

# The “New” Church of God Messenger

## A Newsletter for the People of God

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**Publisher:** Church of God, Bismarck, Darwin & Laura Lee, **Editor:** Laura Lee, **Assistant Editor:** Darwin Lee We do not necessarily agree with all contributors or their works submitted and printed in this newsletter. It is up to you to get out your Bible and see whether these things are true. Iron sharpens iron.

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## Articles

### All Abuse Hurts

by Brenda Branson (Hanson, Kentucky) Copyright © 2004 All Rights Reserved

Most people think “abuse” is just **physical attacks** such as hitting, punching, kicking, pulling hair, twisting limbs, pinching, slapping, biting, etc.

There are many other types of abusive behavior which hurt just as much or more than physical abuse. ***Just because an abuser stops hitting his spouse doesn't mean he has stopped being abusive.*** Here are other varieties of abuse which are just as destructive as physical abuse:

**Emotional Abuse**—Name-calling, mind games, “crazy-making,” belittling, shaming, extreme manipulation, coercion.

· **Economic Abuse**—Withholding money as punishment and making partner beg for necessities, demanding partner to relinquish rights to her own paycheck, requiring partner to account for all money spent (down to the exact penny).

· **Isolation**—Limits phone calls or visits to or from friends or family; listens in or “bugs” phone calls; restricts access to telephone, mail, car, or people; monitors all incoming and outgoing mail; forbids partner to leave the house unless given permission or accompanied by abuser.

· **Sexual Abuse**—Forces partner to have sex at any time, any place abuser desires; demands sexual acts that are uncomfortable or distasteful to partner; physical abuse to sexual organs; subjects' partner to pornography or bizarre sexual activities; degrades partner's body.

· **Threats**—To leave or end the relationship, to commit suicide or harm someone else, to take the children, to spread lies about their partner, to hurt or kill their partner or partner's family/friends, to ruin partner financially, to destroy personal property or kill pets, to reveal secrets or confidential conversations.

· **Intimidation**—Suggesting that partner is inferior or “less than;” cruel remarks about partner's looks; ridiculing partner's ideas; using gestures, angry looks, loud voice, or cursing to control or cause fear, yelling and screaming.

- **Humiliation**—(much like intimidation) Inappropriate humor designed to put down partner; public criticism of appearance, parenting skills, housekeeping or cooking skills; pushing someone's face into a bowl of food (or worse); forcing food or other objects into someone's mouth; public showing of embarrassing photos or video clips.
- **Violence to pets or property**—Throwing things, punching holes in walls, stomping on things which he has thrown to the floor, pounding fists on doors or tables to generate fear, breaking doors or windows to get to partner, destroying partner's personal property or keepsakes, injuring or killing pets.
- **Silent Treatment**—Refusing to communicate, using silence as a weapon to manipulate.
- **Using Children**—Manipulating children to get information or give information, misuse or disrespect of visitation time, withholding child support, bribing children with gifts or activities, undermining the other parent's authority, blaming or putting down the other parent in front of the children, using subtle manipulation to brainwash the child into believing one parent is trying to prevent the child from seeing the other, competing to be the most caring parent in the child's eyes.
- **Irrational Blaming**—Holding the other partner responsible for everything that goes wrong, for problems with children, financial difficulties, car breakdowns, holiday stress, loss of promotion, loss of job, weight loss or gain, losing his temper, violent behavior, etc., etc., etc.
- **Spiritual Abuse**—Misuses scripture to keep partner "in line," unbiblical interpretation of "submission" and lack of understanding about husband's role in the home (servant leader), using scripture to justify abusive and oppressive behavior.
- **Macho Male Privilege**—Treats children and spouse like property to use or dispose of at his whim, punishes spouse when she disobeys or disappoints, dictates orders and makes all decisions, expects everyone in home to cater to his needs, threatens anyone who defies or questions his authority.
- **Power and Control**—Will not allow anyone to make any decisions without his approval; monitors food consumed, money spent, utilities used (heat, air, water), phone calls, mail, time spent outside the home; governs activities inside the home; rules TV choices and volume; restricts right to decorate or organize home without his permission, refuses to allow repairs or replace broken appliances; controls clothing choices and hairstyles; will not allow spouse to express opinions or develop friendships; denies spouse any free time to relax or recover from illness; leaves daily list of demands with a warning attached if they are not accomplished.
- **Stalking**—Following to work, church, appointments, etc.; calling multiple times a day to check up on things; spying, leaving messages on car or under door to let you know they have access to you when they want it; finding out about appointments with doctors, lawyers, or counselors and contacting them before you arrive with an intimidating message.

***Not all of the above abuse is illegal, but all is sinful and destructive. All abuse hurts!***

## **The Great White Throne Judgment**

### **by Rhoda Foust (Lehigh Acres, Florida)**

What is meant by "Judgment" anyway? Does it mean that anyone who is judged will be severely punished? Does it lead to destruction "? We are all familiar with the term "Judge". We understand when one breaks the law of the land, he/she normally will stand before a judge in a court room, one who determines the cost of the offense. But is this what God's judgments mean? In studying we find that in the Old Testament when the Hebrew word according to Strong's concordance #0494 it means "act of deciding a case, decision, case, cause" etc. This word is used in Gen. 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." We find in many places that judgments are connected with a part of keeping God's laws and His judgments.

When the Hebrew word #08201 is used it means something a little different as in "act of judging". Ex 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

But when the Hebrew word #04941 is used, it can mean, "manner, ordinance, fashion, plan, fitness, measure" etc. The scriptures below are examples. Lev. 26:46 These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses. 26:32 And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day. Deu. 12:1 These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth. Deu. 6:20 And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Deu. 7:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers:

Here we find that judgments are also connected with the covenant God made with the people. A covenant is defined as: "a binding (legal) agreement or promise between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action". When using the term "judgments" God refers to the people keeping the covenant made between Him and them. An example of this is found in 2 Chr.34:29-33.

- 29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.
- 30 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.
- 31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in his book.
- 32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.
- 33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

The covenant was that if the people would do as they had agreed in Ex.19:3-8 He would fulfill all the promises of greatness He had made to them as we saw in De.12:1.

- Ex.19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;
- 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.
- 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:
- 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.
- 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.
- 8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

The judgments God referred to were the details of the covenant. He would decide (judge) how well they kept their part of the covenant (agreement) and would determine what His decision would be toward their actions (attitudes), how well they kept their part of the covenant (agreement).

If one wants to go into greater study of the terms "judgment" or "judging" there are many locations that can be found in any reference concordance. The above scriptures are for the purpose of laying ground work for the study of "the day of God's judgment", or "the Great White Throne Judgment".

When one is critical or condemning, we use the term that that person is "sitting in judgment" of someone. That isn't that anyone is being punished or destroyed, but simply that a decision has been reached concerning the one being judged. However, when one of authority judges a perpetrator, he considers the details of the crime (sin) and to what penalty is to be paid depending on the seriousness of the offense. One may have run a red light resulting in a small penalty. One may have killed another person, making the offense more serious, deserving a larger penalty. On the other hand, one may be judged to receive a prize as a reward for having performed a heroic deed. There is much said about judgments in the Bible.

- 1Sa 8:3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. We see where judgment is perverted and also where it is practiced in justice.

- 2Sa 8:15 And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. God makes righteous judgments.
- Isa 5:16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.
- Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
- Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.
- Isa 42:3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.
- Isa 42:4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.
- Jer 9:24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

So we see that much judging is being made by man and God. But when does the great judgment of God begin on the whole world? In Jn.12:31 Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world". Jesus explained to the unbelievers that judgment was beginning then and there and would lead to Satan being cast out.

1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Now the question: If we, who are believers, live a justified life, why would we have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ as Paul stated in Heb 9:27 "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment ". The answer, of course, is that we are presently being judged as we have already saw. And how are we being judged? By our deeds (actions and attitudes). Jude says in v.14-15.

- 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,
- 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

How will these ungodly people be recognized? By the same as the Godly. Php 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

- Re 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
- Re 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
- Re 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.
- Re 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Before one is judged by their deeds, they have to have the opportunity to do deeds, either good or bad. God evidently has a method of keeping records of every one that has been given life and at some point, the judgment is made as to whether their name will be entered into the book of life. Since we are told many times in the scriptures that God is a righteous judge, a God of love and mercy we conclude that anyone who will be in this last judgment will have been given an opportunity to decide whether to follow the ways of a loving God or reject Him. Before judging the millions that have died without knowing God, He would have given them knowledge of Himself and His plan for mankind. They would have to know right from wrong to make the right or wrong choice. God would not, in His mercy, judge and condemn His innocent children to eternal death if they hadn't first learned right from wrong. Below we see those who have died standing before God being judged according to their works.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according

to their works. These people who had been dead have to be living at the time of their being judged. They also have been given time before their death to do either good or bad deeds. Some who have done bad deeds could also have repented and accepted God's way of life before their death just as we, as believers, have. Otherwise, God would not be a just, loving, merciful, and forgiving God. We will take a look at some of these people who died long ago and are presently dead. Jesus is sending some disciples out to witness to certain people who have already heard about Him.

Mr 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Lu 10:12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Jesus does not say that the people who refuse to accept the disciples are condemned to eternal life, or the lake of fire. What He does say is: it will be more tolerable for the sinners of Sodom than for these people, when they (both) are judged.

Rev.20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. This statement shows that sinners (nations such as Sodom) will be resurrected "in their lot" and given an opportunity to make a choice, (by their deeds), which will allow them to repent, to do either good or bad deeds, to determine whether their names will be written in the book of life or not. Daniel questioned about this subject and was told by an angel.

- Dan.12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.
- 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
- 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.
- 13 But go your way till the end be; for you shall rest and stand in your lot (to your inheritance) at the end of days. Then we pick back up in Rev.

Of course, this all takes place in a future age, at the end of days, prior to when the new city of Jerusalem appears from heaven. Jesus tells who can and cannot enter into this awesome city.

- Re 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. The next verse in Rev.22 shows us God sitting on a great white throne, the earth and the heaven no longer being found. We see that the second (eternal) death no longer is a curse to mankind.
- 22:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
- 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
- 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

To better understand this study, it would help to understand the seven ages of mankind. However, the first 19 chapters of Revelation is about this age (Age 3). Then chapter 20 goes into the next age and extends on into the ages following the one-thousand-year period, leading us to the age when "all things will be made new" in chapter 21.

In conclusion: God is not going to send anyone to burn in the lake of fire until He gives them time to make a decision, to do deeds of either bad or good. This will happen in a future age long after the fourth age or 1000 yr. Period, (when Satan will be bound). Mankind has a long time yet to make it into that great city, New Jerusalem when death will be no more.

## **The World as We Know It is About to Become History**

**by David Ben-Ariel (Toledo, Ohio)**

Those who strongly disagree with the "European Union" forging ahead, the Euro-skeptics, state sovereignty is under attack and that the EU is going *backwards*, descending into the darkness of fascism, not advancing democratic ideals but sacrificing them with impunity.

Rodney Atkinson, author of three books on the subject of *Fascist Europe Rising* (his most recent), led the charge, sounded the alarm, from a strictly secular point of view that interestingly matched what theologian Herbert W. Armstrong was warning about from a purely biblical perspective: the revival of the unholy Roman Empire is well underway and most remain oblivious to its inherent dangers.

Both the Bible and history serve as two witnesses that testify against the German-Jesuit dominated drive to control the European continent and then *the world*, enforcing a Pax Romana of sordid sorts.

Do you really think such a grand design would limit itself to Europe or restrain itself to remain a regional power? Truth is stranger than fiction.

Calls *are* increasing for the destruction of the European monster in the making, to abort the beast while it is still possible, due to legitimate concerns ranging from the fascist tendencies of the EU, its Nazi role model starkly laid out and exposed, and fears it will ultimately implode and impede Europe for years and drag the whole world down with it.

In *Abolish The European Union*, Robert Locke considers "The EU is a mortal threat to the civil liberties of those who live under it.... The EU is quite plausibly the nucleus of an aspiring soft-totalitarian world state; it is in fact far more likely to fulfill this role than the justly despised UN. I apologize if this sounds alarmist, but history clearly teaches us to think ahead to the logical implications of things that are just beginning... there are signs that Europe is awakening to the monster in its midst."

Even "Former Soviet Dissident Warns for EU Dictatorship"

"In a speech he delivered in Brussels Mr. Vladimir Bukovsky called the EU a "monster" that must be destroyed, the sooner the better, before it develops into a full-fledged totalitarian state."

Notice the reoccurring use of the word "monster" in reference to the rising beast in Europe. **Germany is the head of the monster** even though The Atlantic Times, among others, looks the other way and refuses to question: Germany Behind the Mask: Monster or Marshmallow? Even though Johannes Gross revealed his countrymen wear a mask. 'But the day may come when someone lifts the mask,' he wrote. "... So long as we wear the mask, we remain hidden and continue to conceal the situation from ourselves."

Others fear the colossal failure of the European Union and its tragic consequences.

Why the EU Needs to be Destroyed, and Soon laments "The EU wants to recreate the Roman Empire and ends up creating the second fall of Rome."

Christopher Booker and Richard North, co-authors of *The Great Deception: Can the European Union Survive?* believe the EU is destined to fail and would "leave a terrible devastation behind it, a wasteland from which it would take many years for the peoples of Europe to emerge" and conclude: "... the project Monnet had set on its way was a vast, ramshackle, self-deluding monster: partly suffocating in its own bureaucracy; partly a corrupt racket, providing endless opportunities for individuals and collectives to outwit and exploit their fellow men; partly a mighty engine for promoting the national interests of those countries who knew how to 'work the system'... The one thing above all the project could never be, because by definition it had never been intended to be, was in the remotest sense democratic."

However, biblical prophecy shows that the European Union will be *highly successful*, rich and powerful enough to enforce their economic, political and religious views upon the rest of the world, insisting all receive their mark of approval or else (Revelation 13:16-18; 17; 18).

"Corporatism is of course the basic building brick of all fascist systems," Rodney Atkinson notes in CORPORATISM - THE EUROPEAN DISEASE IS CATCHING.

Apparently, Mr. Atkinson is right again as Jerome Corsi has been exposing how our Southern border blurs for global trade, in accordance to treacherous plans well underway to create the "North American Union" that merges Mexico, the United States and Canada, complete with the "Amero," all under "...the Strategic and Prosperity Partnership of North America, or SPP. The SPP agreement was reached between President Bush, President Vicente Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin during their March 2005 summit meeting in Waco, Texas. **The Bush administration plan is to create a North American Union along the model of the European Union....**" (emphasis mine).

Corresponding with Mr. Corsi about these developments by design at home and abroad, he responded: "Common markets and free trade zones are forming across the globe. The North American Union is further along than we think. This is a fight we have to take on, otherwise the USA is gone."

That's the whole purpose of the globalists! No wonder President Bush doesn't give a hoot (remember the Bohemian grove?) about borders with Mexico. Many leaders have sold their souls, betrayed their people and backstabbed their countries.

Reuters Arthur Spiegelman, wrote on May 10, 1996: "Realizing they were losing the war in 1944, **Nazi leaders met top German industrialists to plan a secret post-war international network to restore them to power**, according to a newly declassified U.S. intelligence document. The document...says an SS general and a representative of the German armaments ministry told such companies as Krupp and Rohling that they must be prepared to finance the Nazi Party...when it went underground."

We are now witnessing the beast beginning to rear its ugly head again and come out from its exile, having taken firm root throughout the world. Germany's Fourth Reich is forming with partnerships around the globe, its Assyrian eagle looking both East and West as its talons are determined to clutch countries as prey and enslave all to their system.

The secret Nazis are getting more brazen and will soon shed their corporate, political, educational and religious cloaks to openly promote their new emperor to oversee this international enterprise of elitists called **BABYLON**.

## A Blast from the Past

### Is Disfellowshipping a Christian Practice?

by Arlan Weight (Bismarck, North Dakota)

CONTINUED FROM ISSUE #4

#### Christ's Example

When it comes to disfellowship, how does it square with Christ's example and teaching? We must look closely because he says 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' (Mat. 7:13)

Furthermore, he says, 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.' (Mat. 7:21)

So here Jesus is telling us to search diligently and follow after a certain way of life; a certain way that leads to life. He further indicates that it is only those doing God's will who are allowed to enter. (Mat. 7:21)

So, what is God's will concerning disfellowship? Let us look at a key scripture. 'Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' (Mat. 18:14)

So, who are these 'little ones'? Is Jesus talking about children? Let us look closely. To get the context of what God the father's will is concerning these 'little ones' we have to back up to Mat. 18:1. In Mat. 18:1 it says the disciples came to ask Jesus about who would be the greatest in God's kingdom. By this time, being with Jesus day and night, they may have begun to feel a little exclusive as to their own importance and they wanted to find out. So, Jesus began to teach them.

So, He called a little child and set him in the midst of them. The Greek word for 'little' is 'mikros' meaning small. It is no doubt the root word for microscope, microns, etc. Therefore, the little child was small, possibly less than 5 years of age. But is it little children he is talking about?

In verse 3 he says 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The word 'converted' comes from the Greek word 'strepho' meaning 'turn'. So, He's saying a person must turn and become as a little child.

He goes on in verse 4... 'whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child... and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name... but whoso shall offend one of these 'little ones' which believe in me...'

There is the clincher... a 'little one' who believes in Christ. Can a little child believe in Christ... a little child less than 5 years old? Well ...maybe, but we can see from the previous verses it says, 'as a little child.' It is quite obvious Jesus is referring to an adult person; a person new in the faith or someone who may not have grown very much.

Just because a person is a 'little one', it does not mean he or she just started attending services. They may well have been attending for years. They may well have been persons very much like the people in Corinth where Paul said they had not grown very much... even in 25 years. He said they were in need of the basic essentials of a little child getting started in life. For Paul says, 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.' Notice John 16:12. Jesus is telling his own disciples He had something to tell them but said they were not able to 'bear them now.' Can we get the picture? The Corinthians as well as Christ's disciples at one point in time were small. They were adults, not children and yet they were small spiritually. They were yet 'little ones'! (1 Cor. 3:2)

So, if a 'little one' seems to be questioning something and is viewed by some to be causing division, should he or she be suspended? Should they be disfellowshipped... put out of the church? Does a minister know the heart or intent of the individual having the disagreement? Is it his job to know? Could the minister be wrong? What if the minister offends one of these 'little ones' by suspending or disfellowshipping someone?

Look at the example of David being anointed as king. Samuel, was ready to pick Eliab as God's anointed, but the Lord said unto Samuel, 'look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature... for the Lord seeth not as a man

seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' (1 Sam. 16:7) Imagine that! Here was a man, Samuel, who was close enough to be able to talk to Christ, about to make a mistake in selecting a person to be king, whom God says he did not recommend. Can you fathom that? Now if Samuel could make a mistake like that do you not think it possible ministers, too, can make these kinds of wrong judgments concerning those they view as causing division? Think about it...

But you say, someone has to make these calls, these judgments ...but...what about Matthew 7:1-5, where Jesus is giving instruction on judging. He says, 'Judge not'. Is this for the rank-and-file member only? And does it mean condemn only? Some have said this word 'judge' should be rendered as 'condemn' and the statement in Mat. 7:1 should read condemn not.

The Greek word for Judge is 'krino'. It can mean condemn but it can also mean 'call in question, conclude, decree, determine, esteem, ordain, think, or my sentence is'. Out of 107 times where 'krino' is used only six render it as condemn or damn. The rest are those mentioned. When we look closely at Matthew 7:1-5 the context clearly indicates that it does not only mean condemn. In verse 2 He says, 'For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' So clearly this is not only condemning people. This is 'concluding, calling into question, decreeing, determining, esteeming, ordaining, thinking, or sentencing.' It is a general statement of the way we deal with other people is the way we will be dealt with. In verses 3-5 Jesus gets a bit more specific when he shows how people are prone to look at the faults of others when the fault is with themselves.

So, when a minister makes a decision to suspend or disfellowship, he is clearly 'judging' in the broad sense of Matthews usage. Could this be a violation of what Jesus told us not to do?

All of the splits and schisms since **Mr. Armstrong's** death seem to be late testimony to the judging mentality. Why can't we be more tolerant of each other? Let iron sharpen iron. Have a little thicker skin and let people have the opportunity to express themselves. Let the congregation have the ability to be exercised to discern right from wrong and to grow thereby; to lay this responsibility on their shoulders instead of on the shoulders of the ministry. Laying this responsibility on the shoulders of the ministry often leads them to remove that person from the fellowship of the congregation. Why? The reason, as stated before, is to be able to nip the problems in the bud and get rid of the rotten apple before it has time to affect the other apples.

Look at the parable of the tares. This parable Jesus gave indicates there is danger in removing tares from a wheat field ...even when you know absolutely which is a tare (weed) and which is wheat. Could there be a greater purpose for weeds and wheat to dwell together until the harvest? Leaving them together they both struggle for survival. It is possible some of the wheat can be choked out, but by the same token struggle produces strength. Do Christians need to be able to deal with these kinds of problems and build strength while doing so? If we never have to answer questions of why we do what we do and do so without the minister intervening, what kind of strength are we building?

It goes back to our purpose for being. Why is God only calling some now? Why the first fruits? Why is God teaching and training some now? What kind of training is going to be necessary to be on the team in developing a peaceful 'World tomorrow'?

Think about it... When Christ returns to this earth His first mission is to go to war ...to put down rebellion. But how will peace really come and how will it continue to grow and be maintained? That is where the saints come in. The people now trained in exercising forbearance, longsuffering and patience are going to be those Christ will use to build the peace. Can Christ use someone who is trigger happy or quick to remove people causing trouble? Is this the way He wants things done? Will peace suddenly happen when He returns?

Jesus says 'blessed are the peacemakers'... We must be learning that job now. To grow in longsuffering, we have to have something to suffer...long with. Much like a weightlifter. To build muscle a weightlifter must push against a greater and greater force. To build patience and longsuffering we need to be exercised also. The only way possible to build these character traits means being in an environment where you get hit on from time to time. Suffering wrongfully allows us to build strong spiritual muscle...Removing someone from the fellowship of believers who seems to be contentious, just because he or she may not understand something the way you do, only removes the opportunity to grow in that regard.

How many 'little ones' have been put out of the church since the church began? how many 'little ones' have been uprooted because some other member has been told not to come to church and they were offended by that? how many people have stopped coming when they see the hypocrisy in people shunning or avoiding contact with others because they've been told to do so. Young people especially are keen to see this hypocrisy the same way God does.

In Isaiah 65:1-5 God says those who He 'spreads out his hands to' walk in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts: a people that provoke me to anger continually to my face ...which say to one another 'Don't come too close, you'll defile me! For I am holier than you.' (LB) Wow! Could this possibly be giving us a little insight to what God really thinks of how we suspend or disfellowship. Read on...'They stifle me...they infuriate me!' (LB)

What would we say if God tells us it makes him mad every time a person is removed from the body of believers? Especially if He handpicked that person to be called into the fellowship in the first place? How serious is it? God hates sin, but He does not hate people. His way is constantly seeking out ways to find that one that goes astray, just the opposite of disfellowship.

As stated above, most often when a person is disfellowshipped, 1 Corinthians 5 (LB) is used where incest was taking place and Paul gave the instruction to remove that person from their fellowship. But how often are you told the second half of that story? If Christ inspired the first letter to be written would he not have inspired the second. Let us see what he said.

'Remember that man I wrote to you about, who has caused all the trouble, ... I do not want to be harder on him than I should. He has been punished enough by your united disapproval. Now it is time to forgive him...otherwise he may become so bitter and discouraged that he won't be able to recover. Please show him now that you still do love him very much.' (2 Cor. 2:7-8) (LB)

Did you get that? Paul is saying to the congregation ...not the ministry, that, just as with a united disapproval they removed him, they, unitedly need to contact him and forgive him. It does not say here that the man was sorry for what he had done. Maybe he had repented. Another view could be taken, however, in that by contacting the person, actively going to the person, being willing to put the past in the past, it might lead to his ultimate repentance ... which is toward God.

#### **Editor's Note (Added on 12-19-06):**

Paul isn't going to have them go out and bring back into a congregation of God's people a man who is still having sex with his mother. If that were the case then why throw the man out in the first place, let him stay and practice his sin. The whole point was to show the man that what he was doing was wrong in God's eyes and that a whole congregation should not be tolerating such sin. God does not forgive you before you repent, so why would Paul teach anything contrary to that in this case?

The Bible does teach that this man was sorry and repented, see 2 Cor. 2:7 which says: 'So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with **overmuch (extreme) sorrow**.'

There is no sorrow if the person is not sorry. Paul wanted the congregation to seek the man out and let him know they forgave him so that the man would not be overtaken by his sorrow for what he had done, which was a sin. Laura Lee

#### **Disfellowshipping-A Work of the Scribes and Pharisees**

In Matthew 23:2-3 Jesus said, 'The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not.'

Jesus acknowledged their position... their proper role in teaching the people. They were the educated and rightly needed to be teaching the things Moses instructed centuries ago. And He said all that they tell you to do from that instruction, given long ago, was proper, was right, was from God and needed to be obeyed. But in the same sentence, when Jesus is telling them what to do, he is also telling them what not to do. He says, 'do not ye after their works'.

The word work comes from the Greek word 'ergon' meaning 'deed, doing, work'. So, what were some of the deeds the Pharisees and Scribes were doing. The Scribes and Pharisees were good at making themselves look 'good'. But behind the scenes, they were guilty of 'extortion' and 'excess' among other things. (Mat. 23:25)

When we think of extortion, we think of someone demanding something (usually money) from someone or else... Or else what? Well...there is a penalty. If you do not pay up, we'll throw you in jail ...or worse if like the mafia...blow you away. So, extortion indicates using the position of leadership in a 'lording over' type way, intimidating the people to obey or pay the consequence'.

Look at John 12:42. Here was Jesus going about teaching people and doing good. He went to church, kept God's Holy Days, and did all the things required, but He didn't fit the stereotypical person that the leaders thought, should be, of a true follower of God. Consequently, there was a... 'division among the people because of him.' (John 7:43) And 'Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him...' (John 12:42)

Why not? Why not talk openly about something or someone doing good? What could be the harm in doing that? Well, you say nothing, but why didn't these leaders want to voice their belief? Read on...'lest they should be put out of the synagogue:'.

Just like extortion for money, there was an extortion to remain a good church member. And in order to do so, you could not have any other opinion about any other person, no matter what good that person was doing. If it did not conform to the leadership's view, you were guilty of the infraction and would have to pay the consequences. In this case be put out of church... suspended or disfellowshipped.

In John 9:22 it says 'the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue '. In fact, Jesus foretold this would happen in our day. He said, 'They shall put you out of the synagogues:'. Hold on!! It gets worse. He says, 'yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service'. (John 16:2) Seems impossible that it would be possible. Hard to believe but there it is. Does it seem any less likely than that some minister could eject a person or suspend a person from attending church thinking they are doing right ... 'doing God's service'.

Now think for a moment is Jesus saying true Christians would be put out of churches that plainly are not following the Bible as their authority. No way! In this society today many churches exist that call themselves Christian. They claim to be Christ's but do not even keep the same Holy Days as Christ kept, much less the Sabbath. True Christians would not be put out of a church they know is not the one Christ built and is building. True Christians would be suspended, and told not to come, 'marked' or disfellowshipped from the 'body of believers'.

But again, why would people be put out then as well as now? The answer is right there in John 12:42. The reason they, at least many of the leaders were tight-lipped about supporting Jesus, was that 'they loved the praise of men more

than the praise of God'. These leaders were concerned about their position ...their status... and possibly their paycheck as well as their impression with the people. They were such a tightly knit group-so focused on every little detail, they overlooked the obvious.

Do you think times have changed that much from then to now? Take a look at the young man who was blind from birth and Jesus healed him. (John 9:34) The Jews were so steeped in their own self-importance it was they who were blind and not the young man who was healed. Look at the attitude they displayed to the young man. Why do you think you are? 'You were altogether born in sin and do you teach us?' Don't you realize who we are and all the education we have had ...how can you possibly know something more than we do? Why we know you, you have not gone to college. What can you know about the scripture? We are ministers, we are highly educated. We not only went to college, but we were also at headquarters and have pastored many churches since and you are sitting there trying to tell us something!! Ridiculous! 'and they cast him out '.

Again, I will not belabor the point but one of the 'works' they seemed to be involved in, in Jesus day was putting people out of the church. Now you or I cannot put people out or suspend them. After all we are not the 'authority', but to be a good church member we must go along with the decision and shun them who are put out ...or else that just might be our fate as well. It becomes a matter of intimidation and it was a 'work' of the Pharisees in Jesus day and something He told his followers not to have a part in.

### **Disfellowshipping Still Practiced-Long After Church Began**

Were they still putting people out of church after Christ went to heaven? Apparently so. Take a look at 3 John 10. It says Diotrephes would not receive certain people in the church and to those who did receive them he cast them out of the church. What does this look like? It is not specific about why he put them out except that Diotrephes 'who loves to have the preeminence among them'.

Apparently, this had to be someone who may have been ordained at one time to such an office, because he claimed the authority to boot a person out of the church for one reason or another. This also could not have happened unless the people accepted the practice, or at least went along with it, fearing themselves, to oppose it, lest they be the ones to be thrown out.

Now who were these brethren who were being thrown out? The answer to this question is all of 3 John. John starts out the chapter by praising certain, of the brethren for receiving people for their courage 'as', they, 'walked in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth'. Some, such as Diotrephes, did not think they were walking in the truth, but others did. And what did John say? He said they were faithful for receiving such. Notice verse 5. 'Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever you do to the brethren, and to strangers'...What? 'to strangers' Apparently here you had some who were showing kindness to some people who were not even members of the church, and because of that John praised them for doing so. But, again, what did Diotrephes think of it? He ejected them from the fellowship.

Doesn't this have a ring of present-day application? I think we can safely say it does. The reason being is that basic nature is the same today as it was back then.

### **Summary**

We can see certain sections of the Bible that seem to indicate support for disfellowship, but when we hold them up to Christ's teaching to love and forbear with one another the answer is clear. His desire is for reconciliation and not disfellowship. Only then can we expect our prayers to be heard. 'First be reconciled to thy brother...' (Mat. 5:24)

When we look closely also, we can see the Pharisees practiced suspension and disfellowship and it certainly looks like one of the 'works' Jesus said his followers were not to do. Therefore, it is not a Christian practice to be part and parcel with. Many mainstream Church of God churches today talk a good line about going back to the faith once delivered but in actual practice follow in the footsteps of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said, 'except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.' (Mat. 5:20) therefore it should be something we look long and hard at and come away from.

The real essence of God's will is in Mat. 18:11-14. 'For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. how think ye? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine and goes into the mountains and seeks that which has gone astray? And if so be that he finds it, verily I say unto you he rejoices more of that sheep than the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your father which is in heaven, that one of these 'little ones' should perish.'

God's will is to 'seek out'... look for ways to encourage and exhort. Our calling is to 'walk ...with lowliness and meekness with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love endeavoring to keep the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3) This is our mission and part of the great commission' in 'teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;' (Mat. 28:20)

Let us be about our Father's business.

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