

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## WHO CAN AND WHO CANNOT MARRY WITHOUT COMMITTING SIN?

Thomas B. Warren

For a number of reasons, questions about marriage are among the most interesting and important to human beings. And, among the most important of those questions is: *who can marry without committing sin in so doing?* The Bible answer is plain. The Bible makes clear that—ideally speaking—God intends that marriage is to be a *lifetime* contract (Rom. 7:1-4). Jesus gave one exception. He sets out one ground upon which one may put away his companion and marry another, that of marital unfaithfulness (fornication, Mat. 19:9).

God *joins* together two people in marriage *only* when both parties to that marriage are *eligible* (according to *Bible standards* of eligibility) to be married. Even if a person is eligible to be married, if he/she marries some one who is *not* eligible, then he/she commits adultery.

With the above introductory matters in mind, may each reader prayerfully consider those who, according [to] the Bible, are eligible to be married (and who, therefore, can marry *without committing sin* in so doing).

1. Those who never been married previously may, without sin, marry—so long as they themselves marry an eligible (in the sight of God) partner. **“But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin, she hath not sinned”** (1 Cor. 7:28; cf. 1 Cor. 7:9).

2. Those who *have been* previously married but whose former companion is dead. Paul stated the matter in this

fashion:

**For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to the husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of the husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband be dead, she is free from the law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man** (Rom. 7:2, 3).

3. Those who have been previously married but whose former companion was guilty of fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage vow). Here, our text (Matthew 19:9), shows plainly that Jesus gave to the *innocent* party the right to seek another marriage partner. If Jesus had given no exception, His language would have taught that every person who puts away his companion and marries another is guilty of adultery. But Jesus did not do that—He did give an exception, making it clear that those whose companions have been guilty of *sexual unfaithfulness* may put them away and marry another, not being guilty of adultery in so doing. This means *physical* unfaithfulness—the actual act of sexual intercourse—not merely lusting in one’s heart (Mat. 5:28).

The negation, put in simple terms, is a setting forth of those who can *not* marry without sinning in so doing. Or, it might be stated as follows: those who *do* sin when they marry. Just who are these?

1. Those who have a living former companion who was not put away because of fornication. According to Matthew 19:9, Jesus forbade divorce and remarriage except on the ground of marital unfaithfulness (fornication).

2. Those who marry anyone who has a former companion (still living) who was not put away because of fornication. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus said, **“Whosoever shall put**

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**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder**  
**August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

## **Editorial...**

## **FELLOWSHIP BY ASSOCIATION**

The teaching of the article beginning on page 3 by bro. Michael Hatcher was very much needed in 2000 when, as editor of *Defender*, he printed it therein. As needed as it was in 2000, the church needs it even more today. Indeed, it is a sad note that some brethren 20 years ago could see its application at that time (although there were many who did not), but they are blind to its application in other areas today. Thus, they find themselves in the miserable condition of continuing to teach the truth taught in said article, but, for whatever reason, fail to objectively, logically, and consistently apply the same to other parallel cases today. (If you have not read bro. Hatcher's article, we ask that you read it now before continuing with this one.)

The apostle John wrote to and about Christian fellowship (1 John 1:3). Thus, he is not writing about a Christian's relationship to a non-Christian. With that in mind, please note the reasoning of bro. Hatcher's in his editorial.

1. If it is the case that the apostle John is in fellowship with God.

2. And, if it is the case that one is in fellowship with the apostle John.

3. Then, it is the case that one is in fellowship with God. Brother Hatcher clearly understands that we are finite and cannot, therefore, know all there is to know about anyone. Therefore, we may be in fellowship unknowingly with brethren who are not in fellowship with God. Assuredly, the apostle John knew that to be the case. Thus, John's letter pertains to what we know about the conduct of our brethren. All of the foregoing is based on conducting ourselves according to the teaching of Matthew 7:20; John 12:48; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 5:9; 1 John 3:4; James 4:17; 2 John 9-11. Thus, a brother who knowingly remains in fellowship with another brother in Christ who refuses to repent of his sin(s) is guilty of violating God's law of Christian fellowship. As bro. Hatcher well wrote:

However, when we can know (through a person's actions or doctrine) that a person does not have fellowship with God and we fellowship him, then how can it be otherwise that we sever our fellowship with God. This, then, is guilt by fellowship (or association). Many will accept the initial statements, yet some will turn around and deny the reverse of John's argument.

## **ASSOCIATION AND FELLOWSHIP**

*Not all association involves fellowship, but all fellowship involves association.* When we have an oral debate with non-Christians or apostate brethren, we may all assemble in one auditorium, but such association does not necessarily constitute extending Christian fellowship to non-members or erring unrepentant brethren. The adversarial nature of a debate clearly implies as much.

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# FELLOWSHIP

Michael Hatcher

John, by inspiration of God wrote,

**That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:3-7).**

Consider John's discussion relating to his recipients fellowship. In verse three, John says that they had fellowship **"with us."** That is, they had fellowship with the apostles. John continues to say that the apostles have fellowship with God. Since the apostles have fellowship with God, and they have fellowship with the apostles, then they have fellowship with God. Initially, this is John's argument. He continues that only as they walk in the light can they have fellowship with God (vv. 6-7) and thus with the apostles.

I want to especially consider the initial discussion of fellowship as it relates to a modern day question. John's basic argument is: (1) If the apostles (a person) has fellowship with God, and (2) I have fellowship with them (the apostles or a person), then (3) I have fellowship with God. In this case, the apostles did have fellowship with God, but what if they did not. Would it not be correct to then argue: (1) If a person does not have fellowship with God, and (2) and I have fellowship with them, then (3) I do not have fellowship with God. If not, why not? I understand that there might be occasions where a person, because of sin within his heart that no one knows about, does not have fellowship with God and we fellowship him. We would be in fellowship with that one based upon the knowledge which we possess, which would be that they are a faithful Christian and in fellowship with God having no way to see the condition of their heart. However, when we can know (through a person's actions or doctrine) that a person does not have fellowship with God and we fellowship him, then how can it be otherwise that we sever our fellowship with God.(sic) This, then, is guilt by fellowship (or association). Many will accept the initial statements, yet some will turn around and deny the reverse of John's argument.

Years ago a preacher told me that he did not believe in guilt by association. Others have written articles attacking the idea of guilt by association. Yet, one of the definitions of fellowship is association. Thus, according to John's argument above, there is guilt by association (or fellowship).

This same preacher has bragged that he will go anywhere to preach the gospel. Why not, if you do not believe in being guilty by your association (fellowship)? Yet, to give further evidence of this principle, again listen to John.

**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).**

Does the bringing of this doctrine only mean **teaching** of something contrary to the doctrine of Christ or can it also apply to the **living** of something contrary to Christ's doctrine? Surely it applies to both! There are other passages which teach the same principle—guilt by association (or fellowship). **"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"** (Rom. 16:17).

**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you (2 Cor. 6:14-17)**

**"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"** (Eph. 5:11). **"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away"** (2 Tim. 3:5). **"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject"** (Tit. 3:10). **"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"** (Rev. 18:4). How can these passages (along with others) be ignored by these brethren?

Those who hold the view that they will go anywhere to preach do not view their presence as fellowship. However, as a director of a lectureship program, we only ask those who are in fellowship with us. We would not knowingly ask anyone to speak on our lectureship who is not in fellowship with us. The only exception to that might be if we asked someone for the purpose of exposing what they are teaching. Even then we would try to word the advertisements in such a way that everyone seeing it would know that we are not in fel-

lowship with that one and we are exposing the false teacher. Certainly I would go into a denominational setting to expose the errors of that denominational group and teach the truth. However, that is a far cry from appearing on a lectureship program (or whatever they want to call it) with them (even if I am teaching the truth). Appearing at a denominational setting to expose them does not parallel with a preacher today appearing with those liberals who are no longer in fellowship with God. Would I be guilty of association (fellowship)

by appearing on such a lectureship? If the express purpose is not to expose their error—Absolutely. Let us not lose our eternal reward because of associating (having fellowship) with those who are not in fellowship with God (*Defender*, Volume XXIX, January 2000, Number 1, *Notes From the Editor*, pp 2, 3).

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**away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery**” (compare Matthew 5:32).

3. Those who were put away because of their marital unfaithfulness (fornication) (Mat. 5:32; cf. 19:9). The *guilty party* (that is, one who has been put away because of fornication) is not free to marry.

The teaching of Jesus on this matter is too plain for denial. It was with *infinite wisdom* that God has set forth the privileges and the bounds of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It is by *God’s* wisdom that fornication has been designated the *one* and *only* ground for divorce and remarriage. It was God who instituted marriage. It was God who has protected it by setting the *limitations*.

When men and women ask, “But isn’t that too hard?,” Jesus answers with love and compassion, “No, it is not. These limits have been set for [the] good of all human beings.” Charles H. Roberson, former Head of the Bible Department of Abilene Christian University, said, “There is no more grievous wrong against society than divorce for the purpose of remarriage” (*What Jesus Taught*, p. 193). He further said, “The divorce courts are doing little more than legalizing adultery” (*Ibid.*). Still further, he said,

Marriage must be elevated in the minds of men. Its inviolability must be reasserted anew and men persuaded to recognize it as the sovereign cure for all those heart-rending tragedies that destroy the peace of the family (*Ibid.*).

It is sad—yea, even tragic—that today even religious leaders cry, “Does your husband complain about your cooking? Then get rid of him and get yourself another one! Does your wife criticize the fact that your shoes are not shined? The get rid of her and get yourself another one! Are you tired of your wife? Then go commit fornication with another woman and thereby free yourself to get rid of your wife and marry another woman!” And so, on and on it goes today.

It still remains a fact that Jesus’ teaching on the matter is very strict and those who wish to go to heaven had better listen to what He has said (John 12:48).

The Bible teaches that men and women must be willing

to pay any price in order to be faithful to God. One must be willing to give up property, family, freedom, (and, thus, go to prison), and even one’s life in order to be faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10; Luke 14:26-27; Pro. 23:23; Acts 21:13; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:1-5; et al.). Since God demands all of these great sacrifices, why should it be thought strange that God would demand much of us in order to protect the sanctity of home and marriage?

While our hearts ache for those who are involved in marriages which the Bible makes clear are not pleasing to God, it would not be the loving thing to counsel those so involved to stay in sinful relationships. The wise and loving counsel is always, “Obey the Lord. If you do, He will never leave you or forsake you.” Let each of us remember: “**Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life**” (Rev. 2:10). [Warren, Thomas B., ed., *Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 15, April 1984, No. 15. pp. 46-48.]

TRUTH IS UNIVERSAL—THAT IS THE REASON A PERSON SOMETIMES THINKS THE SPEAKER IS AIMING EVERY THING HE SAYS AT HIM.

### WHO CAN MARRY SCRIPTURALLY?

◆ ONE WHO HAS NEVER BEEN MARRIED

◆ ONE WHOSE SPOUSE HAS DIED

◆ ONE WHOSE SPOUSE HAS BEEN PUT AWAY BECAUSE OF FORNICATION/ADULTERY

(Editorial, Continued From Page 2)

The same is the case with the church's public worship assemblies. We never know who is going to visit said assemblies. In general, it is the desire of the faithful that non-members and erring brethren attend said assemblies. We are happy with their presence because we want them to be taught the truth, obey the gospel, or be restored to their first love.

If a brother who has been overtaken in a trespass (Gal. 6:1) were to visit said assemblies, such would constitute an excellent opportunity for the faithful to do as Paul did with Peter when the latter came to the church in Antioch of Syria (Gal. 2:11-14). What a ready-made opportunity for the elders, preacher, and all the faithful to admonish the erring child of God, exhorting him to repent. Again, the foregoing would involve the association of the faithful with an erring unrepentant member, but assuredly such association would not necessarily mean that Christian fellowship was being extended to an unrepentant church member as though that person were faithful to God. Truly, the previous actions on the part of the faithful toward the unrepentant unfaithful church member under such circumstances would be included in Paul's admonition to Christians—**“Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”** (2 The. 3:15). As Jesus taught, **“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”** (Luke 17:3). No admonishing or rebuking of the sinner can be done without having some kind of association with the erring, but it must be an association that does not involve extending Christian fellowship to an unrepentant erring child of God.

#### LIVING CONTRARY TO CHRIST'S DOCTRINE

Referring to 2 John 9-11 in said editorial bro. Hatcher asked,

Does the bringing of this doctrine only mean **teaching** of something contrary to the doctrine of Christ or can it also apply to the **living** of something contrary to Christ's doctrine? Surely it applies to both! There are other passages which teach the same principle—guilt by association (or fellowship). **“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”** (Rom. 16:17).

Of course, conduct that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ on the part of a child of God constitutes sin. As we often emphasize, most of the New Testament was written to church members to keep them faithful to Christ. As I editorialized in the February 2021 issue of *CFTF*, one not only teaches orally and in writing, but also by the example one sets through one's conduct. I referenced Ananias and Sapphira as well as Peter for examples of brethren being guilty of sinful conduct and being dealt with according to the wisdom of God. There is nothing in the divine record that any of the three ever taught a false doctrine orally or in writing. However their conduct was contrary to and against the doctrine of Christ and, thus, was sinful.

Secondly, bro. Hatcher's reasoning paraphrased reads:

1. If it is the case that an unrepentant church member does not have fellowship with God,
2. And, if it is the case that I have fellowship with the unrepentant church member who does not have fellowship with God,
3. Then, it is the case that I do not have fellowship with God.

He then asked, “If not, why not?”—a very good question. A few sentences later, he concluded,

However, when we can know (through a person's actions or doctrine) that a person does not have fellowship with God and we fellowship him, then how can it be otherwise that we sever our fellowship with God.(sic) This, then, is guilt by fellowship (or association). Many will accept the initial statements, yet some will turn around and deny the reverse of John's argument.

Indeed, “some will turn around and deny the reverse of John's argument.”

#### “GUILT BY ASSOCIATION” APPLIES TO MORE THAN APPEARING

#### WITH FALSE TEACHERS ON LECTURESHIPS

What if one elder believed he could fellowship one who is guilty of violating the teaching of the apostle John found in 2 John 9-11 or fellowship those who do? Bro. Hatcher asked and answered that question, pointing out: “There are other passages which teach the same principle—guilt by association (or fellowship).” Also, what if in times past said elder directly opposed other brethren who were guilty of the same unscriptural conduct as the person he presently and routinely fellowships? In such a scenario, I repeat, why would we not conclude as bro. Hatcher did, “This, then, is guilt by fellowship (or association)?” Out of love for such a brother, the truth, God, and the church, said elder ought to be dealt with as Paul dealt with Peter at Antioch of Syria.

Bro. Hatcher was and is correct in pointing out the sin of guilt by association (fellowship) regarding sound brethren appearing on lectureships with false teachers and those who support them. How then could the situation with the above eldership scenario be any different from said preachers who are guilty of sin by association (fellowship)? (*Please see my February 2021 editorial.*) Bro. Hatcher concluded his 2000 editorial with, “Would I be guilty of association (fellowship) by appearing on such a lectureship? Absolutely.” And, reasoning from the same premise regarding the above eldership scenario, the elders who treated the erring elder as if he were faithful would also “be guilty by association (fellowship).” As bro. Hatcher asked, “If not, why not?”

—David P. Brown, Editor

*“In churches, as in nations, peace at any price generally results in war at any cost.”*

**GRAVE WARNINGS FROM OVER HALF A CENTURY  
AGO, BUT FEW HEDED THEM THEN.**

## **LET NOT THE STONES CRY OUT**

**ROY J. HEARN**

When our Lord made His last entry into Jerusalem, His disciples gave forth praise to God, and because of it the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke them. The Saviour replied: **“I tell you if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out”** (Luke 19:37-40).

### **HOLD NOT YOUR PEACE**

Too many of us too long have held our peace. Many faithful saints are lamenting the trends among us toward liberalism, modernism, and materialism that for a long time have threatened the Lord’s church on many fronts. Unless elders, preachers, editors, teachers, and saints otherwise who love the Lord’s truth cry out, digression and apostasy will result. If all of us would cease to act like hirelings and put on the whole armor of God, and stand as we ought to stand, we might stem the tide. Otherwise, the waves of infidelity are sure to engulf the Lord’s people (Eph. 6:10-18).

### **IT IS TIME TO CRY OUT**

1. When an elder in the Lord’s church opposes and criticizes those who oppose the teaching of evolution in the public schools.

2. When a teacher in one of our Christian colleges says: “I do not believe anyone can be classed as an intellectual who does not teach evolution.” And another says, “I would teach it, but I am afraid the students would become confused.” Let us not hold our peace.

3. When an instructor in Bible in a Christian college says: “We ought to preach the Social Gospel,” and another is allowed knowingly by the Administration to teach the doctrine of salvation by grace only, and influence young preachers to go forth opposing such a thing as the “plan of salvation.”

4. When a public speaker in the church says the only good argument for vocal music in worship is good singing (Col. 3:17, 17; Eph. 5:19).

5. When in order to build large numbers in enrollment, a school administrator advocates “throw away the rule book,” and let down the gap, morally, and expose decent young people to all the riffraff such action would bring in; ignore the wisdom of the Bible, and let “everything be reviewed in the light of modern times and trends” (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).

6. When saints, elders, preachers, and Christian college

officials ignore the bounds of the gospel and seek to compromise the Word of God with denominationalism (Mat. 7:15; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8; 2 John 9; Col. 3:21-23; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

7. When a Ph.D. is allowed to stand before his Bible classes and (1) lament that we look upon the Christian Church as a denomination; (2) affirms that “when we consider the Lord’s church as a whole, it is a denomination;” (3) states that “The New Testament is not written to us;” (4) that “We don’t have any proof that the Lord’s Supper is to be taken every Sunday, or on the first day of the week, but can be observed on Wednesday or Thursday or any other day; (5) that the church and the kingdom are not the same, and that one is not saved in the church” and so on.

8. When a Bible professor criticizes and minimizes the work of our great pioneer preachers, which would include such as J. W. McGarvey, “Raccoon” John Smith, Tolbert Fanning, Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Moses E. Lard, Walter Scott, et al., who labored diligently and fought valiantly that primitive Christianity might be restored.

9. When an eminent educator and preacher rejoices that the era has passed when stalwart men made unrelenting warfare against innovations, digressions, and premillennialism (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

To sound an alarm does not make one an alarmist. The above are not hypothetical cases, but names and addresses and documentation can be given. We need to face the facts and return to the sound principle of Bible teaching. All forces that love the truth should be rallied lest we lose the ground gained by our predecessors of the Restoration Movement. **“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward”** (2 John 8).

This writer believes in Christian education, but he believes it ought to be kept Christian. God placed true Christian education in the hands of the church 1900 years ago, and the Lord expects the church to carry out its responsibility in the matter. The writer believes in schools where the Bible can be taught, but those who support them ought to investigate and demand that only the sound doctrine be taught (2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9; 2:8).

## EDITORIAL REMARKS

Brother Hearn's article, *Let Not The Stones Cry Out*, on the preceding page was printed as long ago as November, 1964 in the gospel paper, *The Lord's Way*. It was then reprinted on the front page of the journal, *Gospel Defender*, edited and published by the late bro. Barry L. Anderson of Florence, Alabama. The late founding editor of this paper, bro. Ira Y. Rice, Jr., took Hearn's article from *Gospel Defender* and printed it his second volume of *AXE ON THE ROOT*, pp. 173-175 (1966). This was four years preceding the first issue of the paper, *Contending for the Faith*.

Following bro. Hearn's article brother Rice included brother Anderson's editorial, pertaining to Hearn's article. In that introduction Anderson wrote, "This article points up some alarming trends among us." He then continued with the following interesting remarks.

I have known Bro. Hearn for twenty-four years. Through the years he had a reputation for soundness and scholarship. I am sure he is not the type of individual who would shout "Wolf, wolf!" at a will-o'-the-wisp.

These same symptoms of liberalism within the body of Christ that he mentions have been giving some of our more serious and scholarly brethren considerable concern for some time; and those of us who are connected with the *Gospel Defender* have been trying to do our little bit to stop the leak in the dike before it becomes a flood.

But the thing to this writer that is so tragic about the whole situation is that most of the religious publications among us are weighing very little if anything about these evil tendencies. The crusading polemical spirit of the pioneers or even of Elijah, John the Baptist or Paul is looked upon with disdain by a certain class of intellectuals among us. Many brethren have adopted the so-called "positive approach," the "preach-the-gospel-but-let-others-alone" philosophy. And the inevitable result of such an approach is that error, like the farmer's weeds, grows (often imperceptibly) when it is left alone.

Brethren are saying we ought to be soul seekers, and not heresy-hunters. In the first place this is an unscriptural use of the word *heresy*. And secondly, it is unjust to imply that those who are interested in exposing error and sin are not also interested in saving the lost. Certainly we ought to be interested in saving the lost, but we must also be concerned with saving the saved. To do the one and not the other would be like the shepherd who rescues his sheep from the wolf, and then places them in a fold where there is another wolf.

Last year a congregation in another state imported a specialist from Tennessee for a teacher's workshop meeting, and during a question-and-answer session one of the local teachers asked this brother how he would advise parents and others to go about teaching their children that it was wrong to dance. His reply was, "Why I don't even tell my own children it is wrong to dance." And this man conducts quite a few of these teacher's workshops around over the country. What's to become of the church if its teachers are taught by such teachers as this?

It seems that the whole trend of affairs in the world politically, socially, and religiously is to the left! Leniency and latitudinarianism are seen on every hand. It is my prayer that men of God and of influence among us will have the faith and fortitude enough

to rise up and cry out against the evolutionary, denominational, and modernistic concepts that are creeping into the church of our Lord today. Some are speaking out. More need to. All Christians should pray that Christ may find the church without spot and wrinkle when he comes.

At this writing, fifty-seven years have passed since bro. Hearn's article appeared in *The Lord's Way*. And it has been fifty-six years since it was first printed along with bro. Andersen's editorial in *AXE ON THE ROOT, VOL. II*. Thousands upon thousands of brethren have gone to their eternal reward during that period. Many of them were stalwarts of the faith in life and doctrine. Sadly, many of them were the progenitors of today's apostates, some of whom continue to encourage the church to be a denomination. After all now a person born at the time of the writing of these articles is over fifty years old. And, many of them cannot remember a time when sound doctrine was the goal and the exposure and refutation of error was far more the rule of conduct for elders, preachers, churches than exist today.

In the autumn of 1964 some of us were just planning to dedicate our lives to preaching the gospel. Others who are yet in this world were in their first years of preaching. At this present time, we have grown old in the intervening 56 years as we have preached and defended the faith. During that time, we have watched the church year by year being swept further into the sea of apostasy, being "**tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive**" (Eph. 4:14). Sound doctrine was and is made light of, repudiated, and rejected by those who teach doctrines that loose men from what God has bound on them. The intent and purpose of those false teachers of whom brethren Hearn, Anderson, Rice, and others were concerned over fifty years ago is clear today and has been for some time—their goal was and is to make the Lord's church into another denomination among denominations. Sadly, to a great extent they have succeeded in their nefarious efforts.

Over those years, many of those who paved the way for and led the church into apostasy were the men in the Bible departments or otherwise associated with the schools of higher education operated by brethren. Now those schools are worthless when it comes to preaching and defending the ancient Jerusalem gospel and the church it produces when honest-hearted people believe and obey it.

Materialism, secularism, and pluralism have taken over the country. The "I'm okay, you're okay" sick syrupy subjective romantic sentimentalism, falsely called love, cries out to all, "Don't judge me." In the church, that fermented mentality tolerates and embraces all things contrary to the doctrine of Christ as it cultivates the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride (vainglory) of life with its cheap permissive grace and antinomian spirit. It, therefore, repudiates the final authority of the New Testament in all moral and religious matters.

No matter the cost, we must keep obeying God's Word. It will read and mean the same on the Day of Judgment as it does now (John 12:48). Let us highly resolve that we will not be moved away from it (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10)—**DPB**

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## THE GREATEST WAR

R. L. Whiteside

The greatest of all wars is the war between right and wrong. It is greatest in point of numbers engaged and involved. Every responsible person is on one side or the other. There are no neutrals; neither can there be any. Jesus settled that when he said: **“He that is not for me is against me.”** If you are not fighting for the right, your very example, no matter what your desires may be, is helping the wrong. Even the helpless infant suffers as a result of sin in the world. This is the greatest war, if measured only in dollars and cents. Think of all the government machinery engaged in protecting the good citizens and in apprehending, trying, and punishing the criminals. To that must be added the loss of good citizens murdered and also the vast amount of property criminally destroyed; also we must add the cost of every lock, every safety-deposit vault, etc. And, above all, it is greatest because of what is involved. Some wars decide the destiny of nations; your part in this war will decide the destiny of your soul.

This is a war of conquest—the conquest of hearts. You may surrender to either side. God is leading the forces of righteousness; the devil, the forces of evil. So far as you are concerned, you decide the issue. **“Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness”** (Rom. 6:16)? The devil has gained a point every time he induces you to do wrong, and he has gained a victory when he induces a person to make no effort to obey God. Be sure that he is using everything possible to keep people from obeying God. He uses religious theories with great effect, such as universalism, unconditional salvation, “one way is a good as another,” and so on through the whole catalogue of false theories.

Let this statement find permanent lodgment in your heart: Anything, whether it be doctrine preached from the pulpit or business affairs, or social relations, or anything else, that keeps you from doing God’s will or makes you feel at all com-

fortable in disobedience, is of the devil.

But people who earnestly desire to do right will not be led astray. **“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”** (Mat. 5:6). This means that they will attain to what they desire. Every one who sincerely and earnestly desires to do right will find the right. That promise of Jesus is as plain and definite as: **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”** I cannot doubt either promise. Hence, I believe that every honest person comes to know the truth.

But many people who are honest with their fellow men are not honest with God. What is honesty? It is to render to the other person everything that rightfully belongs to him. If I take or withhold from my neighbor that which rightfully belongs to him, I am not honest with him. If I am indifferent about my obligations to him, I am not honest with Him. If I withhold from God that which rightfully belongs to Him or am careless or indifferent about my obligations to Him, I am not honest with Him. I owe it to God, as I do to my fellow man, to treat His Word fairly. Also, I have been bought with a price; by right I belong to God. Honesty requires that I deliver to Him in full that which belongs to him, to be used by him as He pleases. To act on the principle that one way is as good as another is dishonest. In business affairs we have certain standards of values, weights, and measures. To deviate from these carelessly or intentionally is dishonest. God’s Word is the standard by which our conduct is to be regulated. By it we are evaluated, weighed, measured. Let us be honest with Him in making a determined effort to abide by that standard. The devil is a skillful warrior; be not deceived (Whiteside, R. L., *DOCTRINAL DISCOURSES*, The Manney Company, Ft. Worth, TX, 1955, pp. 61-63. Originally printed in *The Gospel Advocate*, 12/3/31, p. 1538)

—Deceased