

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.

Nonprofit org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Almo, KY
Permit No. 10

Let Hitherto

Paul “long[ed] to see” and “oftentimes...purposed to come unto” the “saints” “in Rome” (Rom 1:11, 13, 7). As of the writing of Romans he had not seen them, because he had been “let hitherto” (v 13). *Let hitherto* is the 1611 way of saying, “hindered hitherto,” meaning up to this time, stuff has kept me from coming up to see you. Thumb over to chapter fifteen and read: “Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you” (15:22). Read verses 18-21 to see what had so long “hindered” Paul from going to Rome. In short, he had been too busy preaching in other places.

Another elder and I recently visited a weak and negligent brother. He scrambled to enumerate the things which had hindered his coming to services, none of which things included the real reason: He did not want to. When you do not attend one or any of the four hours we typically meet each week; or, VBS, gospel meetings, lectureships; what hinders you? When you do not join others in door-knocking, flyer-folding, floor-mopping, or whatever; what hinders you? Please, hear me out. You may be legitimately hindered just as Paul was.

Hindrances are a fact of life. A ballgame at 6PM on Sunday is going to hinder you from being at church, or conversely being at church is going to hinder you from being at the ballgame. Time and space can be a real bummer; they force us to make choices. Some such choices necessarily exclude: that is, when I choose to do one thing, I choose not to do the other.

You owe it to yourself, your family, and your brethren to have a frank discussion with the Godhead about your hindrances. You and I have a future appointment (Rom 14:10; 2Co 5:10) for which we shall not be “let hitherto.” —AA

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

EDITOR'S EMAIL: wpiggbot@myshadetree.com
ELECTRONIC BOT: *Via David Lemmons' website*
BOT.LemmonsAid.net
DAVID'S LEMMONSAID E-MAIL:
LemmonsAid-Subscribe@YahooGroups.com
EMAIL: dlemmons@netscape.com



Leadership in Congregations without Elders

One of our readers sometime ago suggested that we do an article on the subject of “Leadership in Congregations without Elders.” He suggested, and I agree, that most discussions on congregational leadership primarily had to do with elders. Most of us would agree that the need for God-approved leadership in congregations without elders should be a high priority.

It would be difficult to over emphasize the importance of leadership within the Lord’s church. “Unto [God] be glory in the church” (Eph 3:21). She is the manifestation of His “manifold wisdom”; she came into being and now exists “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). This being the case, we should know that God’s all-sufficient word (2 Tim. 3:16-17) will provide us with needed instructions in regard to leadership in His church, even in instances where local churches lack qualified men to serve as elders.

While I by no means claim to be a super authority on the above subject, I have learned some things from the study of God’s word and by having worked with congregations both with and without elders. Since I started preaching, about 53 years ago, I’ve worked with well over a dozen congregations. More of those were without elders

than were with elders. Things went smoothly at some of those congregations with elders and without elders. Some did not go smoothly in either case.

What made the difference in those cases where things did not go smoothly? The people. God’s plan was not at fault; it never will be. People are nevertheless not shy about affirming that aspects of God’s plan “won’t work.” Regarding church discipline and withdrawing fellowship, for example, I have actually heard Christians say, “I just don’t believe it will work.” That is about like saying, “I don’t believe baptism for remission of sins will work.” How dare we say that anything which God has ordained will not work? One person said, “A congregation without elders just can’t get along.” In some cases that is true. But, why? Because people will not let it work. It is not God’s fault when things do not “work.”

Before discussing our subject in greater detail we shall give attention to **God’s Ideal** with regard to congregational leadership in general. Elders as leaders will not be our primary focus, because, as noted, there is presently a great deal of discussion on this subject. We focus, however, on leadership in general, and how that applies in local churches without elders. →

BANNER OF TRUTH

Published by the
Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd., Almo KY 42020

Elders:
Jimmy Lockhart (270) 753-4460
Mike Smith (270) 437-4616
Marlin Pierce (270) 759-9649

Preacher:
Virgil Hale (270) 767-0625

Editor
Walter W. Pigg (270) 753-3675
164 Coles Campground Rd., Murray, KY 42071

Assistant Editor:
Alan Adams (850) 937-2460
1653 Pine Lane Dr., Cantonment, FL 32533

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

Perhaps one other thing I should point out is that leadership is being considered in the area of decision-making which involves the congregation. To some extent, each member of the church should individually be active in leadership, because there are many ways an individual can be a leader. The New Testament has many examples of individuals manifesting leadership. They set about doing the Lord's will, though not directed by some formal leader to do so.

I. GOD'S IDEAL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

God knows, and we should know by a study of His word, that good leadership is essential within the church if she is to function effectively in fulfilling His eternal purpose. It is indeed interesting to note the emphasis upon leadership among God's people, in both the Old and New Testaments.

It was, and is, God's plan that elders be appointed in congregations when qualified men are available. It is also enlightening to note the responsibility of elders as

leaders. They are to "feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you....Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:1-3). Needless to say, when church members are not fed the right kind of food and properly cared for, they are not going to mature and behave properly. Once again: When such occurs it is not God's fault, rather that of the people.

That elders are to be capable and effective leaders is made crystal clear by the fact that God has given specific qualifications for elders. These qualifications are primarily set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

In churches with elders, the overwhelming cause of problems stems from the fact that God's qualifications have been ignored, and replaced with man's ideas and desires. Among those called "elders" today, it would be at best difficult to find a many who actually meet God's qualifications. Present conditions reflect that fact.

We now turn our attention to leadership within congregations without elders. The importance of this is seen in the fact that so many congregations are without elders.

II. IS IT RIGHT FOR A CONGREGATION TO EXIST WITHOUT ELDERS?

Some go so far as to question whether a congregation may scripturally exist without elders. It is obvious that congregations existed in New Testament times without elders. Paul left Titus in Crete, "that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). Did this mean that elders were to be ordained in every city, whether or not there were men who qualified? Of course not. After telling Titus to ordain elders, Paul immediately starts listing qualifications, as he listed qualifications in I Timothy 3. God's ideal was, and is, that when men are qualified to serve as elders they should do so, but not when they are not qualified.

A suggestion actually made to me is apparently the view of several brethren: "A congregation should pick out the best men they have and appoint them as elders." There is evidence that this has been done in more than a few congregations. Does God approve? Surely not. If it is acceptable to waive God's qualification for elders, may we do the same in other matters? Some have. †

An Unburdened, Burdened Man

Like many young people with an exaggerated sense of burden, I have vivid memories of cynically thinking that my dad thought I was a pack mule. Think, however, of a young man who was actually given the name, עִמָּוֶז (Amos), which is derived from a verb form which means: to burden, load, or carry a load. The word is also translated "lade" (Gen 44:13; Neh 13:15), as in: lade, or load, a donkey.

Perhaps Amos' father was pleased at having a son who could grow up and help with the herds and the orchards (cf. Amos 7:14). Farming indeed involves burdens to be born, so what better name for a prospective farm boy than Amos, burden-bearer? This boy, who would grow to manhood and who had been toughened by the rigors and burdens of agrarian life, was in 755 B.C. called by the "Father of all" (cf. Eph 4:6;). He sent Amos from the southern hills of Tekoa to the northern city of Bethel, to where he bore and then unloaded a far more serious burden on the nation of Israel.

Amos does his preaching (Cf. Rom 10:14-19) during the time when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jereboam (the second one) was king in Israel. The beginning of the eighth century was a time of hope. God used Assyria to crush Syria which had long dominated the region of Palestine. Uzziah and Jereboam were both shrewd leaders and for considerable period Judah and Israel enjoyed amazing prosperity. So often, however, as is the case, prosperity lead to moral decline and corrupt religion.

Jehovah sent northward from the heights of Tekoa a hard man to preach a hard message to a soft and decadent people. He did not mince words denouncing opulence, idolatry and injustice. He preached repentance and retribution for the impenitent. In an interesting historical interlude, Amos is confronted by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (Amos 7). He mockingly questions Amos' motives and tells him to go home and "drop" his words. Amos' response is classic:

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD

said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land (Am 7:14-17).

Amos had never served as a prophet, nor had he been taught by or associated with one of the schools of the prophets (cf. 1Ki 20:35; 2Ki 2:3 et al). Perhaps it is good to be reminded that often it is neither the "trained" nor the "professional" of whom we are in most need; rather, we need people full of a sense of God, duty and conviction. The churches of Christ today are soft and self-absorbed. We are in desperate need of anomalous Amos's to come our way.

Amos preaches a message of judgment to surrounding nations (1:1-2:3). They would be judged for their transgressions. He preaches a message of judgment to both Judah and Israel based on the same principles (Am 2:4-6:14). The rest of the book contains five prophetic visions one of which is quoted by James in Acts chapter fifteen showing that the true restoration of David's house and kingdom actually takes place in the church where Jew and Gentile and brought together through the Gospel of Christ (Amos 9:11-17; Acts 15:14-17).

For Amos, a man who lived close to the dirt and knew the cleansing contentment of hard work; a man, who spent his life outdoors, and was thus imbued with a sense of God's presence and might; for such a man, the mission he was given must have been horribly distasteful. To the elites in Bethel and Samaria, Amos was a fish out of water, an anachronism, yet he did his job.

May every gospel preacher be filled with the spirit of Amos. May our preachers come to understand that the job is not about their convenience; it is not about them, nor how others perceive them. It is about "the word of the Lord" (Am 7:16; 8:12). Based on how they live and serve, many of our preachers would surely not be named Amos, burden-bearer. —AA

Whip the Lips

If we individually are “soldiers” (2Tm 2.3, 4); so, collectively we are an *army*. Armies “fight” (1Tm 6.12; 2Tm 4.7) there will always be those who “make war with the saints” (Rv 13.7), which is why christians “war the good warfare” (1Tm 1.18). What, however, does this mean in practical terms? Is it just sentimental stuff we sing about?

Armies which win wars are those who go on the offensive. Those who dig trenches and try to just “hang on” are destined lose such a war of attrition. Offensive armies have strategies; they plan battles with objectives in mind, and they train toward that end. Storming the beaches of Normandy was preceded by grueling exercises and discipline.

A “good soldier” must be trained all over: forced marches; heavy weights; going without sleep; going without food and so on. A “man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things” (1Co 9:25).

In training and preparing an offensive force, you find your greatest weakness and start there. In WWII, conscripts and volunteers, before they entered the battle area, were given rules of conduct relating to controlling their mouths; it was entitled: “Loose lips sink ships.” It said among other things:

SILENCE MEANS SECURITY — ... Protect your conversation as you do your letters, and be even more careful....during war your lips must remain sealed and your written hand must be guided by self-imposed censorship. This takes guts. Have you got them or do you want your buddies and your country to pay the price for your showing off.

In my humble estimation, one of our brotherhood’s greatest weaknesses is the *mouth*. We are challenged by: volume of talk; needless talk about others; sharp or “smart” talk; uninformed talk; and so on. We need to look at positive ways to impose self-control on “loose lips.”

In the area of voluminous talk, limit yourself to saying *only what is necessary*. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely” (Prov 10:19); “be swift to hear, slow to speak” (Jam 1:19). This requires as much discipline and fortitude as marching through a swamp with a hundred pounds on your back. It can be done. —AA

READER’S RESONSE— *May many awaken to the danger Islam poses to the faith. — Editor*.

“I found a couple issues of Banner of Truth while we were looking for a place to move. Now that he have moved I would like to be placed on the mailing list for BOT.” — **Benjamin Richardson, GA.**

“Enclosed [is a] check to help with support to assist you in carrying on the good work you and your staff are doing, to teach and uphold God’s truth.” — **Ken Pylant, GA.**

“Would you please send your Banner of Truth publication to the following name. Thank you so much. We appreciate your publication very much and for you standing for the truth.” — **Bobby and Nell Harris.**

“Enclosed please find my check for... to help with the publishing of Banner of Truth. We need good gospel literature.” — **V. Glenn McCoy, CA.**

“Please take me off the mailing list for the time being, as I am moving to another location. As soon as I am settled I will want to continue receiving it. Thank you so much for standing for the truth as it is written. So many times we want to please ourselves before pleasing God. You will continue to be in my prayers as you teach the word and confront those who are slipping away — **Janella Ash.** (*You are right. We must heed Jesus: “If any many will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Thanks for letting us know of the change— Editor*).

A Few Words from the Editor

With about 3,700 individuals on our mailing list, we quite often have the BOT returned, with a note saying the recipient has deceased. Our heart goes out to the families and friends of those readers who pass from this life. Some of these people we have come to know quite well through correspondence or other communication.

Just a few weeks ago I learned that a very good and personal friend had passed from this life in May of last year. He was not only a close friend, but he contributed articles for publication in BOT. His name was: John Q. Mitchell. I was informed he died in his sleep. Brother John did much to encourage the reading of Banner of Truth. He had us send 25 copies of BOT to the church in Alhambra, CA. Through John’s influence, the church for several years supported the paper on a monthly basis.

Why Not Put Your Friends on Our Mailing List? When people do not send us a change of address we delete their name from our mailing list, so we need new names to keep our list up. If you find BOT worthwhile, maybe you know others who would feel the same way. Why not send us their names? May we suggest that most people of a very liberal persuasion would not appreciate it, and we do not suggest sending the BOT to folks who likely would not want it.

III. WHEN CONGREGATIONS LACK ELDERS, IN WHOM IS LEADERSHIP THEN VESTED?

In the absence of a scriptural eldership, leadership of the congregation devolves upon the faithful men of the congregation. God’s order of things as it pertains to spiritual leadership places women in a subordinate role. Thus, by default, women would be excluded from the leadership and/or decision-making of the congregation. That men are over women is clearly established in God’s word, beginning with Genesis 3:16. Then in addition, there is I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-24, and I Timothy 2:11-13. When the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews occurred, the apostles told the brethren to “look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:1-3). This does not mean that women have no right to convey their thoughts to those men making the decisions, rather that they are not the ones to make the decisions, or serve as leaders of the congregation.

Some times some have the idea that a congregation is prohibited in doing various things when there are no elders. But this is not the case. A congregation without elders can make decisions and carry out God’s plans, as congregations with elders can do. In the absence of elders, the faithful men of the congregation must make the decisions.

IV. SOME GUIDELINES IN MAKING DECISIONS FOR THE CONGREGATION

Does the decision have God’s approval? It is the case that some decisions are made which have no authority from God. The men do not have a right to make any decision which violates the teaching of God’s word. When a decision is being considered, if it does not meet the test of being authorized by God, it should be discarded, taken off the table immediately, with no exceptions. Just today [Dec. 8] I saw a local church’s signboard, both sides of which promoted the religious celebration of Christmas. There is no biblical authority for such celebration, so whoever made the decision to put up this sign did so without God’s authority. This decision did not meet the test and should never have even been considered in the first place.

Decisions must not be made on the basis of utili-

tarianism. Concluding that something “will work,” is not an authorized basis for deciding to proceed with it. The apostle Paul was slanderously accused of saying, “Let us do evil that good may come” (Rom. 3:8). We would run out of room if we made a list of all the things people presently do in the name of religion, which things are in reality what Paul was unjustly accused of promoting — doing evil that good may come.

Many congregations have been swept up in the entertainment craze thinking erroneously that this evil will work out for good. But the sad fact is that this evil [unauthorized worship] is a violation of the “doctrine of Christ” with regard to true worship (John 4:24).

More and more of our brethren are fellowshipping people in man-made religions. Their comeback is, “We might win them over.” The evil of violating God’s law on fellowship (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11) is ignored. It is the thinking of man, not the teaching of God’s word that causes people to engage in this evil.

Opinions must not be made matters of faith. It is not too unusual for people to have opinions which they treat as matters of faith. Faith must come from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17), not from opinions of men. Opinions must be treated as such, and brethren should be able to come together on matters of opinion. If something is truly a matter of opinion rather than a matter of faith, it is only fair for the majority to be considered.

Matters of faith must not be classed as opinion. That the true worship authorized by Christ (John 4:24) does not authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music is a matter of faith. But more and more of our brethren are calling the use of the instruments as “opinion,” when it is clearly a violation of the “doctrine of Christ.”

Even though these suggestions may serve as guidelines for congregations without elders, the same is true with regard to congregations with elders. Many of the same problems that occur in the absence of elders occur also where there are elders. The fault is with the people, not with God. That people turn away their ears from God’s word in religious faith and practice is not something new. It happened in the early days of the church and will no doubt happen as long as time stands.

Decisions are to be made by “the men,” not just a man or a few men. Faithful men of the →

congregation, in the absence of elders, have a real responsibility to take part in the decision-making. For the men to make a decision for the congregation it is necessary that the men come together for that purpose. The “Men’s Business Meeting” is an area in need of improvement.

There are sensible rules for having a profitable discussion of business matters. Such rules are often followed in secular discussions of business matters. The same thing can be done with brethren in the absence of elders. The Lord’s work is a business which is more important than any secular business.

I have personally been involved in business meetings of brethren, which were carried out in a very effective manner; this, however, is not the case in many instances. To be successful, there is the need for someone to serve as the chairman of the meeting. Brethren are allowed to bring up various business matters to be discussed by all who have a desire to participate. In the first place, it should be determined whether or not the matter discussed is a matter of faith or of opinion. This is very important.

Detailed minutes of business meetings should be kept. Unless proper minutes of meetings are made, faithful sisters and others may be kept in the dark with regard to decisions which are made by the men. Though precluded from being decision-makers, who would argue that sisters do not have a right to know what is going on within the church?

When brethren act in a fair manner, and with the utmost respect for the teaching of God’s word, a consensus can be reached. It should always be uppermost in the minds of brethren, as to what is in the best interest of the congregation from a scriptural standpoint, rather than what may suit individuals.

I have likewise been personally involved in business meetings which were in no sense of the term successful. This did not have to be the case, and would not have been if some sensible rules had been followed. We shall note some things which contribute the lack of success in many business meetings.

V. THINGS WHICH HINDER THE MAKING OF GOD-APPROVED DECISIONS

Paul warns of the “devices” and “wiles” of the devil. (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11). When things go wrong within

the church, the problem can be traced to the evil influence of the Devil. The Devil works through men. His aim is to conquer and he is so devious in his efforts. His efforts some times have great appeal. Paul, warning of “false apostles” and “deceitful workers,” said, “And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-14). He goes on to say, “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness...” (v. 15).

In a local church, when things go contrary to God’s will, it is not always a case of people just desiring to do evil. Some times people are simply duped into thinking something is right when it is as wrong as can be. But whether or not unauthorized decisions are made deliberately or through ignorance, the damage to the Lord’s church will be a matter of reality just the same.

Let us now note a few examples of hindrances to the making of God-approve decisions. Some of these things I’ve seen personally, and knew of the evil results which followed.

Decisions made primarily by one man. It is a rather common thing when a group of people are involved, for one man to try to have his way. This is not a new problem. The apostle John writes of a man of such a disposition. “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 John 9). John goes on to describe this self-centered man. In principle there are quite a few Diotrepheses. In one instance I moved to a congregation to work with them full-time. There were no elders, but one man who had before been an elder made it clear who he considered to be “the boss.” I had yet to even get our goods unpacked before he proceeded to give me “instructions.” During my tenure, he was a perpetual source of strife, leading finally to the church marking and withdrawing from him. For the well-being of the church, it was an action long overdue.

In the absence of elders, no one man is to have authority over others, but this is quite often a problem. Some times a man of wealth may feel that he has special rights. Or, there may be a man who has never been in a position of leadership, who wants to be a leader, and sees the church as an opportunity. In cases where there is a chairman of the men’s business meeting, it is assumed that he has more authority than others, but this is not so. †

FELLOW-HELPERS

Aug., Sept., Oct. 2006

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Barbara A. Kist | 75.00 |
| Phillip M. Gillespie | 30.00 |
| Cynthia McIntyre | 90.00 |
| Robert M. Price | 600.00 |
| Joe C. Turbeville | 10.00 |
| James W. Smith | 200.00 |
| Anonymous | 100.00 |
| Mrs. J.W. Grace | 50.00 |
| Shirley Phillips | 30.00 |
| Phyllis Mitchell | 60.00 |
| James B. Olson | 75.00 |
| Mrs. John H. Brown | 75.00 |
| Virginia F. McCoy | 100.00 |
| Billy White | 50.00 |
| Imogene Nichalson | 25.00 |
| Saks church of Christ I | 80.00 |
| Pine Ridge church of Christ | 150.00 |
| Church at Rockford, IL | 25.00 |
| Damon Rd. church of Christ | 200.00 |
| Pilot Oak church of Christ | 25.00 |
| Downtown church of Christ | 100.00 |
| Berea church of Christ | 100.00 |
| Total Aug., Sept., Oct. contribution | 2,415.00 |

“That we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 John 8)

We sincerely appreciate those who make our work possible. You help us to get the truth to thousands with every issue of BOT, including many hundreds to people in other countries. Thanks for being our *fellowhelpers*. —Editor

Banner of Truth Financial Report

Aug., Sept., Oct. 2006

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Balance on hand Aug. 1, 2006 | 8,834.26 |
| Aug., Sept., Oct. contribution | 2,415.00 |
| Total funds available | 11,249.26 |
| Total expenses: | |
| BOT and related postage (*Includes 530.65 not shown in July) | 3,501.02 |
| E-mail (one year) | 117.00 |
| Mailing labels | 100.50 |
| Phone | 12.40 |
| Ink | 174.47 |
| Paper | 1,800.00 |
| Total expenses | 3,501.02 |
| Total funds available | 11,249.26 |
| Less total expenses | 5,705.59 |
| Total on hand Nov. 31, 2006 | 5,543.67 |

Readers’ Response

“This is Steve Baisden way up here in Northern MI. Thank you for the continued good that you are doing with BOT. I am currently getting one copy at my home address and would like to substitute that for a bundle. We have started a new congregation in Ludington, MI and would like to put them out there...name of the congregation is James Street church of Christ. I hope I get to make this year’s lectureship. It would be good to see everyone again.” — **Steve Baisden, MI.** *(Steve, we will be happy to send the bundle. We trust you will be able to be with us this year. Since you have been driving a hundred miles one way to services, I know this will be a great help, and it will be good to have another congregation. Many would not drive the distance you drive to services. — Editor)*

“The article in the June 2006 Banner of Truth was excellent. I, too, have noticed the influence of politics on the church, instead of the other way around. I don’t know why Christians can’t understand the only means they (we) have of the Lord blessing the U.S.A. is for each one to live a faithful life, ask for God to help us, and vote for the candidate that will more nearly lead us to Biblical principles. It’s time for the members of the body of Christ to realize that as the leaders go – so goes the nation, just as it did in the O.T. Why ask God to bless our country and then vote for someone that will lead us away from Him???” — **Joe C. Turbeville, TN.** *(Your statement is very apropos. — Editor)*

“I enjoy reading and studying ‘Banner of Truth.’ As you both know, there are only a few ‘churches that speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent.’ I would greatly appreciate any of the back issues that are available as this time. Enclosed is my check to help your good work.” — **Polly Johnson, TN.** *(We are sending you dozens of back issues. Thank you for your generous gift to help in our work – Editor)*

“Hearty greetings to you in the most precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ the author of peace, from your bro. K.M. Ratna Kumar, evangelist/Bible teacher at Totamoola church of Christ....First of all, I am very thankful to you for sending ‘Banner of Truth.’ Also I thank our beloved and respected bro. James D. Cox, who has inspired me to read and get BOT. I understood that many readers of BOT world-wide continuously reading and enjoying your articles on different subjects of the Bible. I found source of the articles written on Islam, inspires me to write you....Keep us in your regular mailing list....Convey my special greetings to the elders, Jimmy Lockhart and Mike Smith. Looking forward to hear from you. May the Lord give you good strength and life, and bless you abundantly.” — **K.M. Ratna Kumar.** — **India.** *(Brother, your words are kind, inspiring, and encouraging. →*

Where's The Fight?

Alton W. Fonville

Changes have taken place. A few years back, this was a phrase when heard meant excitement, and people gathered around. An activity was taking place which meant opponents were “settling their differences.” This was the case in the world around us. This was also the case within the Lord’s church, but in a spiritual sense rather than a physical sense. The “fight” has almost ceased to exist among far too many within the Lord’s church.

Headlines on some of the papers throughout the brotherhood give the shameful details: “Nation’s largest church of Christ adding instrumental service and serving the Lord’s Supper on Saturday night.” “Leaders say there was little opposition to the announcement.” Brethren, where’s the fight which we entered when we took that “oath of office” to serve the Lord, and become a member of His army? Certainly, it is not the physical fight, and our weapons are not physical. False doctrines and practices, spiritual wickedness and rulers of this world are the things mentioned specifically by Paul, and for which he fought this “good fight of faith.” He was literally a prisoner in bonds in his constant fight against these things, and he warned everyone night and day with tears, about being constant in this fight, and using him as example to follow.

At one time, not too many years back, the church of Christ was known as a “fighter.” Members were known as “people of the Book” — “Walking Bibles.” The church was growing faster then, but we have changed, and the “fight” is not in us now. We wonder what has happened and where is that fight? It does not take too long to find some answers. The Book has been replaced with words which are not so harsh, and which tend to please ourselves. We like to be entertained and be at peace with the world. This attitude has nearly done away with that fighting spirit which Jesus Christ and the apostles wanted the Christian to have.

How does the above fit with the scriptures and their teaching? Let the “inspired word” from God speak to mine and your hearts. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the

world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). “Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.... “And a man’s foes shall be those of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...” (Matt. 10:34, 36-37). Paul said, “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” (Ro. 12:2).

To the Philippian brethren Paul wrote the following advice and warning: “Brethren, be ye followers of me, and mark them walk so as ye have us for and ensample (for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things)” (Phil. 3:17-19).

Those words above from Almighty God have been perverted, twisted, smoothed down, forgotten willingly, and otherwise neglected to the loss of our fighting spirit which each Christian should have. We have loved this world and its pleasures more than God. We have not humbled ourselves as true servants of God, but have served our bellies [own desires for the material] rather than serve God. Many have become friends of the world and enemies of god (Jas. 4:4).

If we would “lay hold on eternal life,” we must “fight the good fight of faith” (I Tim. 6:12). This involves living in such a way that it will enable Christ to present the church “to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

—337 Madison 4605, St. Paul, AR 72760

EDITOR’S NOTE: Some time ago an elder made an observation which, in my view, is timely. He suggested that even congregations which we refer to as being “sound,” are often quite soft on some things. There seems to be a lackadaisical attitude prevailing in far too many instances. When it comes to standing up for the Truth, it is a compliment to be called a “fighter.” The Lord’s church is set forth as a spiritually militant body of true believers. If we, in general, engaged in the spiritual warfare as we should, we would see the church strengthened, not weakened.

Failure of men to participate in decision-making. Whereas all the faithful men should participate in decision making, this is seldom the case. Poor decisions are some times made because some of the men did not participate. As a member of a congregation the man has an opportunity as well as a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the congregation. When men do not take part in the decision making process they have little reason to criticize decisions which are made, although such decisions are to the hurt of the congregation.

Failure of men to let themselves be heard. It is some times difficult to get brethren to speak up and be heard. This can happen even with brethren who have strong convictions with regard to certain things which are in keeping with the Lord’s will. We’ve heard the old adage that “Silence gives consent.” That is quite true in many instances. If a matter comes up before the brethren, even if it is not right in God’s sight, those who remain silent are in principle supporting it.

In some instances a good number of brethren may declare their resolve to stand up and be counted on the side of that which is right, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty of taking a stand, they falter.

The influence of partiality. Some times decisions may be influenced by relatives, friends, wealth or notoriety. This is not the proper way to arrive at decisions which will be for the well-being of the congregation. Our loyalty to Christ must be stronger than even family relationships, as pointed out by Christ in Matthew 10:32-37.

Scheduled meetings to discuss matters pertaining to the congregation should be held. When the men of the congregation do not come together to discuss the business of the church, decisions are more likely to be made by one or two, or a few of the men. This may result in decisions being made that did not have the approval of the men in general.

VI. A CONGREGATION CAN HAVE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP WITHOUT ELDERS IF BRETHREN ARE WILLING

God’s ideal for leadership is still qualified elders. When the qualifications are examined it is clear that men of that caliber would be more effective as leaders than the average man who lacks those qualities.

To me it would make sense for brethren to engage a great deal more in the training of men to be elders, beginning with young boys. There is much more emphasis upon becoming preachers, and there is a great need for sound preachers, but qualified elders can carry on the work of the congregation, even without a full-time preacher.

Even though it is God’s ideal for elders as leaders and decision makers, we must face the fact that there are so many congregations without elders. Should these congregations just disband? Certainly not. Those in the first century which had no elders did not do so. Yet, should congregations without elders work toward a goal of qualified elders? Certainly so. But in addition, the brethren should make every effort to have the best leadership possible in the absence of elders.

As noted, the people can prevent good leadership, but they can also exercise good leadership. We are prone to make excuses when things do not go well in the area of leadership. When things do not go well it is the fault of *the people*. When brethren are the right kind of people, the congregation can carry on in an effective manner. We must never think that when things do not go well that it is God’s fault. Let us place the blame squarely where it belongs: Us. And frankly, when leadership fails in congregations with elders, it is still a people problem. Elders, like christians in general, often fail to live up to God’s expectations.

CONCLUSION

One of the greatest problems within the Lord’s church today is the lack of good leadership. Just as a secular business can hardly rise above its leadership, the same thing is true with a congregation of the Lord’s people. We would do well as teachers, preachers and elders to give more attention to the need for and the training of good leaders.

We have never seen a time when there was a greater need for leadership within the church than right now. We have never seen a time when the church was faced with more problems than right now. Good leadership is without doubt the most effective way in combating the “devices” and “wiles” of the devil. God has provided us with the instructions to make effective leaders, but we must take the same to heart. May the Lord help us to rise up to the occasion.

—Editor

“Change Agents” — Who Are They?

The above term is used in many instances, in both the secular and religious worlds. “Change,” as we will be using it in our discussion, denotes change from one state or condition to another. An “agent” is one who is involved in bringing about the change. This would include both men and women.

We are discussing “change agents” as they have to do with change and/or efforts to change the Lord’s church. This change has reference to change which is contrary to God’s revealed will; that which is not authorized by the Scriptures. “Change” is not wrong in itself, but the change we are discussing is that which violates what God’s word teaches; such change is wrong.

The term “change agents” has for years been frequently used as a topic in brotherhood discussion. A book written several years ago by brother William Woodson, *Change Agents and Churches of Christ*, may have contributed to the use of that term. I have not read brother Woodson’s book, but have read reviews and comments about and quotations from it. One said that the speeches and writings of Lynn Anderson, Rubel Shelly and Calvin Warpula are examined in the book. There is no doubt that these brethren, and many others, have set about to change the Lord’s church in ways that are not in harmony with God’s word.

I have been given a tape and a transcript of a speech made by brother Woodson, October 15, 2006, at the 8th Annual N.E. Florida Lectureship, at the Wesconnett Church of Christ, in Jacksonville, Florida. I have been asked to review the portion of the speech which primarily has to do with change agents. The speech was entitled, “Errors About the Miraculous and its [*sic*] Effects on the Church,” but included some discussion of change agents.

I am responding to that speech in part, especially that which deals with change agents. There are important and timely warnings in the speech about some of the things now happening within the church. I am in this discussion, however, focusing on a portion of the speech that deals primarily with change agents, and other items which are pertinent to the subject of change agents. My comments and observations are

addressed to brother Woodson in the form of an open letter. —

Dear William,

It has been a long time since you and I were fellow students at Freed-Hardeman. I guess the last communication we had with each other was the letter I wrote brother Claude Gardner, relative to the speech made at the chapel hour at FHC by “Judge North.” I sent you a copy of that letter and you replied. I still have that reply.

I’m printing a portion of the transcript of your speech at the Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville, Florida which has to do with “change agency.” This will make it easy to refer to things I will discuss. I will note some other things in your speech which relate to the subject. Let me say here, I have listened to your speech and also read the manuscript. You certainly imparted some good and needed information about a number of things. The things you had to say about the Charismatic Movement and its effect on the church should have the attention of all who are concerned about the well-being of the Lord’s church.

I now begin with a portion of your speech, which has to do with change agents in particular. —

Well, about change agency. I saw the document that started change agency among us, and brother Rubel Shelly, after he had made a speech on the subject at Centerville, Tennessee in 1983 gave me a copy of his manuscript and asked me to critique it. I wondered at the time why he didn’t bring it to me before he gave the speech. But I copied that material and still have it in my files. That was the coming out of change agency in our part of the country. Where is it now, all these many years later? Well, in Middle Tennessee it is not very effective. The churches of Christ in Davidson County and Nashville, 106 of them. The highest number of that group they ever got into change agency was 19. The number now is, I would say, maybe 12 to 15 of them. You will find very few churches of Christ in Middle Tennessee that are very much interested in or supportive of the change movement. Yes, they will here and there infiltrate a church, but by and large, most people are now aware and are very, very resistant. . . . It is a very disappointing

The 6,400 member group, according to *The Christian Chronicle’s* report, “has decided to add an instrumental worship assembly with communion on Saturday nights.” This is an example of how far brethren may go, once they leave the “old paths.” This didn’t happen overnight, as it did not happen overnight with others who have apostatized. This should serve as a warning to those who are now on that same road of apostasy.

More Children Born to Unmarried Parents. A report from the National Center for Health Statistics shows that 37 per cent of the 1.4 million babies born in the United States last year were born to unwed mothers. What else can be expected when more than four million unmarried couples live together? Add to this the flaunting of sexuality by so many sources, and the disappearance of any stigma on account of illegitimate births. Statistics show that children born under these circumstances are more likely to continue to follow the same patterns.

WHAT ABOUT SOME GOOD NEWS? I am greatly encouraged when good news is received. And, there is much good news, and that is most especially found among brethren who are not willing to bow their knees to Baal, regardless of the pressure to do so. Good news often comes from those in their golden years, who have kept their faith and continue to do so, when so many have fallen by the wayside. Good news comes from brethren in other countries, when they demonstrate that they have had some good teaching and do their best to stand up for the truth. It is good news that brethren are willing to give up some of the niceties in our country and go to other countries to help convert and train others to carry on the Lord’s work. It is good news when brethren are unafraid to set forth the Truth in writing, realizing that they are exposing them selves to undue criticism. As it was with Israel in the long ago, although they in a large part drifted away from the Lord, there was always that remnant that stood firm, thereby playing a vital part in helping to accomplish God’s plan of salvation for man.

As we examine the New Testament we find much bad news: church problems, false teachers, unfaithful brethren, etc. but the good news is that we can “overcome.” In the seven churches of Asia, the promise of blessings was to the “overcomers.” — *Editor*

What Is Religious Conversion?

The word “conversion” means to change from one thing or state to another. Wood is converted (changed) into paper. Wheat is changed into flour, etc. But when we add the word “religious” to the word, it means a change in the realm of religion.

The New Testament is replete with several examples of conversion; the book of Acts being referred to as “the book of conversions. True conversion follows an inspired pattern set forth in the New Testament. This pattern is not followed in many instances; thus, true conversion has not occurred, even though an individual may believe it has.

The first example of conversion to Christ is recorded in Acts 2. In that case “about three thousand” were converted (v. 41). The gospel had been preached to the Jewish multitude. They were told by the apostles about Christ and his resurrection, and how he had been made “both Lord and Christ” (v. 36). It was at this point that they were pricked in their hearts, and said to the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v. 37).

Their first step in conversion had already taken place, and that first step was – Faith in God. The writer of Hebrews says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of that that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). You see, the Jews already believed in God. Their need now was to believe in Christ. Without belief in God in the first place, they could not have been converted.

The second step in their conversion was to “Repent.” (v. 38). Repentance is not the act of turning from sin, but rather a change of the mind which results in turning from sin.

But more steps must be taken before conversion is complete. Though “confession” of faith is not mentioned here, it is implied. Paul said, “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37).

Finally, the step that makes the conversion complete. The apostles, in addition to commanding repentance, said “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . . .” (v. 38). Upon their obedience to that command, they were converted, but not before. Now, as Christians, they were added to the church (v. 47). — *Editor*

believed that December 25th was his birthday...so, when Christianity became popular they just substituted the birthday of Jesus (the Son) for the birthday of Saturn (the Sun).

I've often wondered why people seem to be more interested in Jesus during December than at any other time of the year, and I think I may have come to understand. You see, *it's the baby*. People like babies. They're soft, tender, sweet and innocent. People will sing those pretty songs like, "Silent Night" and "Away in A Manger," and these have baby Jesus as their main theme. We see manger scenes in front of denominational church buildings, in public squares, and in front of people's homes. Who doesn't like to think about Jesus as a baby!!? You and I are certainly moved when we read of His birth, and we who are parents know something of what Mary and Joseph must have experienced and felt on that day when Jesus was born. It is a beautiful and moving story...whether you read it in December or in July...It is a wonderful story, and certainly...without the birth of Jesus, there could be no sacrificial death on the cross, now could there?

Yes indeed, people like stories about babies, and the birth of Jesus is no exception. And also my friends, this "*baby Jesus*" makes no real demands on people of today, so they are content with the sweet story of His birth in Bethlehem, but they seemingly are ignorant of Jesus the KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS!

You see my friends, this baby *did* grow up, and He is King of kings and Lord of lords! He is "...*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:8-9). The problem with most folks today is they don't want to "*Lord*"...they don't anyone telling them what to do, how to act, where to go, how to dress, how to talk, etc. But *HE IS LORD!* It is a logical contradiction to call Him "*Lord*" and then not do what the Lord says (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). This Lord is going to judge each of us one day (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Rev. 20:11-15). Keep in mind *YOU* are going to be judged by *HIS* Word. This fact should cause you to truly want to study the Word in order to understand what is right and what is wrong (Eph. 5:17; John 8:31-32; Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). You cannot know what is right and what is wrong apart from the verbally inspired Word of God.

I certainly hope that each of you have a happy time with your friends and family during this festive time of the year. But my sincere hope and prayer is that each of you will be resolved to truly submit to Jesus as your Lord. He gave His life FOR YOU, and He asks you to take up your cross daily and follow Him. Will you?

—P.O. Box 285, Crum, WV 25669

EDITOR'S NOTE:

December 25 is a national holiday, and as Americans we so recognize it. It is not a religious day to us, because we find no justification in God's word for so observing it. It saddens us when our brethren follow the example of the religious people who in error observe December 25th as a "Holy Day," as well as other things which are not in harmony with God's will.

In The Mostly Sad News

The Muslim "In The House," Keith Ellison, wants to use the Koran instead of the Bible in his oath of office. Virgil Goode, unafraid to speak out in opposition says that if people don't wake up, other Muslims will be elected to office. It seems that most of our people still do not realize the world wide threat of Islam. It is time to awake.

Miss America – A Stripper. How sad it is that a person of this depraved would become a "role model" for many in our society. This is a sign of the times in which we live. What will children think about such actions as parading before an audience almost naked, displaying no sense of shame for such immodesty, and also engaging in drunkenness?

Miss Teen America – A sad role model for our young people. When such matters are discussed on the news, instead of a jovial countenance, heads should hang in shame that our society has come to accept such immoral behavior. But some good news is that those of the organization known as "MADD," (mothers against drunk driving) have severed their connection with "Miss Teen." It is always good when people are willing to stand up for good moral principles. When it comes to matters of morality, more and more people lack the courage to stand up and be counted on the side of higher standards.

Richland Hills Goes Farther Into Apostasy. 1

thing for the church to be targeted, and as a result, go through the difficulty. But our people, by this time have a good awareness if they want to have a good awareness of the material that is available. A great deal of writing has been done and continues to be done. Books, articles, pamphlets. There are a good number of tapes that are available, and there are speakers here and there throughout our brotherhood, well-informed and very capable of coping with the matter if the local congregation should need some help. What we are basically seeing is a record has been established. First of all, the record is one of discord and confusion. Those who come with the agenda to remake the church, have over estimated in many instances, the acceptability of brethren for their efforts. There will be resistance, and many times a very spirited resistance. That is always present. A second thing is division. The churches that have resisted have often been obliged to either push the change agent out or be pushed out themselves. And that is division. The change agents are basically a parasite movement....

Brother William, I guess the thing that struck me most when I first heard this was that it sounded like things in Middle Tennessee are really looking up and that the change agents are not really a problem.

I was born and raised in Middle Tennessee, and though I have lived elsewhere for several years, I still know about things in the Lord's church in that area as well as in many other places in our country and in some foreign countries.

Being aware of conditions in Tennessee and other places, I am trying to understand how things could be, as you describe, looking up. The following question came to mind, "Could brother Woodson be giving a definition to change agents which excludes many whom I know are active in trying to change the church?" It is a matter of fact that there were a great many brethren who were trying to bring about change before Rubel Shelly in 1983; and subsequent to his heyday, there continue to be. That is about the only thing I can think of that would explain the way you see the matter and the way I and many others see it. Many times a great deal hinges upon the definition given to a term or a word. I have noted what I mean by a change agent: One who goes about to change the church.

But my definition of a change agent and what yours seems to be are quite different. For example, a per-

son might travel through Texas and never see a cow. There are two main reasons why that could be so. One, the person is blind and cannot see. He, of course, would not see a cow. Two, one could call a cow a horse or some other animal, and therefore, on that basis not see a cow.

Early on in your remarks you point out that Rubel Shelly was the beginning of "change agency" among us. One reviewer of your book said you examined the writings and speeches of Calvin Warpula and Lynn Anderson, as well as that of Rubel Shelly. These three men have quite a lot in common, and that is, they have been and are engaged in changing the church. But you and I know that many others could be added to the list of those who are trying to change the church, and sad to say, have done much to achieve their evil objective.

For example, consider the following brethren who are or have been quite well-known within the brotherhood. There are others, some not as well known, that could be added to the list: Mike Cope, Rick Atchley, Buddy Bell, Joe Beam, Dan Billingsly, F. LaGard Smith, Walt Leaver, Joe Vandyke, Prentice Meador, Max Lucado, Jim Woodruff, Jeff Walling, Jerry Jones, Lynn Anderson, Randy Mayeux, and others.

Do you consider these men as "change agents" as well as the three mentioned earlier? What about those brethren who take the position that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is a matter of opinion? Are they "change agents." What of the increasing number of brethren who are using the "Praise Teams," "praise worship," etc.? There are quite a number of brethren who find reasons for divorce and remarriage other than that set forth in Matthew 19:9. Are they not trying to change the church or the teaching of God's word? If such brethren as these are not out to change the church, what are they trying to do? There are many erroneous teachings and practices, about which you no doubt are aware, which we could add to the list. When people change the teaching of God's word to include error, aren't they also changing the church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth"? →

In your remarks about change agents, you did not call attention to many of the happenings which have and are taking place at Lipscomb, and other places in Nashville and Middle Tennessee. Lipscomb influences quite a number of people in Tennessee and in other places. What about those teachers at Lipscomb who are in fellowship with Woodmont Hills, where Rubel Shelly preached for years? What about the congregations which supported the Billy Graham Campaign a few years back? Isn't F. LaGard Smith now a teacher at Lipscomb? Are you aware of his denial of the doctrine of everlasting punishment of the lost? What of his teaching that some may be saved without baptism? Did people from Lipscomb have anything to do with the Hendersonville Community Church? Of course you must know something of what has happened with the Madison congregation. There are reports that a great portion of the Madison congregation has gone elsewhere. Is that true? Is it not also the case that Madison has been having a "traditional" worship and also a "contemporary" worship? These things tell me that things are not looking up in Middle Tennessee.

Since your speech in Florida, some far out things have happened which involve some people from Lipscomb. The recent article in *The Tennessean* relative to the "religious conflict gathering at Lipscomb University," raises serious questions. Although Lee Camp disputes some of what was said in the article, there are still many questions that need answers. Another recent happening at Lipscomb was the Benefit at Lipscomb redefining mission work. This involved "The Anteaters' Ball," at the Willard Collins Alumni Auditorium.

Brother William, do you think the many things happening in other parts of the country will not have an adverse effect upon the church in Tennessee as well as other places. It seems to me that our brotherhood is affected pretty well all over to some degree, by what is happening in other places. The problems in Texas are likely to be seen in Tennessee, etc.

Some examples of what is happening in other parts of the country are: 1) The recent happenings at Richland Hills (reported in the *Christian Chronicle*); their introduction of instrumental

music in worship; their Saturday night communion; errors nonetheless upheld by the elders. 2) The various happenings at Abilene, including a notorious first: welcoming a "Homosexual Rights Group," on Campus; and also, efforts to encourage fellowship with The Christian Church. 3) The "North American Christian Convention" in Louisville, KY. 4) The schools operated by our brethren, for the most part, have allowed wholesale error to come in.

My point is this. With all the evil influence emanating from several different sources, how can our brotherhood in general not be adversely affected? In your speech you mention the influence upon young people by such things as Winterfest, and how that the speakers are able to "manipulate a crowd." You also set forth some valuable information as to how people are influenced to believe error with regard to the Holy Spirit and His direct leading of people. These are warnings which should be sounded out to our people, all across our brotherhood, even in the world-wide sense. Those who propagate such error, and this is quite widespread, are trying to bring about change, and as we know, they have been frighteningly effective in their efforts. Aren't such people as these change agents?

You point out that change agency is not very effective now, that you have been in New York, Michigan, California, Texas, Colorado, Georgia and Alabama this year and "very few brethren are experiencing much difficulty." You also call attention to the stopping of "Jubilee" in Nashville. Is there any indication that the supporters of Jubilee have repented of their error? Will they not continue to work toward their objectives of change? I cannot understand how change agency is not very effective anymore, and yet I believe you would agree that the church is beset by more error now than ever in our lives.

Brother Woodson, I sincerely believe that the picture you paint with regard to change agents in the first portion of your speech will mislead some into thinking we are not facing the reality of the error we actually face. Evil is evil, regardless of what we call it, and we should "abstain from every form of evil" (I Thess. 5:22, ASV).

For the cause of Christ, Walter W. Pigg

Does God Authorize Christmas as a Holy Day?

Those who are generally considered part of what is called "The Christian Religion" consider Christmas as a Holy Day. But from the standpoint of its being authorized by God, there is not a whit of evidence. Christ never was "in Christmas" because God did not put Him there. Man, by his own authority, put Christ in Christmas. Why then, do so many religious people put Christ in Christmas? In response to this question, I am commending to you an excellent article by our brother James E. Farley, as published in *The Mountain Messenger*, Crum West Virginia, December 2006. The title of the article is, "**Some Facts and Some Thoughts About 'The Holidays.'**"

Before we get to the article I want to call attention to an example which serves as a case in point that more and more of our own brethren are following the practice of "The Christian Religion" in general in observing Christmas as a "Holy Day."

A congregation in this area posted messages on the sign in front of their meeting place promoting Christmas in a religious sense. After a few days the messages were changed, but in a very insignificant way. We shall give the messages as first posted and after the change.

Side one of the sign carried the following:

**ALMO
CHURCH OF CHRIST
MERRY
CHRIST-MAS**

[Times of services given here]

MINISTER: PRIESTLY SCOTT

Side two of the above carried the following:

**CELEBRATE OUR
SAVIOR'S
BIRTH**

Side one of the changed sign carried the following:

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

Side two of changed sign carried the following:

**CELEBRATE OUR
SAVIOR'S BIRTH
EVERYDAY**

One might ask, "Just what difference did the change on the sign make?" Christ is still "kept in Christmas," in a religious sense, and God never put Him there. The difference in the change might aptly be described as that between "tweedledee and tweedledum."

Now to brother Farley's article —

It is that time of the year again...that festive time of the year...the time we call "*the holidays*." People really do seem to be happy, cheerful, and jovial at this time. There are bright colors and lights all around. It really is a pretty time of the year isn't it?

It is also a time when many people are thinking about the facts surrounding the birth of Jesus the Christ. Allow me to say, first of all, that I am glad that people think more about Jesus at any time of the year...December included. Maybe this is a time when your hearts are more tender and pliable, and therefore a time when you may be reached more readily with the Truth of the gospel of Christ.

But my friends, there is not even one small indication in the Scriptures that Jesus was born in December, let alone on the 25th!!! Furthermore, we are never given any indication that the early church ever celebrated an annual day to remember His birth. We do know that they gathered weekly to remember His death. (I Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7).

THE WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA says, "*After the spread of Christianity, churchmen tried to give Christian meaning to pagan festivals.*" This is precisely what happened with the origination of a "*Mass for Christ*" or "*Christmas*." The celebration of Christ's birth on December 25th is of Catholic origin. It did not originate with Jesus, or with any of his apostles.

It was in 354 A.D. that Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate the birthday of Jesus on December 25th. This day was already a special "*holy day*" for Romans. For centuries these people celebrated the birthday of "*Saturn*," the Roman "*god*" of agriculture. This "*god*" (Saturn) was personified in the Sun. The pagan Romans worshipped the Sun, and →