furnish the church unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Fifth, it violates the autonomy of the local church. It does this in at least three ways, first, by making decisions for the churches. According to the MOU, “the General Assembly shall be the highest decision-making body of the Association” (4). Also, the Assembly “shall have the power to make by-laws which shall bind the Association” (4). Second, by overseeing portions of the Lord's treasury that has been contributed by church members and is to be under the oversight of the local congregation. Third, by planning evangelism for the churches in the Tema region. According to the MOU, it is the responsibility of the evangelism committee, to “plan and

execute **all** evangelism program(sic)/projects in the Tema region” (Emph. NYA). One wonders what the point of the local church, then, is. There is more, but I believe these drive home the point.

Sixth, it leaves the world with the impression that the churches of Christ support an ecclesiastical hierarchy. We are Christians only, folks. Jesus Christ is our only Head (Col. 1:18). And each congregation is self-governing, self-supporting and selfpropagating.

Seventh, by its actions it preaches the social gospel. The Tema **Churches of Christ** association says in its aims and objectives that it is going “to assist members in the area of employment.” I know that brethren need to work, and certainly if a brother or sister has connections, he should help a brother or sister in need of work. But, please, if we are going to speak as the oracles of God, then give me the book, chapter, and verse that says it is the work and mission of **the church** (not the individual Christian, mind) to seek employment for members.

Eight, it has its own rules of order. The Tema **Churches of Christ** association have put the New Testament aside as the only rule of faith and practice for the church of Christ and organized this MOU, thereby eliminating Christ as Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

Ninth, it could be a recipe for doctrinal disaster. Since it is the work of the edification committee to “develop literature and printed (sic) for use in contracting churches especially for integrating new converts, children bible classes,” who is to say that error at the top, among the “specialists” (MOU 9), wouldn’t lead all the congregations astray?

Last but not least, it is going to get brethren to compete with each other for positions of authority in the association. But our Lord said,

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

The foregoing reasons are what is wrong with the Tema Region Churches Association. I do not know if this organization is already in place or is in the pipeline. Either way, I hope the brethren, elders, deacons, and preachers, many of whom were taught by Dan Mcvey, would reconsider this course of action and heed his advice to **be diligent that we do not fall into the trap of denominationalism – that spirit that glories in divisive thought.**

When all is said and done, the *Tema Churches of Christ Association* is an unbiblical, man made, denomination. The axe is laid to its root and it will be cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10).

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Getting Back to Basics

Earl West

Whatever happened to the old-fashioned idea that the church exists to preach the Gospel and that the purpose of the Gospel is to save souls?

Judging from some of the bulletins we see and some announcements we are asked to make, some churches of Christ today appear to have gone over to the YMCA.

We are all for families knowing how to make money, and we are equally happy to see people make a success out of their lives, but churches of Christ should be concerned to preach in today’s world the same Gospel that was delivered in primitive times—to save souls from sin. Using that Gospel as a guideline, they ought to teach people how to grow spiritually and be prepared for heaven.

The church today is in serious danger of falling victim to a materialistic gospel—how to make money, how to get rich, how to be successful in business, in social life, in school, etc. One of

the surest signs that we are more interested in material values than in spiritual is when these types of lectures, because of their novelty, are more attractive than the message of a redeeming Savior.

One of the denominational journals we get had a lead article recently titled, “The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel,” and the editors were deploring the popularity of a so-called gospel that tells us how to be either “healthy or wealthy.”

If the denominations, who make no attempt to practice New Testament Christianity, have come to denounce this type of emphasis for its complete lack of spiritual content, it is indeed strange how churches of Christ, who are supposed to be set for the defense of the Gospel can justify such spiritually empty messages.

The preachers who go around with this type of message betray a total lack of conception of what New Testament Christianity is all about. Elders who allow this sort of thing are either ignorant of the Bible or unable to withstand the pressure of a generation of super salesmen preachers. In both cases it is a disgrace to the cause of New Testament Christianity.

If the central theme of the Gospel is not Christ and Him crucified, as Paul delivered it in Corinth, then, in the words of the lamented Foy E. Wallace, Sr. “We have been reading the wrong book.”

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