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Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:
Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday:
Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Agony

The Spirit says the christian life is a “race” (Heb 12.1), from the word *ἀγώνα*, which in ABCs looks like *agona*. The root of this Greek word is the origin of our word “agony.” Agony is all about pain, anguish, and struggle. So then; we have “set before us” an “agony.” Now, that’s interesting.

It’s good to look at the different ways a word and its “cousins” are translated. Jesus talks about “striving” to “enter in at the strait gate” (Lk 13.24). He was “in an agony” when he prayed in the garden (22.44). Paul speaks of “the conflict which ye saw in me” (Phill 1.30). A literal translation of “fight the good fight” would be “agonize over the good agony” (1Tim 6.12).

A bedridden brother once wept before me because he cannot “go to church.” He asked for sermon tapes and printed material. He is on his back but still running. He said, “I love heaven; I can’t wait to get there.” He made me think of some brothers and sisters whose “agony” only comes to view when they “explain” why they can’t make it to church; why they can’t do their Bible lessons; why they can’t visit the sick; why they can’t talk to people about their souls. With furrowed brows and scrunched-up faces full of agony, they systematically excuse themselves from any sense of responsibility.

When I think about the things I sometimes “agonize” over: going to Wal-Mart; putting on a shirt and tie; deciding what I want to eat—Father, forgive me. We will agonize to make our bodies trim; agonize as we preen ourselves in the mirror; agonize to get an education; agonize to get good jobs; agonize over overtime; agonize over making time for fun. It is surely not an overstatement to say that we just do not see a lot of agonizing over how to get to Heaven and whether we are headed there. —AA

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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Defying the Army of the Living God

From the beginning of the inspired history of man, a conflict has raged between the servants of God and the devil. This conflict will not cease as long as time stands. God’s enemies have almost always been in the majority. Now, those defying God’s army are greater in number, and fighting with greater intensity than ever in our lives. If victory would be ours, we must war the best warfare ever, never giving up.

In I Samuel 17, we find an interesting record of an ongoing conflict between God’s people, Israel, and the Philistines. In this particular instance of that conflict we find that “Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army” (v. 21). Then, “there came up the champion of the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines...” At this point, the men of Israel lost their nerve. “And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid” (v. 24). But, thanks to David the tide would turn.

As the men of Israel discussed this champion Philistine, Goliath, David inquires as to the reward which would be given to the man who killed the Philistine. It is at this point that David asks, “...who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the Living God? (v. 26). We know the rest of the story, how that David took his sling and five stones and went forth to meet the Philistine.

After being ridiculed by the Philistines, David responded to Goliath: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied” (v. 45).

Brethren, today we are in principle facing a host of Champion Philistines. This we shall discuss in greater detail in the course of our discussion. But one important thing we must remember is that, it is only by going up against them in the “name of the Lord” that we can expect to stand. When we turn aside from the Lord, defeat is sure to come. It is enough to cause us to weep to think of the many that have already suffered defeat, and passed from this life without even one ray of true hope.

Israel and the Philistines fought a carnal war; it is in order that we reflect on these wars of old and draw analogies and lessons in light of the spiritual war which the New Testament church is to wage. →

BANNER OF TRUTH

Published by the
Hickory Grove
church of Christ

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Published monthly and sent free to interested persons. Made possible by the contributions of congregations and individuals. Our purpose is to: 1) Teach and uphold God's truth; 2) Encourage mission efforts to seek the lost; 3) Oppose that which is "contrary to sound doctrine" and not in harmony with the "doctrine of Christ."

Continued from Page 1

I. THE HORRORS OF PHYSICAL WAR

In my time I've been around for a number of wars. I was actually involved in only one, but I know something of several more, and I know something of the horrors involved. I was in World War II. I knew about the Korean War, the Vietnam War, The first war with Iraq, the second war with Iraq, in which we are now engaged. There is the ongoing war with Islam and its terrorists. Wars cost in many ways.

The Cost in Lives. Scores of millions of lives have been lost. This has included innocent women and children, as well as those who died in battle. It included dear friends and relatives of mine. I can only imagine the sadness and broken hearts of those who received a telegram or a knock on the door, bringing the sad news of the death of a loved one and family member.

The Pain and Suffering. There is no way to measure the suffering endured because of these wars. Not only by those injured in battle, but those who have suffered in other ways. Millions have suffered from

starvation and disease brought on by war. And, what of the death camps, prisoner abuse, such like? As for me, I can't fully comprehend what millions have endured in pain and suffering. But this is war.

Social Disorders. Just think of the disruption of families, even entire societies, because of war. Many families have been separated for the remainder of their lives, leaving behind precious children and family members. There is no way to measure the heartbreak which millions have experienced.

The Destruction of Property. Entire cities have been destroyed, including the homes of millions and the places of employment which provided people with a means of life. Family treasures have been lost or destroyed. Then add such things as ships, planes, automobiles. Roads and bridges, and many other things have been destroyed.

Financial Costs. Millions have been burdened with the financial cost of war. Taxes which have been paid to finance wars could have been used for the well-being of millions. On and on we could go.

The things above involve the mental and physical. Personally, I can't think of anything which has brought about as much pain, heartache and suffering as has war. War has been aptly described as "hell" in one meaning of that word.

A Comparison. The horrors of physical war have been discussed in order to help us understand better the spiritual war in which men have been engaged since the beginning, and in which we are now engaged in a greater way than ever. If only we could bring ourselves to realize that the forces now defying the Army of the Living God can bring upon us greater consequences than any physical war. We know at least something of the horrors of physical war, but do we fully realize the horrors which are involved in this spiritual war? Many comparisons are used in God's word, and it seems to me that this comparison is indeed timely. With hopes of impressing more clearly upon our minds the greater terror of the spiritual war than that of a physical war, we should reflect upon the nature of the spiritual war.

II. WHAT IS THE ARMY OF THE LIVING GOD IN OUR DAY?

To begin, let it be noted that this army is a spiritual army, not a physical army. No tanks, planes, guns ↴

Readers' Response

We do appreciate hearing from our readers from many places in the world. We response we receive is often so very encouraging, and that includes foreign responses.

"Grace and peace to you and all the saints from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. My name is Mican Vevera and I am a Christian of the Lord's church at Kamkumung, Papua New Guinea. I teach Religious Instructions in two secondary schools and one primary school for 40 minutes every Friday and Wednesday, for almost 6 years....They (from America) send me some materials and a Banner of Truth, Vol. 13, Feb. 2004, No. 2, "The Biblical Significance of the Word Work" I read it and it really encouraged me with the work I am doing because some times I thought of giving up, but our Lord is so good that He is always helping me. I am interested to have a copy every month it is free because I cannot afford to order books or materials to help me teach. Please if you have some old copies of Banner of Truth that you don't have a need of or any other materials which think can help me, you can send it also to me. **Micah Vevera**" – **New Guinea.** (I've written to Micah to see if his address is still current. If so, we hope to be able to send some material. It is sad that mailing costs have increased so much. – Editor).

"I am very happy to inform you that I have received the packet of papers you mailed me. There are 15, vol. 14 number 11 in the pack. Thank you so very much for the kindness you have shown in responding to my requests. We shall use these gifts of yours in ways that will bring glory to our Father in heaven and edify His children here on earth... **Sylvester A. Imogoh**" – **Nigeria.**

"Beloved brother Walter W. Pigg, ...I am very happy to be in touch with you through this letter and it is very glad to me in the Lord, to meet you by way of correspondence. First we thank God and Christ (Eph. 5:20) and to you, and to our most beloved brother James D. Cox, of Southern California School of Evangelism. The same brother send me a copy of your printed page BANNER OF TRUTH. Which I received on November 27th, 2002. Our thanks to James D. Cox, a good and productive servant of God, who is a great source of strength, and gift of God to us. We appreciate him, and love him. Myself and our brothers enjoyed the articles in the BANNER OF TRUTH very much, and we discussed some of the contents in our regular Bible Classes. Thank you very much to you that you evangelizing and strengthening the preachers, Bible Class Teachers, and brothers and sisters all over the world by way of your printed

page, with the blessings of the Lord. We pray that it should be widely used for the Lord's service to spread the kingdom of our Lord. God bless you all those, whose efforts are collectively brought up in the form of BANNER OF TRUTH. I would so much appreciate having copies of the previous and present, to be mostly used in the church services as well as share them with others too. It is very pleasure to us, we shall be added to your mailing list....**K.M. Ratna Kumar**" – **India.** (It is good to hear from a brother in India. In 1970, I made my first trip to India. We knew the Carl Johnsons who lived near Ooty in the Nilgris. He conducted the Mt. Zion School of Preaching for several years. I later made another trip to India for three months and taught in the school and preached many places. I was there for a short time later, but I did the Mt. Zion Newsletter for about seven years. I will check to see if your name is on our mailing list. If not, we can send a copy each month. We used to send bundles to several places in other countries but mailing costs have increased so much it is not going to be possible to continue. May the Lord bless you and others who are involved in the Lord's word. – Editor)

"I want to thank you for your 'free' publication of Banner of Truth. I thank you for your great desire for preaching, teaching, supporting, and defending the truth. At present you are sending about 16 of your publication to my home. From here I have been mailing some to others and taking most to church and passing them out to the leading men. This past Lord's Day one of the men suggested sending you a check to support you work. This is the reason for the fifty dollar check.... Due to the present circumstances, I humbly would like to make additional request of you. I was wondering if you would be willing to send some directly to the church in addition to what you are sending me. It is a small congregation, so the 16 or so that you already send me, plus, a possible 16 more would be sufficient at present. This way, more members and others will have the opportunity to receive a copy. Finally, if possible, could you put my aunt and cousin on your mailing list too... **Dale Steele**" – **OH.** (We shall be happy to accommodate your request to add the names and also to send a bundle to the church address as you suggest. It is always an encouragement to us when brethren like you take an active part in getting the paper out to interested people. We appreciate those who send names to be added to our mailing list, since we lose some every month. Some do not send a change of address when they move and we mark them off our mailing list. Convey our thanks to the brethren there for the generous gift to help us with our expenses. Expenses, just about like everything else, continue to increase. – Editor)

FELLOW-HELPERS

February, March, April 2006

Pine Ridge	200.00
Saks	180.00
Pilot Oak	25.00
Berea	100.00
Raymond Leadbetter	25.00
Jim C. Cooper	60.00
Phyllis Mitchell	45.00
Cynthia McIntyre	90.00
Shirley Phillips	30.00
Robert M. Price	600.00
Paul Curless	50.00
Anonymous	200.00
Harold Gibson	20.00
Randy L. Ballard	10.00
Ronald Edmondson	100.00
Charles Miller	35.00
A. R. Huffman	25.00
Mrs. John H. Brown	75.00
Barbara Kist	20.00
Anonymous	100.00
Judy Blackman	25.00
Gene Colley	20.00
Martha Feltman	5.00
Nannie Philpot	2.00
James B. Olson	30.00
Guy Grone	20.00
Joe C. Turbeville	10.00
Dorothy West	25.00
Hibernia Weaver	5.00
Lola Mae Higbee	15.00
Total contribution	2,147.00

“*fellow-helpers to the truth*” (3 John 8)

Banner of Truth Financial Report

February, March, April 2006

Balance on hand Feb. 1, 2006	11,940.98
Feb., March, April contribution	2,147.00
Total funds available 14,087.88	
Total expenses:	
Postage January – April	3,596.33
Paper	1,800.00
Phone	24.19
Travel	27.00

Ink, staples and other supplies	139.49
Mailing labels	96.07
Total expenses	5,682.98
Total funds available	14,088.88
Less expenses	5,682.98
Balance on hand April 30	8,405.90

We continue to express our sincere thanks for those make our work possible . Without our concerned brethren we would have to give up. We have confidence that our brethren will continue to be *fellowhelpers* in getting the word out.

You will notice that our balance on hand is considerably less than it has been for quite some time. Our balance is down from \$11,940.98 to \$8,405.90. There are a number of reason why this is so.

One thing which has hit us quite hard is the increase in mailing costs. Our cost for here in the U.S. has increased at least 12 percent. We have been sending about twenty bundles to other countries, mostly in Africa. The cost of a one pound bundle (15 copies) was \$1.80. It increased to \$2.85, in one raise. Then it increased to \$3.35. Now, there are different prices to different countries, with some places being near \$10.00 for a one pound bundle. This makes foreign mailing almost out of bounds. We are deeply disappointed by this, since we had so much positive response from brethren in other countries. We are sending more than fifty individual copies of BOT at a cost of just over 80 cents. We will be sending a single copy to the places where we have been sending bundles.

Our balance on hand decreased quite a bit due to a smaller contribution for the past three months. We have had a real good balance, and we are not hurting now, but it has gone down.

Also, during the past three months our expenses have been greater. We had to buy paper, and the price of the paper increased from \$1,580.00 for 200,000 sheets to \$1,800.00 for the same amount.

Again, we say Thank You, for making our work possible. We believe that what we are doing has never been needed more than it is needed right NOW.

—Editor

and bombs and other implements of war are involved. Yet, in a figurative way, many references are made to a physical army. We can understand why this is so. Just about everyone knows something about physical war and its horrors. This helps people to understand better the spiritual war in which we are now involved.

Members of this spiritual army are described as soldiers. Paul said to his son, Timothy, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). Paul then follows up by instructing Timothy that “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (v. 4). Epaphraditus is called a “fellow soldier” (Phil. 2:25). In Paul’s letter to Philemon he refers to Archippus as “our fellow-soldier” (v. 2).

We quite often sing, “Soldiers of Christ arise, And put your armor on...” There is no doubt but that the title of this song is based on Ephesians chapter six. Note some of the things said in Ephesians 6, which have reference to a soldier: 1) put on the whole armor of God. 2) Loins girt about with truth. 3) Having on the breastplate of righteousness. 4) Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 5) Taking the shield of faith. 6) And take the helmet of salvation. 7) And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The above could hardly be more descriptive of a soldier when Paul wrote the Ephesians’ letter. Jude said to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (v. 3). *Vine’s* says that word “contend” means to “contend about a thing as a combatant.” In Revelation 19, it is said of the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords,” that the “beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together, to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his **army**” (Rev. 19:19). The one who “sat on the horse” is none other than Christ. So Christ is here pictured as having an army. The figures used in many other places make it clear that God has an army, made up of Christians.

What is the army of the living God in our day? It is the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In view of this, it stands to reason that if God’s army is to overcome those who defy it, it must be strong and stay strong. In keeping with this fact is Jude’s admonition to “contend for the faith” (v. 3). Timothy was

charged to “War a good warfare” (I Tim. 1:18). Paul told the Corinthians to “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Cor. 16:13). Earlier Paul said, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord...” (15:58). Paul was looking forward to the “crown of righteousness” on the basis that he had “...fought a good fight...finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Victory requires the same of us.

III. THE ENEMIES OF GOD’S ARMY THAT WE FACE TODAY

The New Testament is filled with warnings which Christians face, and must overcome if they are to be victorious. There is the warning against false prophets and those within the church who would “speak perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30).

The enormity of the problem faced. Never in our lives have we faced such a strong and determined enemy as now; yet, so many fail to realize the enormity of the problem. I think of Neville Chamberlain of Britain when he was taken in, and allowed the wool to be pulled over his eyes by Adolph Hitler. Too many of our brethren are somewhat like Chamberlain. They act as if there is peace, when they are about to be consumed by evil.

God’s enemies are defying His army in many ways. We shall enumerate some of those ways in our discussion, yet some brethren don’t get it. One area of opposition involves so-called “Christian Holidays.” Let me make it clear that I do not believe God’s word teaches Christians to observe these days. Now, we can’t say, “The church of Christ doesn’t observe these days,” and be truthful. This is because some of our brethren are now observing such days. We should say, “God’s word doesn’t teach the observance of these days.” This is the truth of the matter. Yet, some brethren still don’t get it.

The opposition to Christmas, Easter, and other religious holidays, IS NOT because the critics believe the Bible doesn’t teach their observance, but rather because these holidays have a religious significance. The critics don’t believe in God and His word. Their Goal is to remove God’s influence. →

The Ten Commandments. We know God's word does not teach the observance of the Ten Commandments in this age. We are living under the reign of Christ, not the Law of Moses. But do I believe people should have a right to post the Ten Commandments? Yes, I sure do. Those who oppose the Ten Commandments do not do so because they believe the Bible doesn't authorize their observance, but because they represent God. They oppose that which indicates a belief in God, whether it be in error or in truth. With them, God is out, unbelief in.

An example of some brethren, who don't get the point, is that of a person with considerable Bible knowledge. This person said, "Why, we don't believe in the Ten Commandments." The critics don't believe in the Ten Commandments, or any other part of God's word. They oppose the Ten Commandments because they call attention to God. See the point? One would and should, if they understood that the enemies of God's army are bent on destroying every influence of God they can.

There is something in common with these enemies of God's army, the church. Our Lord put it this way: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reproved" (John 3:19-20).

IV. EFFORTS TO DISCREDIT GOD'S WORD

In my growing up years (I was born in 1925) most people, at least gave lip service to a claim to believed God's word. Although many did not show by their actions that their belief in God and His word was very strong, they did show the influence of God's word in their lives. I mean by this that most people would not lie or steal. My father, though he died without becoming a Christian, often made reference to what "The Good-book said." He did not lie or steal, or engage in so many sinful acts which are common today. His belief in God did have some influence in his life, as it did in so many others. Over the years as I have seen faith in God wane, I have seen sin and immorality in its wide sense increase. With God out of the way, anything goes.

Syndicated Columnist, Cal Thomas, had a very in-

teresting piece in the Murray *Ledger & Times*, April 11, 2006. The piece was entitled, "The Gospel of Unbelief." The article gets right to the heart of the problem – Efforts to discredit God's word. From his column and other sources we shall consider a few examples of this widespread effort to do away with every vestige of God's influence by discrediting His word. If God's word is not true, as an increasing number of people now believe, God's influence will be virtually nil. Though the fool said in his heart, "There is no God" (Psa. 14:1), even the fool should recognize there is a God, as testified by God's handiwork in the creation.

Jesus Walks on Water. A Florida State University scientist has speculated that Jesus walked on ice, rather than on the water. That would have been some cold spell, in that part of the world. What about Peter? Did he fall through the ice? But leave it to the newspapers to carry such tomfoolery, and in some instances imply some measure of credibility.

The "Gospel of Judas." This uninspired document says Christ asked Judas to betray him. Who could believe such without denying what God's word clearly says? Perhaps such stuff might give some comfort to one who has made up his mind that he is not going to believe God's word in the first place. It seems like days of old when the rebellious Israelites wanted the prophets to "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). It is a sad day in spiritual Israel when some of our brethren have that disposition of mind. They don't want to hear the truth, and they are not going to do so.

"The Da Vinci Code." This book erroneously claims Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered children by her. What could be the purpose of this book, other than to make money, of course? Is it not an effort to discredit God's word? If it be true, then God's word is false. That is what some would like to accomplish. That is, disbelief in God's word.

B.C. and A.D. out. After all these years, would you believe that there are those who want to substitute something in the place of these initials? The letters B.C. have meant "Before Christ," and A.D. has meant in Latin "Anno Domini" (Year of the Lord). There are those who would change these initials to "C.E., or Common Era," and "B.C.E., before Common Era." Why in the name of common sense should the

anything I write, it seems.

(3) Your commendation of my articles, reminds me of those who go about to sweeten up a person before pouring on the salt. In most instances the "salt" is not pointed out specifically. I find this to often be the case of critics.

(3) "Extremely critical and overly negative" sure lets us know what you think. However, you come up short on examples and what is contrary to God's word. To be consistent, you would likely find some of the New Testament characters to be the same.

(4) I'm sorry that you are "often embarrassed" by my "handling of the issue." If you would be so kind as to give me some valid examples it would make for a better understanding as to why you are "often embarrassed."

(5) Yes, I'm aware of Ephesians 4:5. I also understand what it means to "speak the truth in love." If New Testament writers spoke the truth in that manner, we must admit that it often involved criticism. May I suggest that you do some additional study on the meaning of the "love" which is so often used in the New Testament?

(6) I am aware of Matthew 18:15, and I am aware that you do not understand it. It is not a "a serious misreading of the text" to conclude that it deals with personal offenses; it is the plain meaning of the words. Be careful that other plain teachings in God's word are not so misunderstood. Your view of the passage is a "a sugar-stick" for critics of critics.

(7) Yes, I have criticized things which I did not see or hear "firsthand." I take the word of credible witnesses, as Paul and others did. You should perhaps look in the mirror, C.C.; you have mentioned a number of things without "firsthand" information. Benton had a radio program, and though I did not hear it myself, others did hear it. Now you mention John Dale. These are your words: "Also, in the recent issue, you criticized John Dale's participation in a revival that you yourself had not attended." Now, not only did you not have "firsthand" information, you stated a falsehood. I was there when John Dale spoke, and heard every word. My fellow gospel preacher, Richard Guill, was also there. Furthermore, I have a tape of what John Dale said. You have spoken falsely against me, and if there is much honor in you, you will apologize

for your false statement.

(8) I could not "air all the dirty laundry in the brotherhood" in my bulletin each month, if I tried to do so. If you have any idea as to what is happening in our brotherhood, you know that error is rampant as never before in our lifetime. If your knowledge of God's word is more than just a little, you know that we are to speak out against error. I find that the printed page is an effective way of getting people's attention. What would you recommend? Silence?

(9) It would help us to understand your knowledge of how to "handle matters" if you gave us some examples. Would you say this is in the realm of opinion? Could it be that you are making your opinion a matter of doctrine?

(10) There you go again, stating something that you give not one iota of evidence to prove. That is, that I "seem to have made many trivial issues a matter of doctrine." Could you give me just one example to prove your point?

(11) That you "have come to view things differently" accounts for much of your criticism. There are many warnings in God's word about the danger of viewing "things differently." I would imagine one of the things you view "differently" would be that you somehow have a right to dole out sharp criticism against me, for my criticism of things which are not in harmony with God's word. Have you ever thought about how inconsistent you are? If not, you should. In my more than fifty years of preaching I have seen many, including close friends, come to see things "differently." Viewing things differently has resulted in a great portion of the Lord's church having departed from the old paths, having become more "contemporary" in many ways. I am thankful that that at least 95 percent of our readers still view things as they did years ago, when the majority of our brethren looked to the distinctiveness of the Lord's church and His word as the only rule of faith and practice.

(12) It is true that some issues are more important than others, but this is not to say that we can engage in and uphold a sin which might be considered of less importance.

The above letter of criticism is an example of unauthorized change. The fact that we do not criticize everything in the BOT doesn't justify unjust criticism.

—Editor

A Critical Reader Response

It is our practice to invite responses to what we carry in Banner of Truth, be they positive or negative. While most of the response we receive is overwhelmingly positive, some is negative. The response referred to above is a mixture of both, with the negative prevailing. We are carrying this rather long response since it reveals how some brethren think, and how their thinking may change. We have seen this in a great many instances and have been greatly disappointed in some of those. While we cannot know what is in the mind of man except by what he says and does, we wonder if perhaps some start out with good and sincere intentions only to become captivated by that which is not good, since it is not in harmony with God's will. The letter of criticism which follows was dated Oct. 27, 2004.

Since the above letter has only two paragraphs, I will insert numbers in the letter in parenthesis () and respond accordingly to those numbers. This should make it easier to follow my response. Since the letter is from "Concerned Christian," I will use the initials C.C. to refer to the individual. The letter, in its entirety begins below.

Brother Pigg, I'm writing to you because I am concerned about your articles in your paper each month. (1) I first would like to commend you for the good articles that you have either written or included (e.g., the issues dealing with Islam and the recent articles on the upcoming election). I only wish that you would include more articles such as that. (2) Unfortunately, the majority of the articles are extremely critical and overly negative. (3) At times I agree with your assessment of certain issues. However, I am often embarrassed with your handling of the issue. (4) While I cannot judge your motive, I find myself feeling that the wording of the article fails to convey a loving attitude. Obviously, you are aware of Ephesians 4:5, where Paul advises us to speak the truth in love. (5) Further, you are aware of Matthew 18:15, where Jesus tells us to first go to our brother regarding a disagreement. I am aware that some people attempt to limit Jesus' advice only to private matters; therefore, allowing anything to be said publicly to be rebuked publicly. However, that is a serious

misreading of the text. (6) If nothing else, Matthew 7:12 would teach us to first contact someone before we write them up in our bulletin. I point this out because too often I have read a criticism from you in your paper regarding a certain issue or church despite the fact that you haven't confirmed this firsthand. For example, several months ago, you criticized the Benton church of Christ for their new radio program even though you yourself had not listened to the program. Also, in the recent issue, you criticized John Dale's participation in a revival that you yourself had not attended. (7) Even regarding the items you see/hear firsthand, I wish you would be more careful and selective about how you handle the matter. You don't have to air all the dirty laundry in the brotherhood in your bulletin each month. Use your paper for edification and use other avenues to deal with people/churches that are not standing in the old paths. (8)

I, like you, am concerned about the direction that many churches are going. However, I feel that there is a right way and a wrong way of handling matters. Writing someone up in your bulletin month after month does not seem to be the most effective way. (9) Further, please learn to differentiate between doctrine and opinions. A lot of your criticism is not about matters of doctrine. Yet, you seem to have made many trivial issues a matter of doctrine for you. (10) I used to be the same way, but have come to view things differently. (11) Yet, I do not advocate a "core gospel" approach. However, every issue does not carry equal importance. For example, one's carrying a different Bible version is not to be equated to one's believing that baptism is not essential to salvation. (12) I hope you will continue to publish your paper, but I pray that you will change some of your approaches to certain matters. In Christ.

Our response begins now. Note the numbers.

(1) Dear "Concerned Christian." I do not understand why you write a letter of severe criticism and do not sign your name. I'm somewhat concerned about people who for lack of courage or conviction, or whatever reason are not willing to make themselves known. I sign my name to what I write.

(2) Your commendation of my "good articles" is appreciated. Some critics would not commend ↴

above be done? Are B.C. and A.D. outdated? They haven't been outdated since I have been around and able to read. Here, again, we have an example of removing or replacing something which calls attention to Christ, and God's army. Some unbeliever might be offended, therefore give in to them, since this will lessen the influence of Christ.

Military Chaplains. Efforts are underway to restrict the prayer of military chaplains. Although a survey says that more than 80 per cent of soldiers identify themselves as Christians, prayer in the name of Christ would not be allowed. Again, things must give over to the unbeliever, one who may be offended by the mention of God and Christ.

Freedom of Speech in Religion. A bill in 1954, contained an amendment, pushed by then senator Lyndon B. Johnson, which barred all tax-exempt groups from participating in political activity. While this law has not been generally enforced, threats are being made to prohibit churches from being involved in various political activities. The real danger of this is seen in the fact that a preacher could not teach what the Bible says about such things as abortion and homosexuality. From my own experience I know that a preacher can get in trouble by preaching against those who uphold and encourage such sins. If some have their way, we will see the day when our worship, if allowed at all, will be controlled by the government. Are we fully aware of this, or do we have a Chamberlain complex?

Prayer Out of Schools. It has been some years now since prayer was not allowed in public schools. Although all sorts of immoral teachings are allowed, God is to be kept out. It would not violate the law to teach atheism, or communism, for that matter, which is a form of atheism. You see, even our governments are opposed to God's influence in many instances.

God Out of Pledge. Just imagine how far the enemies of God's army have come. A court decides that God cannot be mentioned in the pledge of allegiance.

Evolution a Theory. A bill in Utah that demanded evolution be called a "theory" was voted down. There has been quite a controversy relative to evolution. It is the "in thing" to teach it as a fact, but it can't be taught as a theory. Here again, governments are in-

olved, and on the side of anti-God.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

We've only touched the hem of the garment, so to speak, but we have seen enough to awaken us to reality if anything will. Not only is God's army being affected now, what will happen with our children and grand children, and others yet unborn?

Already a wave of soul-destroying liberalism has swept over the Lord's church like a wildfire out of control. This has so weakened God's army that the enemy now has a greater advantage. Do we realize that if the present trend continues within the church and among the enemies of God's army, our freedom of worship may be lost? Don't say it can't. History gives valid evidence that it can.

The ACLU is one of the greatest enemies that believers in God have ever faced in this country. If that organization has its way, our society will become a completely secular society with God completely out of the picture.

We must not forget that political forces are hard at work among those who uphold such sins as abortion and homosexuality. Remember the time which such politicians would not have gotten to first base? Now some are using their opposition to the teaching of God's word to draw political support. It is heart rending, but a fact, that some of our brethren are working with the enemies of God's army. Yes, they will receive their reward in due time, but what about those they will lead with them to eternal destruction?

Finally, may the Lord help us to realize that the war in which we are now engaged is far worse than all the physical wars combined. Souls, ours and others, will soon embark into eternity. If we lose this present war — the depths of hell await us.

An eternal victory can be ours, but there is a fight we must win. If brethren under the rule of a pagan and tyrannical government could fight a battle against evil and win, so can we. So far, we are not threatened by physical danger. But if we are faced with the matter of being faithful unto the point of giving up our physical lives, surely, heaven will be worth it all

—Editor

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ANADDENDUM

After finishing the above article, I decided that I should review some of the conditions which exist in our society, which testify to the adverse effects the denial of God has already brought upon us. These things do not happen overnight, but over a period of time. But they happen nevertheless. Some younger people have not seen the changes that I have seen, having been around fourscore years.

The Increase in Profanity. I've lived in a time when people could be fined for the use of profanity in public. Now, profanity is a common thing in many places, including movies, TV programs, and written material.

The Paducah Sun carried an article by Jocelyn Noveck of Associated Press, in the March 29, 2006, issue, entitled: *Age of profanity? Use of foul language draws concern from Americans.* The article points out that the use of profanity and swearing has increased in every category over the past few years, and that younger people use such more often than older people. "Nearly three-quarters of Americans questioned last week — 74 percent — said they encounter profanity in public more frequently." Of those questioned 64 percent said they use the F-word.

It is not unusual now to hear children using all manner of profanity. We can understand why. They hear their parents and many other people doing the same. But after all, with little or no respect for God and His word, and code of ethics, why not use all manner of filthy language?

A recent report said that Foul Language during family hour on TV has increased 94 percent between 1998 and 2002.

Out of Wedlock Births Increase. Never in our society has there been such disregard sexual moral standards. With more than a third of children now being born to unwed parents, and in some places well over half, it is clear that God's influence in the matter has been cast to the wind. There is now almost no stigma attached sexual immorality. Over five million couples are now said to live together without being married. The American home is in deeper trouble than ever. Contributing to this sad condition is the wholesale indifference of so many people. As my dad used to say, "People have gone to the dogs." But what can be

expected when people forget or fail to believe in God?

The Wave of Homosexuality. When one examines God's word it is easy to see that homosexuality is as condemned as any sin. The condemnation and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the various times its is mentioned in God's word, not only the Old Testament but also the New Testament, leaves no doubt about how God sees this vile sin. But now that God's influence is being eliminated from society, it seems that a great segment of society is bent upon practicing this repulsive sin.

The practice of homosexuality, and the so-called marriage of homosexuals, has become a main plank in the platform of many politicians. Instead of homosexuality and lesbianism being opposed and frowned upon in our society, a great many people are for giving the sinful people special privileges. But, then, if God is not real, why not act like the lowly animals of the field?

The Plague of Gambling. Gambling is not specifically mentioned in God's word, but its attendant evils certainly are. Within the past few years we have seen a wave of gambling sweep across our country, bring additional crime and suffering to multitudes. Those who are on welfare are some of the most frequent gamblers. Tax payers are supporting their habit. But in spite of the side-effects of gambling, there are few places where it is not practiced in some forms.

When All Things Are Considered. We are kidding ourselves if we do not see to relationship of the evils that we have mention, to the lessening of God's influence upon our society. The Psalmist said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17). God's word also says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

How often do we stop to think of what the consequences will be if we allow the enemy of God's army to prevail? We have seen so much already, but there is more evil to come, as the opposers of God have their way. Yes, there is something we can do. We can stand up and be counted on God's side. He will never leave us, but we must remain loyal to Him. The army of God can prevail, but it requires the utmost loyalty of His soldiers. "If God be for us, who can be against us"?

— Editor

How Liberalism Grows

The following is from the church bulletin of the Farmington church of Christ, dated April 23, 2006.

Let's go exploring...

Last Sunday was Easter, reminding us that there is resurrection from the dead, which means Jesus also forgives sins. It doesn't get any better.

Thanks for doing your part last Sunday. It was a good day. There were several signs of God's working and moving. Don't you love watching the kingdom come?

The Wednesday night ladies class got off to a good start. The ladies of this congregation are not afraid to experiment and, at the same time, support one another. They display a wonderful understanding of how to wait.

Next month (May), our four Sunday mornings will be different. We will experience the Lord's Supper in ways designed to increase our understanding and participation.

New experiences with established patterns can feel 'wrong'. And yet, we're not the kind of church that is afraid to study our Bible and follow Jesus more closely. —*Amos Allen.*

A few observations are in order relative to the above. This is not the first far-out thing to come from this congregation. And, if the general tendency prevails, it will not be the last. Once a congregation chooses a path of liberalism, there is seldom an about face in returning to the "old paths."

Question! Was one of the signs of "God working and moving," related to Easter? "Easter" is found in Acts 12:4, but this is a mistranslation. There is no authority in God's word to observe Easter.

Question! Just what is the ladies class experimenting with? Have they discovered something new in God's word? Or, is the mind of man involved?

Question! Just in what way will they "experience" the Lord's Supper? Have they discovered something to improve upon the "understanding and participation" revealed in the New Testament?

Question! Why do "New Experiences with established patterns" make people "feel 'wrong'"? Could it be that one's conscience raises a question?

Observing the practices of various congregations over the past several decades, one thing stands out. That is, of the changes observed, few have caused people to draw closer to the Lord by following His word as carefully as possible. To the contrary, most of the changes I've seen have resulted in less respect for God's word and an increase in doing what people want to do, whether it pleases God are not. The result has been in so many cases, the removal of the distinctiveness of the Lord's one and only church. By what is taught and practiced in a frightening number of congregations today, they can hardly be recognized as a congregation of the Lord's people.

Yes, Liberalism Grows. Not only is that the case in our area, where the Farmington congregation is located, it is happening all across our country and in foreign countries as well. —*Editor*

Special Notice to Foreign Readers of Banner of Truth

It is with sincere regret that we have to announce the fact that the postal rates in our country have become so expensive that we will have to discontinue sending bundles of the paper to foreign countries. The bundles we have mailed for years would now cost us about \$6.00 U.S. The cost just a relatively short time ago was \$1.80 U.S.

Here is what we suggest: We can still send a single copy of B.O.T to those now receiving bundles. Congregations which are able to do so can make copies of the entire paper or of desired articles contained in it.

We are saddened by the fact that our country has made it impossible to reach so many people in other countries. The positive responses which we have received from many different countries have been most encouraging to us. Many things are now working against the cause of Christ, but we must stand fast in the faith and do the very best we can. May the Lord richly bless our brethren in foreign countries and in ours. —*Editor*

From P. 7 from inheriting the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-11). Because it is perverse, most people find homosexual acts to be disturbing and naturally repugnant. That is, unless they are conditioned or desensitized by repeated exposure, experimentation, or indoctrination to accept it. That is exactly what “entertainment” like *Brokeback* is doing. People’s minds *are* being changed, which means respect for God’s will as revealed in scripture is being supplanted with acceptance of godless immorality. The devil is using the arts to entice a generation of souls to be their own gods, to give up Eden for a bite of forbidden fruit.

But the taste of the tree is costly. The reckless abandoning of God’s will to embrace the excesses of pagan hedonism carries a high price. The way *Brokeback* romanticizes homosexuality is typical of the way in which the media hides the truth about the nature and consequences of homosexual sin. Hollywood wants us to believe that homosexuality is a perfectly wholesome, healthy lifestyle, and that those who suggest otherwise are hateful homophobes. But what is the reality? The awful truth that is buried beneath a façade of normalcy is that homosexuality is destructive to health and hygiene. Paul speaks of homosexuals “receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due” (Rom. 1:27), suggesting that there are grave consequences to perverting the divine order. There is undeniable evidence to support this point.

Consider these sobering facts. While *Brokeback* wants us to see homosexual relationships as committed and monogamous, one study found that “43 percent of male homosexuals estimated having sex with five hundred or more different partners and 28 percent with a thousand or more different partners. Seventy-nine percent said that more than half of these partners were strangers and 70 percent said that more than half were men with whom they had sex only once.” (Satinover, 55). In other words, anonymous, promiscuous sex is a hallmark of male homosexuality. What are the consequences of this staggering promiscuity? According to one source:

The median age of homosexual men dying from AIDS is thirty-nine. The median age of

forty-two (compared to seventy-five for married men generally and fifty-seven for unmarried men generally); only one percent of male homosexuals live to be sixty-five or older. Less than three percent of all homosexuals are over the age of fifty-five. The median age of lesbians at death is forty-five compared to seventy-nine for married women, and seventy-one for unmarried women generally (Grant and Horne, 124).

That’s not quite the picture painted by what we see in the media, is it? It’s not likely that kids will ever get that kind of information in public school or from any other source. Instead, a generation is being led to welcome a way of life that is undeniably injurious. In fact, it is deadly—both physically and spiritually.

Satan is using gay cowboys Ennis and Jack—and other films and programs like *Brokeback*—to further desensitize and deceive the public into embracing a homosexual agenda that is hostile to Christianity and destructive to individual souls, the family and the culture. We must reach out with compassion on those who are caught up in that highly addictive homosexual lifestyle and point them to Christ as the way of deliverance from all sin. But we must not be afraid to show that we know from the word of God—and the social science which corroborates it—that homosexuality is a dangerous perversion of God’s design for human sexuality, and that to celebrate it is social suicide. *Brokeback Mountain* may be a beautiful place in Wyoming, but from its peaks we can see in the distance the smoldering ruins of Sodom.

References:

George Grant and Mark A. Horne, *Legislating Immorality: The Homosexual Movement Comes out of the Closet* (Moody Press: Chicago; Legacy Communications: Franklin, TN, 1993).

Jeffery Satinover, M.D., *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1986).

[This is a graphic and sobering example of what faltering faith in God is doing to our country. It is just one of many concerted efforts to defy God’s army.

—Editor]

The View from Brokeback Mountain Hollywood, Gay Cowboys and Social Suicide

Tyler Young

Popular entertainment continues to be a formidable weapon of the anti-Christian left in the culture war for the soul of America. In recent months a slew of social issues films hit theatres with varying degrees of critical and commercial success. The one which has caused the greatest stir by far is *Brokeback Mountain*, Hollywood’s latest assault on the biblical values which have served as the very foundation of Western Civilization. For the few who may not know, the movie is a tragic romance about a couple of handsome cowboys who, despite no previous homosexual inclinations, fall deeply in love with one another. The media is abuzz about the award winning film, which has already taken four Golden Globes, including best drama. With a leading eight Oscar nominations, it’s expect to win best picture.

There has been no shortage of films in recent years with positive portrayals of homosexuality. But never before has a mainstream film centered entirely on a homosexual relationship in the way *Brokeback* does, depicting the passion of two men, Ennis and Jack (played by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal) in all its homo-erotic glory—including a fairly explicit scene in which the co-stars fornicate in a tent. Through impressive cinematography, a stirring soundtrack, artful direction, and quality acting, the film masterfully manipulates the emotions to create a tender sympathy for the gay lovers, subtly undermining any resistance viewers might have toward accepting homosexuality as wholesome. Traditional domestic life is portrayed as unsatisfying drudgery, while gorgeous Wyoming mountain scenery and moving music are effectively employed to romanticize gay “love.”

The story goes something like this. After an initial encounter in the mountains in which they fall for each other, Ennis and Jack part ways. Though they don’t see each other for several years, they continue to pine for one another even after each gets married and starts a family of his own. When they meet again, they begin a severe romance, returning to the mountains from

time to time for camping trips where they fall into each others arms. Their yearning for each other takes precedence over any sense of responsibility to their wives and children, and according to the carefully crafted story, the only thing preventing them from being together is fear of a homophobic society which will not accept their need for each other. Thus does director Ang Lee’s adaptation of the short story by Annie Proulx glorify sodomy, trivialize adultery, denigrate the traditional family, and villainize those who could be so cruel and callous as to deny gay lovers the acceptance they deserve. Any principled opposition to homosexuality is equated with bigotry and violence against gays.

Brokeback serves as a powerful piece of pro-homosexual propaganda, giving artistic expression to the entertainment industry’s growing contempt of biblical morality. Though its success at the box office has been modest, it’s effectiveness as a vehicle for promoting the homosexual agenda is alarming. According to a cover story in *USA Today*, some are expecting the picture to be the one which will change how homosexuals are accepted by mainstream America. Co-star Jake Gyllenhaal is excited about the movie’s potential to do just that. *Entertainment* magazine reported that while he was in Toronto “he was approached by [film] festival-goers proclaiming that their preconceptions had been shattered by the film’s insistence on humanizing gay love,” and that the actor proclaimed, “I mean people’s minds have changed. That’s amazing.”

What is amazing is how deceptive the media has been in its presentation of homosexuality as equivalent to—or in case of *Brokeback*, on a certain level even superior to—heterosexuality. The word of God clearly condemns homosexual behavior as an “abomination,” meaning detestable or worthy of disgust (Lev. 18:22-23); it is “vile,” “unseemly,” and “against nature” (Rom. 1:26-27), unrighteous conduct which will prevent those who do not repent of it

Continued on P. 10

Evolution (4)

I am tempted to say—as I think most reasonable people must think—that a theory which holds that human beings and snails have a common ancestry is cockamamky. I am nevertheless resisting the temptation and am trying to systematically show that the theory of evolution is like a ship with a thousand holes in it; each hole of which cannot be patched. The problems of evolution are along the order of the “problem” of putting a square peg in a round hole: It isn’t going to happen in the world we know. We are trying to view this theory of life, and more particularly, man’s origin under several headings. Evolution has problems right from the get-go. We are calling these INHERENT PROBLEMS, that is, problems built right into the fabric of the theory. We’ve considered such inherent problems as: PROOF, MECHANISM, INSTABILITY, INCOHERENCE, and ASSUMPTION. Within this same category, let’s continue to consider two other such inherent “problems” —

THE INCONSISTENCY PROBLEM. As with the previous point, one would not expect such a prevalent proposition as evolution to be laden with inconsistencies; but, unfortunately for evolution such is the case. Two examples will suffice to make clear the point.

First, there is the matter of “uniformitarianism,” the doctrine that states “the present is the key to the past.” With all of his might, the evolutionist clings to this doctrine of naturalism, until, however, he gets to a situation that nature simply cannot account for. At such a point, he “forces” himself to relinquish his precious doctrine temporarily. We have already considered examples of those who admit that spontaneous generation is a violation of natural law and does not occur, yet they must claim that conditions were such, at one time, as would allow for spontaneous generation to occur.

There is also, the example of those who now advocate “saltatory” changes in organisms so as to account for the abrupt gaps in the fossil record. “Saltatory” means having to do with dancing or jumping. Yes, you guessed it. This is the idea that instead of one “kind” of creature ever-so-slowly changing and shading into another completely different “kind” of creature (which claim is clearly refuted by the fossil record), perhaps one kind “jumped” the barrier and became another kind. You know: fish to mammal;

reptile to bird (or maybe bird to reptile — they haven’t made up their minds on that one); simian to human. I have seen this happen on the old T.V. show, *Bewitched*. Yet, what natural law causes one organism to transform itself into another? There’s no doubt that, say, cows have changed into: Jerseys, Holsteins, Guernseys, Angus, et al; but, a cow is still a cow, is still a cow.

Second, there is the matter of the process of evolution itself. One must certainly agree, that if evolution is true, then it is still occurring. But, this raises the logical question, “Why can’t I see it happening around me?” The reply might be, “Because the process is so slow that it is imperceptible.”

But, if one then turns his attention to the fossil record and, again, logically inquires, “Why can’t we see any transitional forms between the ‘kinds’ of organisms?” Again, the answer is quick and confident, “Because it happened so fast it is therefore imperceptible.” So? Too slow; too fast; pay your money and take your choice. Clearly, evolution is burdened with an inconsistency problem.

THE BIAS PROBLEM. It stands to reason, that if one rules out, a priori, God and supernatural creation, then the only alternative explanation he has for the origin and existence of life is that of naturalism or evolution. But, surely professional people would not allow bias or prejudice to interfere 1

with objective reasoning. Again, this is not the case. Many evolutionists hold to their theory on no other grounds than that they just simply cannot accept the idea of God as Creator. They are amazingly willing to admit it.

Thomas Huxley showed his anti-God bias when, in speaking of Darwin’s work, he said that it was as,

...of a flash of light, which to a man who has lost himself on a dark night suddenly reveals a road which, whether it takes him straight home or not, certainly goes his way. That which we **were looking for** [my emphasis, AA] and could not find, was a hypothesis respecting the origin of known organic forms, which assumed the operation of no causes but such as could be proved to be actually...The *Origin* provided us with the working hypothesis we sought. Moreover, it did the immense service of freeing us for ever from the dilemma —refuse to accept the creation hypothesis, and what have you to propose that can be accepted by any cautious reasoner.”[Matthews, L. Harrison. “Introduction,” *Origin of Species*, pp. vii-viii]

So therefore, based upon the assumption that God does not exist, and that creation is false; Huxley and others just like him conclude that evolution must be true.

Sir Arthur Keith, of Great Britain, portrays this bigoted attitude very well, when he says, “Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is special creation, and that is unthinkable.” [Cited by Bert Thompson. *Theistic Evolution*, p. 25]. I believe the Bible describes such people as “they *who* refused to have God in *their* knowledge...” (Rom 1.28).

America — founded on the premise that we by our “Creator *are* [endowed] with certain unalienable rights — taxes its citizens and uses the money to teach your children that there is no Creator. Little wonder then that these unalienable rights are becoming more and more “alien.” [stay tuned] —AA

What a Weariness

God punished Judah and Jerusalem with desolation by and captivity in Babylon, and “after seventy years,” by His great mercy he “caused [them] to return” (Jer 29:10). Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the returnees began to “build the house of God which is at Jerusalem” (Ez 5:2). In about the space of twenty years, with the help of strong preaching by Haggai and Zechariah, the temple was completed.

Given the horror of the Babylon desolation and captivity, surely the Jews would be chastened, sobered and submissive for generations to come. Right? Wrong. Within another 50-60 years, Jewish men, even priests were dumping the “wives” of their youth (cf. Neh 13:29) and marrying “the daughter[s] of a foreign god” (Mal 2:11). In fact, their attitude toward the temple service had become one of contempt and burden. By their attitudes and actions, they implied, “Behold, what a weariness it is” (Mal 1:13).

Given their relatively recent history of events, how had these people come fairly quickly to such a state? How do brothers and sisters today come to a state where it’s clear that their church-going is merely perfunctory and burdensome. Why do they even go through the motions?

The world, appealing to our lusts, chips away at us. Mommy and Daddy both work so they can have more stuff and more toys; they put their children in first one sport and activity and then another, in games and other recreational pursuits. Our time becomes precious as the lifestyles, which we create, begin to compete with our “church life.” In time, we become wearied and resentful of the comparatively little time we *have* to spend

What an onerous service it is! The service of God is its own reward. If not, it becomes a greater toil, with less reward from this earth, than the things of this earth. Our only choice is between love and weariness. [A quotation, I think, from someone whom I cannot remember]. —AA