

## The Community Church (No. 1)

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**Editor's Note:** Due to the length of this article we will carry the remainder of it in the [August issue of Banner of Truth](#). We encourage our readers to keep this part of the article in order that this important information may be considered in its entirety. The following information should sound a note of serious warning to those who are concerned with the well-being of the Lord's church. The **Community Church** is another dangerous inroad by those who would renounce the distinctive, blood-bought church of our Lord and take people into the man-made religion of denominationalism.

### THE COMMENCEMENT

The Community Church has invaded churches of Christ as a movement permeating into the body of Christ from market-approach driven denominational churches weary of lagging attendance and faltering financial support. The models being followed by those enamored with the Community Church approach to church organization and methodology being Willow Creek and Saddleback have become well known within denominational circles, but the churches of Christ to this point in time have seen little in print on them. Reviews of the Community Church movement have fallen behind in regard to biblical refutation of the error it presents.

The names of those leading the brethren into the Community church movement have been supplied without trepidation. It is not enough to acknowledge the disturbing of the brotherhood in general and faithful congregations in particular, by the Community Church movement, in order to expunge its evil influence from churches of Christ who are advancing the departure from heaven's way. This task is lovingly undertaken in the pages which follow. Ample endnotes document the evidence presented so the reader may investigate the exposure.

Perhaps the departure, especially of the younger Christians, into the Community Church movement can be stemmed by making the information of its origin, nature, and current expression within churches of Christ available. Whatever the future holds for the Community Church movement among churches of Christ know this, a valiant army of faithful brethren, preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and members alike, who follow no Captain other than Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:10) are unflinchingly standing in defense of the soul saving gospel of Jesus Christ

(Phil. 1:17).

In New Testament times doctrinal error tended to crystallize around specific groups like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Judaizers, and around specific individuals like Hymenaeus, Alexander, Phygellus, Hermongenes, Alexander the coppersmith, and Diotrephes. It is no different today. This investigation will expose the doctrinal error that has crystallized around the Community Church as this form of religious expression is being adopted by some churches of Christ and some specific congregations and individuals who are the source of the problem. Additionally, an approximation of the current size and strength of the movement will be offered.

God inspired men to warn the church of imminent danger in the first century. Today, those who follow the apostles' doctrine will too. The Ephesians' elders were told, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:28-31). The Holy Spirit has informed the church that in the later times some will depart from the faith. Paul wrote, *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"* (I Tim. 4:1-2). It is particularly sad when many of the ones departing from the faith have been friends, co-workers, acquaintances, and even family members. This pain should yield voices of concern, not sheepish silence.

## THE CORRECT PATTERN

A pattern is "a form or model proposed for imitation."<sup>1</sup> The use of the word as it appears in the New Testament received twenty-five pages of attention in Goebel Music's book *Behold The Pattern*.<sup>2</sup> A summation of the pattern as used in the New Testament suggests, "The gospel is the mold; those who are obedient to its teachings become conformed to Christ. . . Christian teaching as a mold and norm . . . In context, the teaching can be described as the mold and norm which shapes the whole personal conduct of the one who is delivered up to it and has become obedient thereto." In short, it is "an example to be copied."<sup>3</sup> The apostle Paul urged conformity to Christ, not the world, in Romans 12:1-2, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

The epistle to the Romans not only affirms that a pattern or form exists, which God has carefully planned and announced through the gospel of Christ but that this pattern must be obeyed. Paul said, *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:16-18). In the life of a faithful Christian, a "pattern of good works" must emerge (Titus 2:7). An abiding conviction of these truths should promote the proper response of earnestly contending for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

## THE CORRUPT PATTERN

Instead of accepting and following the Divine pattern, the word of God, the man-made Community Church pattern has been substituted. In most cases the same brethren who consistently have rejected following the word of God as a pattern, stressing that strict conformity to it constitutes legalism, ironically have replaced the word of God with the Community Church pattern and are meticulously loyal to it. In the following the false pattern of the Community Church these brethren have espoused that which they formerly renounced, that is, the validity of following a specific form of doctrine or teaching.

## THE CONCEPTION OF THE CORRUPT PATTERN

One of the sources from which this departure from the truth comes is a book written in 1992, by Rubel Shelly and Lipscomb University professor Randy Harris entitled, *The Second Incarnation*. In a review exposing this diatribe, Curtis Cates wrote under the heading, "No Pattern Exists For The Church":

The latest philosophy of brethren Shelly and Harris demands that one abandon the "deep rut" error that the New Testament is a pattern for the church; they reject that pattern. They write that man seeks a "paradigm for imitation," which they will give in their book, they say (p. 5); yet they write, "We reject a rigid 'pattern theology'" (p. 31). Anyone can see that this is double-talk. I take it that they feel that putting such self-contradictions far enough apart in their book will disguise these opposing, irreconcilable, and unbelievable statements from the readers; however, one recognizes that the word "paradigm" **means** pattern! And they are saying God will not/does not give a pattern but they **will**? How presumptuous! We are not fooled; we will not follow these blind leaders in rejecting the New Testament pattern to concoct a "paradigm" of their own. 4

The catechizing effect of *The Second Incarnation* by Shelly and Harris is proven by an example which appeared in the church bulletin from "The Family of God at Brownsville Road, a Church of Christ." The pulpit minister there, Mark Claypool, wrote an article titled, "A Tale Of Two Churches" in which he contrasted to imagined churches, one called the "Institutional Church of Christ" and the other called the "Incarnational Church of Christ." In the article, following the New Testament pattern of organization is castigated while following the incarnational model as suggested by such heretics as Shelly and Harris is elevated to sublime heights. "A Tale Of Two Churches" is a story told in epic tradition, but the caustic criticism of the New Testament pattern is painfully plain. 5 Therefore, it becomes clear that brethren are following some form of doctrine as a pattern to be imitated. Whether the pattern followed is the New Testament or a man-made pattern, a discernible, identifiable system of teaching is being followed. In the former instance, the churches of Christ are emerging; in the latter case, denominational churches are emerging.

## THE CENTER OF THE CORRUPT PATTERN

*Handbook Of Denominations In The United States*, written and edited by the late Frank S. Mead, is a classic work on the subject and was revised in 1995 by Samuel S. Hill. The entry on the Community Church bears the heading, "Community Churches, International Council Of." 6 Community Churches began around the mid 1800s and nationally were organized first in 1923. The historical Community Church presently has about 250,000 members in about 400 churches. The *Handbook* says, "...Each church is adjusted to the needs of a different community," so "...there is much variety among Community Churches...." What is of particular interest in searching for the background of the Community Church pattern that is the source of much unrest in churches of Christ today is the stated purpose of the historical Community Church. Again, the *Handbook* says,

...These churches are a result of the desire to eliminate overchurching [sic] in some communities and solve attendant economic and staffing problems; to replace the restrictiveness and divisiveness of denominationalism with self determination and Christian unity; to refocus primary loyalty from organizations outside the community to the community itself and, by addressing specific needs there, to effect a more relevant religion.

It appears that a historical Community Church is a freelance denominational church which may or may not have national or international ties with others of the denomination. Therefore, the earliest traceable roots of the Community Church pattern are sunk deep in unrestricted denominationalism. However, the historic Community Church lacks the glamour and appeal of the megachurch model furnished by the contemporary pattern for the Community Church.

## **THE CONTEMPORARY CORRUPT PATTERN**

The danger and propensity of preferring and following man's way over God's is a theme thoughtful students of the Bible readily recognize. The Messiah was mandated because man has a tendency to go astray from God's way. Isaiah wrote, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:6). Jeremiah said, "*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23). And, the Proverbs teach, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12). Down through the history of man one truth is consistent and that is that man is not consistent in obeying God's will.

A reminder of a well-known departure from the truth will help establish the reason for the concern at hand over the Community church pattern now being espoused. Almost two decades ago a movement threatened the churches of Christ on a world-wide scale. Today it is known as International Churches of Christ, which is the Multiplying Ministry of the Boston Church of Christ. Then it was first known as the Crossroads movement out of Gainesville, Florida. Now it is headed up by Kip McKean, then it was spearheaded by Chuck Lucas. The hotbed of the movement was college campuses across the country, especially those where local churches of Christ drew attendance from the respective student bodies. Young people displaced from their families were subjected to nothing less than rudimentary mind control tactics from savvy Campus Ministers. The hurt suffered by the bride of Christ is now legendary. But, the source of the pain was discovered and revealed just as the Community Church pattern is now being

exposed. Perhaps informed brethren will recall *The Master Plan Of Evangelism*, written by Robert E. Coleman. It was first published by this Nazarene preacher in 1963, and by 1982 boasted a circulation of more than three million copies and translation into more than seventy languages. It provided the basis for the movement. It is the essence of the writings of Milton Lee Jones, a member of the church of Christ whose little books have brought "*The Master Plan*" into the Lord's church far and wide. Coleman's little 126 page book has been sufficient to inject the body of Christ with a poison lethal enough to kill entire congregations in various places around the world. Just as the source for the Crossroads/Multiplying Ministry or International Churches of Christ error was isolated in the early to mid 1980's, even so the source for the Community Church pattern needs to be isolated today so the error it espouses can be fully exposed and defeated.

The background development of the Community Church pattern emerges out of the so called new hermeneutic or unity-in-diversity movement that has enjoyed widespread acceptance. The new hermeneutic was discovered to be nothing more than a rejection of understanding that the Bible authorizes by means of direct commands, apostolic examples, and implication. Those who became embroiled in the new hermeneutic had no standard to follow. Dominant personalities set the pace. But, even among the likes of Rubel Shelly, Randy Harris, Carroll Osburn, Mike Cope, Jeff Walling, and Lynn Anderson no system to tie the movement together was suggested to replace the one they rejected. These men knew that just as soon as their new system of supposed Bible interpretation was presented to the brotherhood that allowed the things for which they stood, such as open fellowship with the denominations, corruption of the worship, and a virtual eradication of evangelism, they would be taken to task just as scholars among us like Curtis Cates have done in refuting Shelly's *Second Incarnation* and Osburn's *Peaceable Kingdom* to name only two. It does not take long for departures from the truth to crystallize around personalities or favorite teachings. Paul illustrated this in First Corinthinans, chapter one and verses twelve and thirteen, "*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*" To young Timothy Paul said, "*...Charge some that they teach no other doctrine*" (I Tim. 1:3b). John wrote of "*the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes*" in Revelation 2:15. At least part of this new hermeneutic; or unity-in-diversity movement has now crystallized into the Community Church pattern.

The model or pattern for the contemporary Community Church advancing beyond the historical Community Church is the Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. The pastor, promoter, and prelate of this megachurch is Bill Hybels. It has been featured on the Public Broadcasting Station as the wave of the future in religion. Its methods are promoted in seminars which broadly are advertised across the nation. Prominent preachers in churches of Christ, like Wayne Kilpatrick, have visited Willow Creek Community Church and returned to sing its praises.<sup>7</sup> "Change agents" within the churches of Christ today publicly have stimulated interest in the Willow Creek model. (The term "change agents" aptly was coined by brother William Woodson in his book exposing their agenda, titled *Change Agents and Churches of Christ*). How prominent are these "change agents"? Dr. Gary Holloway is Director of Graduate Bible at David Lipscomb University, now Lipscomb University, Bible Department in Nashville, Tennessee. J. E. Choate, who has performed a valuable service in utilizing his vast historical knowledge of the restoration movement to provide both accuracy and truthfulness in articles which challenge the perilous putrefaction of the "change agents," wrote in the

*Yokefellow*, September 16, 1996, about a paper Holloway read in May of 1995, before the Disciples of Christ Historical Society which later was published in *Discidpliana*. He said,

"Dr. Gary Holloway presented his proposals for this new denomination before an assembly of radical Disciples of Christ whose pulpits are open to gays, liberals, etc. Does Holloway think to gain favor with DLU alumni and patrons when these facts become known to the rank and file of the churches of Christ?"

The first option: The Willow Creek Community Church model based in the Chicago area is presented as the first of three options proposed to replace the apostolic pattern. This is the 'razzale dazzle hoopla' type of entertainment with brass bands, special music, dramatic skits, etc." 8

J. E. Choate further has written, "We are familiar to some extent with the contemporary 'church growth' models which are finding their way into post modern Churches of Christ in Nashville. They are the number one choice Willow Creek Community Church..."<sup>9</sup> In this same article, written in April of 1998, brother Choate said,

"Only the Hendersonville Community Church elects to fly aloft the 'Community Church' banner first lofted by Bill Hybels. However, the worship and practices of the Woodmont Hills Family of God more closely imitate the worship spectaculars of Willow Creek. Other Nashville churches in the contemporary worship services also feed at the trough of Bill Hybel's Willow Creek Cult."

Choate also suggested an insight into the meaning of contemporary worship and its source:

"The best way to understand what goes on in the "contemporary worship services" in post modern churches is to look again toward Willow Creek. Whatever the popular evangelical theology of the Chicago based Willow Creek church is, a major emphasis is on entertainment.

The singing, dancing, and dramatic skits performed at Willow Creek have all the color and pizzazz of a Broadway show. Rubel Shelly's church has recently employed a minister responsible for planning and presenting dramatic skits for the worship services of the Woodmont Family of God. Ruble's [sic] church is a "bootleg" version of the Chicago denomination. His insufferable ego drives him to leave the impression he is the "genius" who has created his new model (paradigm).<sup>10</sup>

## **THE CORRUPT PATTERN CLOSE BY**

The presence of the Community Church in Memphis is directly attributable to two institutions: The Harding Graduate School of Religion and the Highland Street Church of Christ. *Mission: Memphis*, a quarterly newsletter for the Memphis Planting Ministry which is sponsored by Highland Street Church of Christ, in the winter of 1997, told of its beginning.

"In the spring of 1994, a group of leaders from Highland Street church of Christ studied the need to establish new churches in Memphis. The result of the two and a half year investigation was the forming of the Memphis Church Planting Ministry (MCPM) whose purpose is to reach the spiritually lost in Memphis by forming new, reproducing congregations."

So, Highland Street's two and a half year study of the need to establish new churches resulted in the establishment of a new organization called the Memphis Church Planting Ministry (MCPM) which is led by a full-time coordinator/church planter by the name of Ron Cook. Ron Cook's unabashed affinity for denominationalism is presented in *Mission: Memphis* when he said, "Growing denominations are planting churches; denominations that have reached a plateau or are on the decline are not planting churches." When denominations are used as the pattern, it sounds like the way of the MCPM is the only way to keep from declining. It certainly is a wonder that any churches ever came into existence in Memphis before the MCPM was organized. Observe, the way the apostles "planted" churches in the first century was by preaching the gospel of Christ as is recorded within the inspired Book of Acts, but the Coordinator/Church Planter of the MCPM has a better model after which to pattern. And, what is that pattern? Growing denominations. Is an undisguised appreciation for denominationalism really present within the MCPM? Hear the Coordinator/Church Planter once more from the pages of *Mission: Memphis*, "Thank God for...the Frayser Christian Church who have provided free use of their classrooms for three months of weekly group Bible study." What churches has the MCPM "planted"? The Raleigh Community Church of Christ was the first plant and the Frayser Community Church was next. The MCPM is not essential to the emergence of these denominational Community Churches because Highland Street had already "planted" the Downtown Church. Perhaps the reason the MCPM does not claim the Downtown Church as its own creation is because that it is a "planting" also conceived by the Harding Graduate School of Religion.

The details of the origin of the Downtown Church in Memphis were applauded in **Harding**, public relations magazine for Harding University, in the summer of 1995. The abstract for the article in the table of contents read, "The church in the 'hood. Plant a church in inner-city Memphis? Six students from the Graduate School of Religion have done just that—and they've moved into make a difference." Scott Morris wrote the article which said, "The impetus behind the forming of this congregation in downtown Memphis is Dr. Evertt Huffard, professor of missions at the Graduate School . . . Most recently, Huffard has helped to oversee the development of a new master of religion degree in urban ministry for the Graduate School." The Downtown Church has borrowed from denominationalism by employing the use of a praise team to replace the song leader, the clapping of hands during the singing, the presence of icons in worship, and testimonials from the congregation. Again, Morris said in the article.

"Offsetting the harsh realities they face in their world, the church members recently joined together to add a touch of serenity to the inside of their building. They painted a mural that represents to them the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It serves as their focal point during worship services. Designed by a young child, the mural features a 25-foot cross on which hangs the crucified body of Christ. The body is painted a variety of colors, symbolizing that Christ was a man for all people."

Morris added, "The worship assembly includes a time of testimony during which members express their thanks for things most people take for granted." The Lord's supper (I Cor. 11) is given by Christ through the apostles' doctrine to remind and represent the death of Christ, not a 25-foot mural like the Catholic Church has promoted to the elimination of the truth for centuries. The word of God is to be preached in the worship (II Tim. 4:2), not the personal testimonies of the people like the denominations have used for years to heighten the emotions of those assembled (II Cor 10:12). The pattern followed by these churches clearly is not the New

Testament but the Community Church pattern.

The fact that the intention to continue to follow the Community Church pattern is present may be realized in yet another article in *Mission: Memphis* (Spring 1998).

"Raleigh Community Church was started through the cooperation of churches. Boulevard Church made a financial contribution and offered volunteers. An area-wide fundraising [sic] dinner, also organized by the Boulevard Church was attended by Christians from numerous congregations. Southeast Church offered advice from church planting experience. The Downtown Church loaned folding chairs and helped with a workday. Highland Street Church, the sponsoring congregation, provided oversight, some working fund and supplies. Highland's Women's Ministry donated resources through a baby shower for the 'baby church.' Singers from the Chelsey [sic] Avenue Church held a special concert to encourage Raleigh Community members and inspire seekers. The story of the new Frayser church plant will be the same."

While it is disturbing that such activities could ever once take place by those who were affiliated with the churches of Christ, the foreboding is exceeding in the promise contained with the last sentence, "The story of the new Frayser church plant will be the same." The collection for the saints (I Cor. 16:1-2) was augmented by "an area-wide fundraising [sic] dinner." The apostate Southeast Church offered its corrupt advice from its sad experience in departing from the truth. Highland's Women Ministry gave a baby shower to the "baby church." And, the church choir from Chelsea Avenue supplanted the congregational singing the word of God ordained (Eph. 5:19) for the purpose of encouraging and inspiring to follow them into denominationalism. Then the grand announcement, "The story of the new Frayser church plant will be the same."

Six Community Churches that remain affiliated with churches of Christ currently have a presence in Memphis and vicinity. They are: the Downtown Church, the Southeast Church, the Raleigh Community Church of Christ, The Frayser Community Church of Christ, the Cordova Community Church, and the Wonder City Church of Christ in West Memphis, Arkansas. The Cordova Community Church illustrates a point that was made earlier. The presence of the Community Church in Memphis is attributable to two institutions: The Harding Graduate School of Religion and the Highland Street Church of Christ. It was begun by John Mark Hicks, professor of Christian doctrine at the Harding Graduate School of Religion, and Gary Ealy, member of the Highland Street church of Christ, in October of 1997, with its first worship for the public April 12, 1998, on what was billed as Easter Sunday, following denominational doctrine. The new group meets in the facilities of Harding Academy, which is sponsored by churches of Christ throughout the Memphis area. Hicks and Ealy authored "A Theological and Strategic Statement for a New Church Planting" for this Community Church which contains over all, fourteen items of their unique creed. Like almost all credal treatises written by men, theirs contains some elements of truth and many elements of error. Jesus Christ said, "*But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matt. 15:9). Two excellent, scholarly articles recently have appeared in the *Yokefellow*, published by the Memphis School of Preaching and written by Mike Hixson, preacher for the Macon Road church of Christ in Memphis, which devastate the error advocated by Hicks and Ealy (Sept. 4, 1998; Oct. 21, 1998).

One service they unwittingly have rendered is to reveal the source upon which they are dependent for their Community Church. It is the wildly popular book written by Rick Warren, a

Southern Baptist preacher, titled *The Purpose Driven Church*. This book is to the Community Church Movement what *The Master Plan of Evangelism* was to the Crossroads/Multiplying Ministries Movement or International Churches of Christ. The "Foreword" indicates what may be produced from following the pattern of *The Purpose Driven Church*,

"In 1980, Rick graduated from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and moved with his wife to southern California to begin Saddleback Church in the living room of their home. He began with just one family. Now, fifteen years later, Saddleback Valley Community Church is recognized as the fastest-growing Baptist church in the history of America. It averages over 10,000 people in worship attendance each week on a beautiful, spacious seventy-four-acre campus. This is sufficient evidence that Rick Warren knows whereof he speaks. In 1995, Saddleback was selected as the Key Church of the Year by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."<sup>11</sup>

In the rage for large numbers of people and dollars, perhaps the motivation to follow as a pattern a book like *The Purpose Driven Church* is suggested in its "Part Four: Bringing In A Crowd." The heart of the success of the model is to target the type of people desired in the church and stylize the church to fit them. Warren wrote,

"For your church to be most effective in evangelism you must decide on a target. Discover what types of people live in your area, decide which of those groups your church is best equipped to reach, and then discover which styles of evangelism best match your target. While your church may never be able to reach everyone, it is especially suited to reaching certain types of people. Knowing who you're trying to reach makes evangelism much easier."<sup>12</sup>

Notice how the pattern of *The Purpose Driven Church* breaks with the pattern of the word of God. Jesus Christ taught that the word of God is the good seed of the kingdom that is to be *sown* into the hearts of men (Lk. 8:4-18). God is the one who determines the increase, and the sowing of the seed places one as a "*laborer together with God*" (I Cor. 3:6-9). The great commission is preaching and teaching the gospel to every creature, not just to those who fit a preferential "demographic" and "psychographic" profile. Jesus taught, "*But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2:9-10). The type of people Rick Warren's church is trying to reach is described in his book:

"...We've named our composite profile 'Saddleback Sam.' ... We discuss him in detail in every membership class ... His age is late thirties or early forties ... He is well educated. He likes his job. He likes where he lives. Health and fitness are high priorities for him and his family. He'd rather be in a large group than in a small one. He is skeptical of 'organized' religion. He likes contemporary music. He thinks he is enjoying life more than he did five years ago. He is self-satisfied, even smug, about his station in life. He prefers the casual and informal over the formal. He is overextended in both time and money."<sup>13</sup>

While the Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California is desirous of drawing that sort of smug, individual, the word of God teaches, "*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he*

*saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:6-7). And, Jesus spoke of the essentiality of humility for those who would entertain the notion of eternal life, "and said, Verily I say unto you. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).*

The word of God transforms the life of the believer. Paul strongly made this point when he said, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of Faith" (Rom. 12:1-3). No one is added to the kingdom of God who will not willingly submit himself to the righteousness of God. Again, observe the teaching of the Bible on this point, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3).*

But, proof that brethren Ealy and Hicks have patterned the Cordova Community Church after ***The Purpose Driven Church*** model needs to be presented. **First**, in their Strategic Statement they wrote:

"The new church plant will target the younger generation of Baby-Boomers (1955-61) and the whole of 'Generation X' also known as the Baby-Busters (1962-82). This is the first 'Post Christian' generation. They have experienced the breakdown of their homes, corruption in government, and a materialistic society. Cordova is populated by this generation and they are mainly married couples with young children."13

***The Purpose Driven Church*** is not unique in suggesting targeting a group to evangelize, but clearly it is integral to the pattern it proposes.

**Second**, in their Strategic Statement they follow ***The Purpose Driven Church*** model which calls for structured levels from large groups down to "cell" groups. Again, they wrote:

"**The first level is the celebration level.** Here the church gathers weekly as a whole body to worship. It celebrates the work of God in Christ and it laments the fall [sic] of the world ... **The second level is the fellowship level....The third level is the cell.** This is the heart of the 'cell church' structure, and it is where the intimate ministry of the church is conducted. This is a small group of 8-16 adults who gather weekly to share, pray and study the bible. The group serves both the relational and spiritual needs of its members, and it seeks to evangelize friends and acquaintances through their group meetings. This would serve as the primary environment in which Christians would care for each other.

The church plant will begin with a set of trained core members who will lead various home cell groups. These cell groups will provide the context for and means by which new members will be assimilated and equipped for ministry." 14

**Editor's Note:** The Endnotes for this part of the above article are given below. The remainder will be given after the next and final part.

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1980), p. 834.
2. Pages 18-43.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 39.
4. *The Restoration: The Winds Of Change*, Jim Laws, ed. (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1993), p. 509.
5. *FOCUS*, church bulletin of the Brownsville Road Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, better known as The Family Of God At Brownsville Road, A Church Of Christ; October, 1998.
6. Pages 122, 123.
7. *Heaven's Imperative or Man's Innovations: Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ?*, Curtis Cates, ed. (Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching Publication, 1995), p. 711.
8. Page 3.
9. J. E. Choate, "Hendersonville Community Church of Christ Celebrates Yum Kippur," *The Plumblin*e, Wayne Coates, ed. (Vol. 2, No. 9), p. 1.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
11. *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 11.
12. Page 157.
13. Pages 169, 170.
14. "A Theological and Strategic Statement for a New Church Planting," Gary Ealy and John Mark Hicks (Unpublished, October 5, 1997), p. 2.

**Editor's Note:** When caring brethren consider the influences behind the propagation of the Community Church it should cause great alarm. The Highland church in Memphis has been known for its liberalism for a great many years. They have considerable influence. The Harding School of Religion, is being supported by our brethren, and yet it is pushing an error which repudiates the truth set forth by our Lord concerning His church. The loyalty by some to some of our schools is obviously stronger than their loyalty to God's unadulterated truth. It is high time for faithful brethren to awaken to reality!

# A PLEA FOR BASIC HONESTY

*Richard Guill*

The blackest soot from the fires of hell is settling over our society and soiling every sector of it. That soot is dishonesty and lying. We have witnessed it in the top office of our land, the Presidency. Richard Nixon tried to assure the American people, "I'm not a crook!" But he lied. Bill Clinton likewise appeared before the American people on television and proclaimed, "I did not have sex with that woman, Miss Lewinski!" But he lied! Then, even before a grand jury. We have long joked about the dishonesty, deception, and outright lying done by our politicians in order to get elected and to stay in office. However, it is no joking matter. The first requirement of every leader ought to be honesty. Some of our former leaders understood that need and strove to be honest men. Remember the nickname given to Abraham Lincoln? It was "Honest Abe." The story is told of his walking many miles to return a nickel that had been given to him by mistake. George Washington in his *Moral Maxims* said, "I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man."

Before I go further, let me define what I mean by honesty. *Webster* says that it means, "(2) that will not lie, cheat, or steal; truthful, trustworthy, (4) being what it seems, genuine...(ant. Hypocrite)." The Bible uses the term often and the meaning in the Greek is essentially the same. One word translated as "honest" is *kalos* and it means, "good, admirable, becoming; ethical meaning of what is fair, right honorable; of such conduct that deserves esteem" (*Vine's*, p. 569).

The problem of dishonesty and lying is not found just in the politicians and government officials, but it pervades every echelon of our society. In the business world it is rampant. Many seem to think they have to cheat and lie in order to be successful. We have often joked about "buying a car" from someone because of the dishonesty that has soiled that business. How many secretaries have told a caller that the boss was not in when he was sitting in the next office? How many businesses have had to cease taking checks because so many of them were "rubber checks"? The ones who write them know they are not good when they write them.

How many young people today are dishonest? How many cheat on their exams? How many lie to their parents about where they are going and with whom?

How many mothers have lied for their daughters? The phone rings and a young man asks to speak to \_\_\_\_\_, but he is told that she is not there, because \_\_\_\_\_ asked her mother to tell him that if he called.

However, this is not a new problem. Many generations have been plagued by dishonesty that seemed to overwhelm and be characteristic of every person living. In ancient Greece, Diogenes, a philosopher and cynic, is reported to have been seen walking the streets of Athens in

daylight holding up a lighted lantern. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "I am looking for an honest man." I hope I never become that cynical, but sometimes you wonder, "Is there anyone who is really honest anymore?" Of course, I like to think that I am, don't you? Then that makes two!

## CONSIDER THE SOURCE

While we deplore the dishonesty all around us, we ought not to be surprised by it. We expect the world to be plagued with dishonesty and lying because the devil is the source of it. Jesus made that plain in John 8:44, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.*" And Paul called the devil, "*the god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4), and John shows us the extent of his rule, "*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*" (I Jno. 5:19). The world is full of dishonesty, deceit, and lying because it is under the control of the devil.

But not every soul that is in the world, and is still under the influence of the devil, is so corrupt of heart that they have a dishonest heart and lying lips. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said that the seed sown on the good ground *are they, which in an **honest and good heart***, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience (Lk. 8:15). Even those who are thus corrupted can still be saved by the powerful gospel of Christ (I Cor.6:9-11).

## A SIN AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

While we are vexed, distressed, and perplexed by such deception, dishonesty, and lying that occurs in the world all around us, we are even more so when we find it so prevalent among those who are supposed to be God's people.

God has always expected His people to be people of integrity and truthfulness and has revealed His sore displeasure at lying and deceit. Among the seven things said to be an abomination to God are: "*...a lying tongue, and a false witness that speaketh lies...*" (Prov. 6:16-19). If that was not plain enough, He makes it even plainer in Proverbs 12:22, "*Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.*"

There were times when Israel demonstrated honesty, integrity, and were not known for lying and deception. For instance, when the house of the Lord was being repaired, it is recorded in 2 Kings 12:15, "*Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on the workmen: for they dealt faithfully.*"

Then in the New Testament the warnings against lying are emphasized again. Ananias and Sapphira lied about the amount of their giving and God struck both of them dead. "*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*" (Acts 5:11). Paul warns the Colossian Christians, "*Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds*" (3:9). And James warns, "*lie not against the truth*" (3:14). John adds that to claim to have fellowship with God and still walk in darkness makes us a liar (I Jno. 1:6).

Paul tried to impress the need for God's people to show honesty in every situation. When discussing the collection for the needy brethren in Judea, Paul's plan was to be careful about,

*"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21).*

In the church of Christ today there is much lying, deception, and dishonesty. It is seen in all positions and every section of our brotherhood. Note a few examples:

**PREACHERS LIE.** Some preach lies and call it truth. Multitudes of examples could be produced. Look at the lies preached regarding such things as: divorce and remarriage, grace, Holy Spirit, and the list is almost endless. Yet often they will "sneak in" without making their position known, and teach these errors to unsuspecting brethren. If exposed, they are not honest enough to admit their error, but will seek to deny or to defend it

I knew a preacher who had been immoral with a woman other than his wife. He was caught red-handed and there was abundant proof of it, yet when faced with the evidence he continued to lie and deny that he was guilty. To my knowledge he has never repented, but continues to deny his sins.

I knew of another who had come to a town to hold a meeting. One day during the course of the meeting he was scheduled for lunch with one of the members. He asked to be excused from that appointment because he needed to make a trip to a city several miles away. He was excused. However, he was discovered to be with a woman in a restaurant in an obscure part of the same town. He had been having an affair with her when he once preached in the area.

Yes, unfortunately, some preachers will lie about these kinds of things and in other ways also

**ELDERS WILL LIE.** I have known of elders who have denied any financial support for a mission work by saying, "We are just not able (financially) to help right now," when they had several thousand dollars in the bank, not committed to any work. How many elders have dismissed a preacher and when asked by someone the reason for it, they have lied? Or a preacher has been immoral, or has preached false doctrine, and has been dismissed, but they will give him a recommendation to another congregation? That is deception and lying. I knew of an eldership composed of two elders. One of them was the treasurer. It was discovered that there was more money in the bank than the church members knew about and this elder never would let anyone see the books, nor would he account for that extra money. How does that measure up with Paul's philosophy of *"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21)?*

**MEMBERS LIE.** Again, there are a number of ways in which some of our brethren lie. You can probably add a long list that you can think of. However, sometimes we may lie without thinking we are lying. Let me give you an example or two. Do we sometimes lie when we sing? If so, we lie to both God and to one another since we sing to God and teach and admonish one another. Do you sing, "I want to be a worker for the Lord...I want to sing and pray, and be busy every day in the vineyard of the Lord," and then seldom or never become actively involved? Do you sing, "I'm satisfied with just a cottage below, a little silver and a little gold," but go out and work hours which interfere with your service to God so that you can make those few extra dollars? Do you sing, "I love to tell the story, Of unseen things above, Of Jesus and his glory, Of Jesus and his love," but never or seldom teach the word?

Like the great prophet Isaiah said so long ago, it seems that in our generation in the world around us and in spiritual Jerusalem, *"truth is fallen in the street"* (Isa. 59:14). But our condition in spiritual Zion is not as bad as it was in Jerusalem of old. Jeremiah was told to, *"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it"* (Jer. 5:1).

Let us not be as cynical as Diogenes. We don't have to light a lantern and search the city in daylight trying to find an honest man. The church of our Lord still has a large number of honest men who love and live the truth. They will be found in the streets with a lantern searching. But they are searching among those liars and dishonest people, looking for those few who still have an honest and good heart. The lantern they are carrying is the light of the gospel of Christ. Those souls desperately need that light before they are engulfed and drowned in the darkness of sin, error, lying, deception and dishonesty. For such there *"is revealed the blackness of darkness forever"* (Jude 13), because: *"...whosoever loveth and maketh a lie"* (Rev. 22:15), *"and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8).

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#### **Editor's Note:**

While there have been liars since early on in the human race, lying is much more common now than during any time in my life. Growing up during the 1930s, a time of great poverty with many, I can well remember that the people where I grew up were for the most part honest. This included those who didn't even profess any religion. It is so different, now that the mores in our present society are that lying is not an evil. Sadly, this way of thinking has had its impact upon the church of our Lord, as is the case with most changes in society.

## **A Sound Preacher Wanted**

The Northside church in Meridian, MS

is seeking a full-time preacher who is sound in the faith. They would like to find someone soon.

The congregation of about 60 members provides a house for the preacher. Those who are interested may call: (601) 483-2726 (church phone), or Ken Williams at (601) 681-8156.

**HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED ?**

Each month we have to pay several dollars postage due to returned mail. With few exceptions, we delete those who do not send a change of address. Will you help ? - Editor

## Reflecting On An Unusual Readers' Response

The following response from, "Fellow Weighdown participants," is being considered primarily as a case in point of the abysmal ignorance concerning the Bible and spiritual things which permeates so much of our present society. Sadly, the chance of changing people of this way of thinking is almost nil, though it is good when and if such does happen.

I will insert numbers in parenthesis in various parts of the response, and my reply will be by the corresponding numbers, beyond the response.

"Dear Mr. Pigg:

(1) As followers of Jesus Christ and his Holy Scripture, we are very offended by the claims you have made in the article on Weighdown Workshop. It is amazing to us that you cannot see the Lord working through this ministry. Which Bible are you using to back up your arguments that this ministry is not Biblical. (2) This program has brought me face to face with Jesus Christ. I feel closer to my Lord than I have ever felt. I am sure that is wrong in your opinion, right? (3) My God is a God of Grace. The grace that allowed me to come upon a biblically based program, and teach me how to turn to him and be totally dependent upon him for everything. How is that wrong?

(4) As for Gwen's church? Since when is guitar playing and drum playing not biblical?? David used the harp and tambourine to praise the Lord!!! Can you honestly say that God is up in Heaven thinking 'you stupid people, how can you worship me like that?' Don't you think he appreciates any form of worship that is sincere and directed to him? (5) By the way, don't you think that God knows the heart of all of us and that when we are in worship to him, do you think a guitar is what counts?

(6) Have you ever heard of Ruth or Naomi? Or how about Esther? Last time I read the Bible these women were not ministering?? I don't understand your way of thinking. God is a God of love. How can you honestly listen to Gwen Shamblin and her heart for the Lord and for other people, and write these things? I don't understand why people like yourself, are so bored with their own issues that they have to find things to tear apart.

(7) I know many Christian people that have listened to these tapes and have had great success. Success measured in weightloss. Success, most of all, in their relationship with the Lord and opening up to be all of the person that he has made them to be. It seems like if God is

touching people's lives in a positive way, somebody else should have no right to tear that apart. (8) I'm honestly praying that God will open your eyes and the eyes of those around you to the truth of the scriptures. One of Gwen's points in this program is that we take our eyes off of others and put them on ourselves. Maybe that is what you should do. (9) Don't worry so much about Gwen. I think that her and God are doing fine!!! I also think that God is fully capable of destroying this ministry on his own if it is not of HIM!!!. He does not need your help.

(10) I do not mean to sound harsh or mean. I really feel sad that you feel the way you do and I really will pray that God will show YOU the truth!!

In Christ's love,

Fellow Weighdown participant's."

My reply to the numbered items above follows:

(1) I'm sorry that you are offended by the factual things which I have pointed out about Gwen Shamblin and her activities. Many of the things I have pointed out are from her own writings, and other things are clearly matters of fact. It shouldn't be amazing to you that I cannot see the Lord working through such a false teacher as she. Just about any Bible will clearly verify Gwen's errors. You must not use any Bible, or else you would quickly see that Gwen Shamblin violates God's word.

(2) Yes, I believe you are clearly wrong, in your statement that the program has brought you face to face with Christ. Only God's word will do that, and that is in the figurative sense only. I will not deny your feelings, but I will point out something about feelings which is very important. (*See page 14*)

We cannot rely upon our feelings as evidence of God's approval. Paul thought he should persecute God's children, Christians (Acts 26:9-10). (3) God is a God of grace, but grace teaches that people should live "*soberly, righteously, and godly*" (Tit. 2:11-12). One cannot follow the errors of Gwen Shamblin and live "godly." If you are truly dependent upon God, you will go to His word for guidance, and not the false teachings of anyone.

(4) Guitar playing and drum playing are not authorized by the New Testament. It cannot be done as a matter of the faith which comes from the hearing of God's word (Rom. 10:17). It is a transgression of the doctrine of Christ (2 Jno. 9). What David did is not what God authorizes Christians to do. He offered animal sacrifices, burned incense and other things which Christians cannot do with God's approval. I don't know if God thinks "stupid people," but I do know what he wants in worship. Christ said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (Jno. 4:24). No, I don't think God appreciates any form of worship that is sincere and directed to him. In fact, I know He doesn't appreciate such. It is not "*in truth*." (5) Yes, God knows the hearts of men. Therefore, He knows that the guitar and other musical instruments are used because that is what pleases man, not the heavenly Father.

(6) Ruth, Naomi and Esther were not public preachers like Gwen Shamblin. Neither did they teach error. Paul plainly teaches that women must not exercise authority over men in spiritual things, as stated in I Cor. 14, and I Tim. 2. If you are followers of "His Holy Scripture" as you claim, why would you overlook Paul's teaching? I'm bored? Not me. But I do have a

sincere feeling of concern when people clearly ignore God's word and do what makes them "feel" good. God is a God of love, but our love for Him is shown by doing His will. John said, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments"* (I Jno. 5:3). Jesus said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (Jno. 14:15). I try to guide people to God's word, but so often they will not listen. I'm disappointed when they accuse me of "tear[ing] something apart," as you have done.

(7) You speak of people opening up and being "all of the person he [God] has made them to be." God has not made people to be followers of that which is contrary to His will, but rather He desires that they follow the truth which makes free (Jno. 8:32). If God is "touching people's lives" in a positive way, they will walk in the truth, not error.

(8) Have you thought of praying to God to open your own eyes to the truth of the scriptures? I've noted in all your letter, you have not mentioned even one verse from the Bible. Perhaps you should follow Gwen's advice in this case and take your eyes off me and put them on yourself.

(9) Of Gwen you say, "I think that her and God are doing fine." There's no doubt but that God is doing fine, but how can Gwen be doing fine when she leads people into error, as she has evidently led you? By what scripture would you conclude she is doing fine? Since she transgresses the *"doctrine of Christ"* (2 Jno. 9) she doesn't have God's approval. If God destroyed every "ministry" which is in error, a great many would vanish from the earth. You must know there are many false teachings today. If you are a follower of Christ and his Holy Scriptures, I know that you know that.

(10) Don't be sad for me. I feel the way I do because I love God's truth and want to do my best to follow it and encourage others to do likewise. You may not have been "harsh or mean" but you sure have been judgmental, and that has not been based on any truth that you have shown. Your letter has reminded me of a sad occasion with our Lord. When he came near the city of Jerusalem, the record says, *"he beheld the city and wept over it"* (Lk. 19:41). Our Lord wept because the people's eyes were blinded to the truth. Oh, how many are there like that in our day?

It is indeed sad that a number of people have shown their disregard for God's truth in swallowing the errors of the Gwen Shamblin activities as in the case above. But in a way it is sadder still when our own brethren are doing the very same thing! When elders will bring in such an activity of error over the objections of even one person, that's tragic. It is frightening when members will accept such!

- - - Walter W. Pigg

## **FELLOWHELPERS**

May and June 2000

Pearl Bryant 60.00

Lou Nell Elkins	50.00
M/M John H. Brown	75.00
Ted Harshbarger	10.00
Anonymous	100.00
Steve & Sandra Daugherty	300.00
Phyllis Mitchell	40.00
Gene and Sue Colley	15.00
Clarence E. Hall	100.00
M/M Leon Crisp	50.00
Hugh Word	25.00
Geraldine Satler	5.00
Anonymous	75.00
James W. Cagle	40.00
Weldon Thomas	10.00
Elizabeth Sublett	10.00
Evelyn G. Menefee	50.00
Effie M. Seawright	25.00
O. L. Bruce	50.00
Mrs. Bill Foster	50.00
Anonymous	100.00
Anonymous	10.00
Pine Ridge church of Christ	100.00
Green Plain church of Christ	150.00
Maple Hill church of christ	200.00
Alhambra church of Christ	50.00
Wards Chapel church of Christ	<u>25.00</u>
May and June contribution	1,775.00

*"That we might be fellowhelpers  
to the truth" (3 John 9)*

**Please accept our sincere thanks for the way in which you continue to support what we are doing to promote God's word by various means of communication. Without your financial help and your great encouragement we could not carry on. - - Editor**

## **Banner of Truth Financial Report**

May and June 2000

Balance on hand May 1	13,546.52
May and June contribution	<u>1,775.00</u>
Total funds available	15,321.52
May and June expenses:	
Mailing <i>Banner of Truth</i>	1,069.19
Paper (for eight months)	1,600.00
Phone	23.12
Labels	48.49
E-mail	24.00
Strapping material	51.02
Stamps	<u>33.00</u>
Total May & June expenses	2,848.82
Total funds available	15,321.52
Less May & June expenses	<u>2,848.82</u>
Balance on hand June 30	12,472.70

## READERS' RESPONSE

"Please accept the enclosed contribution for your *Banner of Truth* publication. As always, we pray you have much success in your efforts to uphold the Gospel of our Lord. I would like you to please add another name to your mailing list for *Banner of Truth*....- **Sandra Daugherty.**" - **GA.** (*We are happy to add the names of those who are interested in the cause of Christ. Thanks for being one of our fellowhelpers to the truth - Editor*).

"I've been receiving your wonderful *Banner of Truth*. I really enjoy it. So I am sending you a little gift to keep up the good work. God bless you and all people like you. I attend the church of Christ in Lewiston, MT, which is 45 miles from Coffee Creek, MT. Thank God for people like you. Small gift of \$100 and I am asking your prayers. I'll be 93 years young this Aug. 17th. Keep up the good work. Love in Jesus my Savior - **Mamie Billadeau.**" - **MT.** (*It is a joy to hear from one who has your concern for the cause of Christ. In our part of the country, I fear that a great many would not travel 45 miles to services. We thank you for your generous gift. We Pray that you will have a very happy birthday this year, and several more in the years that are to come - Editor*). Next page

"We just wanted to let you know how much we appreciate *Banner of Truth*. Enclosed please find a small check for your appreciation. And I would also like you to send BOT to my daughter - **Alvin & Mae Swain.**" - **AR.** (*We thank you for supplying another name for our mailing list, and also for the check. We always appreciate any amount which is given to keep our work going - Editor*).

"I'm not sure if you still remember me, I called a while back, about a problem with the church here in Council Bluffs, Iowa. It had to do with the weigh down workshop program that the church let through the doors....I think you are doing a wonderful job with *Banner of Truth*. I just got the one called, 'The One True Church.' If you need anything please let me know... - **Daniel A. Ross.**" - **IA.** (*That is not the only place where there is trouble relative to the Gwen Shamblin activities. The question continues to come to my mind — Do many of our brethren just not have any concern for the truth any longer? Evidence indicates a negative answer! - Editor*).

"I just received my copy of B.O.T. today and I wanted to thank you for having all of this in print so that we can read about the false teaching's of today. I am really thankful for all you brothers out there that care about our souls. ...Some months ago I wrote about the preacher here who said that there were going to be animals in heaven. Well, he departed Monday. I know that he has left some of his false teachings here. But at least he has gone to Dallas, TX. From reading BOT and reading the Bible you have been a lighthouse standing on a hill, to show safe passage. God bless you and your family - **Charlene Johnson.**" - **TX.** (*Isn't it a shame that there are a great many false teachers today? When one leaves one place for another, error is almost always taken along - Ed.*)

"I don't know why the Olive Branch church has quit getting B.O.T. I would very much like to have a subscription to it. I miss it very much. We need a lot of preachers and members

that will hold up Banner of Truth. I appreciate your kind efforts. Thank you so very much. Enclosed is small check - **Christine Coopwood.**" - **MS.** (*Thanks. Happy to add your name. Some times when addresses change, we don't receive a notice of that change. We usually delete names when this occurs - Ed.*)

**Editor's e-mail:** < [wpiggbot@apex.net](mailto:wpiggbot@apex.net) >

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