

September 2001

**A Letter** 

May 30, 1961 2708 Milam St. Orange, Texas

Mr. Glenn Melton 1805 9th Ave. Lake Charles, La.

Dear Glenn,

The recent meeting I was privileged to preach in with the congregation there was an opportunity that I could not ignore. In whatever good was accomplished I rejoice. It was my intention from the very beginning to do only good and no harm at all, and I trust that only the truth was preached and God was glorified.

Since I had preached in Lake Charles (when the church met on 2nd Ave.) from July of 1949 to March of 1953, had made many friends there, and had left the church there at my own volition and with the blessings of the entire congregation, I did not think it unreasonable (in spite of the present extreme difficulties in the churches) to expect to see many friends of yester-year in the audience. Their actual response was the most personally discouraging thing I have met since I began preaching. Whether they would endorse the church there or not, or whether they would agree with all that I preached or not, I earnestly believed that some would come as friends, and more, as brethren and listen with open minds. (I recall running an announcement in the bulletin about the beginning of the church of premillennial persuasion in Sulphur. We said that faithful brethren could not endorse and fellowship that church. But when Frank Mullins came there for a meeting, several from Lake Charles and Maplewood were willing to go out and listen to what he said. The truth has nothing to fear, but error has.)

In reality only one old friend came because he wanted to. He came to listen and even asked some questions of me. Four other former acquaintances (two of them as close as any friends I ever had) came, but it was a bitter disappointment to me to learn that they came because they were sent. I would have had a great deal more respect for them had they openly said, "Bill, we are not here because we endorse this church or all of the things that your preach. We are here as a committee sent from the Blvd. church." Just how deep is friendship? and how strong is conviction?

Only after the meeting had begun did I learn how much the church for which you preach has been marked and opposed. Evidently minds have been closed and prejudice has set in among many members of the Blvd. church in Lake Charles and the church in Maplewood. I am convinced that such has come about as a result of two things: 1) they simply are not aware of the innovations that are pouring into churches all over the nation, and 2) they have received a diet of distorted information about some conscientious brethren--falsely portrayed as "trouble-makers," "disturbers," "church-dividers," "ambitious," "opposed to caring for orphans, to doing mission work, and to churches cooperating" and prejudicially branded as "antis." (And some thought you people did not believe in Bible classes because they had heard this loaded and unqualified term applied to you.) (Continued on another page)

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#### **Bible Authority – Preach The Word**

In he word of God we find bible authority for bible preaching. We find no authority from God's word either by command, example, necessary inference or an expedient of a command, example, or necessary inference to preach something else. This authority comes from the command found in 2 Tim. 4:2; <u>Preach the Word</u>. We also find an approved bible example as the New Testament disciples continued steadfastly in the <u>apostles' doctrine</u>, Acts 2:42. The context of Acts 2:42 is worship. In worship the apostles' doctrine is manifest by preaching. An approved bible example is found in Acts 20:7, "they came together to break bread and Paul preached unto them".

Many times it seems brethren are insistent (as well they should be) that the worship be only that which is authorized on the pages of the inspired word. So we demand truth about music in worship and the Lord's supper. Yet, when it comes to preaching, many brethren seem to be satisfied with just about anything. Why do some demand bible authority concerning music and the memorial supper but care little or nothing about authority in regard to the preaching part of worship? Is it that they had rather be entertained than enlightened? It seems many are content to be left alone in mediocrity than exhorted to do the Lord's will. Some truly seem to thrust the word of God from them, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life Acts 13:46. We must remember that bible authority for all is needed Col. 3:17; 2 Jn 9, I Pet 4:11. Why do some who profess to be sound in the faith want watered-down, wishy-washy, soft preaching; which is not in any way preaching the word? Why do brethren who strive to be faithful in most things put up with nonsense from the pulpit?

Some complainer might ask, "don't we have bible authority to use illustrations, or poems or even humor to make a point in preaching?". Absolutely! Paul quoted from a heathen poet to prove a point about the nature of God to the Athenians Acts 17:28, and the illustration of sowing wheat when writing of the resurrection I Cor 15:37. The master teacher, the Lord himself, possibly used some humor when he referred to Herod as "that fox" when speaking to the Pharisees about his death and resurrection Lk13:32. We would notice that this was the inspired word and the points were backed by inspiration. So yes, we have approved bible examples that establish the authority to use poetry, humor or illustrations to make points in preaching. The uses of such to make a point preaching must, however, be backed up with the inspired word to be speaking as the oracles of God I Pet 4:11!

If we would learn from the Master, hear Him as He said "It is written" Mt 4:4; "it is written" Mt 4:7; "it is written" Mt 4:10; "ye do err not knowing the scriptures" Mt 22:29; "have ye not read" Mt 19:4 "did ye never read in the scriptures" Mt 20:42 and He constantly quoted from the scriptures.

If a man professes to be a gospel preacher should he not back up every idea he puts forth to an audience with a "thus saith the Lord"? If not, I ask you is he preaching the word or something else which is not authorized? In times past brethren often prayed that preachers would, "hide their preaching behind the cross", or preach, "from the shadow of the cross", or some similar, prayerful statement. We don't hear these prayers much anymore - Why? Is it because more and more what some mis-designate as gospel preaching consists of not preaching the word but consists almost entirely of psychology, philosophy, humanism, secularism or one joke after another? Brother J.D. Tant often asked "are we drifting"? I would ask that same question today in regard to preaching the word.

Gospel preachers are admonished to preach the word 2Tim 4:2 and speak that which becomes sound doctrine Titus 2:1, and hold fast the form of sound words 2Tim 1:13. Faithful men need always to realize that spiritual truths are always better taught "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth comparing spiritual things with spiritual" I Cor 2:13. This passage speaks of the inspired man of the 1st century but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have the completed and confirmed inspired book 2Tim 3:16-17. Let us use the words of the Holy Ghost in our preaching. Preaching the truth which is God's word 2Tim 4:2; Jn 17:17, is what makes gospel preaching and gospel preachers distinct from preachers of error in the devil's denominational world.

Many brethren today have tremendous public speaking abilities. Now, if they will combine these abilities with bible knowledge and preach the word 2 Tim 4:2, they would be great in the kingdom of God and be adhering to preaching the word for which we have bible authority.

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### Church History The Early Days of the Lord's Church in Texas, Part 1

Having been assured by some of my own relatives that our family has been members of the church of Christ in Texas for 8 generations, I undertake to tell a brief history of how this came about. Many other Christians can tell similar accounts. I will attempt to rustle up some sources and will relate some history regarding this; which is almost 200 years old.

Born in New Jersey on April 17, 1776, Collin McKinney, son of the patriot Daniel McKinney who participated in the famous Boston Tea Party, was also an avid lover of freedom. He brought his family to just west of what is now Texarkana, Texas on September 15, 1824. He had left the Baptist church in 1821 and was converted to the truth, renouncing the Baptist faith under the teaching of Barton W. Stone in Elkton, Kentucky. This frontiersman was very instrumental in the War for Texas Independence from Mexico. However, before the revolution, it is said that he and his fellow worshippers never worshipped in a church building or organized a congregation of the Lord's people because it was against Mexican law to do so. He respected the law of the land, though it was unfair. McKinney was not a gospel preacher ("History of Texas 1685-1892" p. 14).

The first gospel preacher to arrive in Texas is thought to have been William P. Defee, a physician by profession. Born in North Carolina in 1798 of Hugenot ancestry, he arrived in East Texas in 1833. Just as McKinney had refrained from doing, Defee for fear of the Catholic authorities (and Mexican law) did not organize a congregation of the Lord's people, either, until after the beginning of the Texas War of Independence. Afterwards he preached all over East Texas as scant articles he submitted to religious journals of the day reveal.

Credit is given to Mansil W. Matthews, another physician, teacher, and preacher for getting the first congregation to be established in Texas. From his home country, he recruited a band of "adventurers" in North Alabama to accompany him to "the promised land." Most of these were members of the church of Christ and they set out in 1835 by wagon and on horseback to come to Texas. It is said that Davy Crockett accompanied this same band as far as Memphis, Tennessee. The group conducted worship services each Sunday as they traveled and became known as the "church on horseback and wheels." ("Historical Sketches," XLVIII, April, 1936, pp. 1-2).

On the first Sunday after their arrival at Ft. Clark or Clarksville, Texas, on January 17, 1836, this band of folks met for worship and constituted the first congregation of the Lord's people in Texas. All the Mexican soldiers and Catholic functionaries had withdrawn back to Mexico from North and East Texas since the outbreak of the Revolution. The Mexicans were not there to interfere with the newly organized church and the faithful could worship without fear of any molestation from the Mexican authorities. No other religion but Roman Catholicism was sanctioned under the law of Mexico during this time. The absence of these officials allowed probably caused these people to simply feel that the outcome of the war would be independence for Texas and so religious freedom would be allowed just like it had been in U.S. The first place of worship these hardy Christians utilized was said to be a long, low, and rambling log structure that was actually part of Ft. Clark. As soon as the first winter had passed, they left these dingy accommodations and began meeting under a brush arbor. Matthews went on to serve as a surgeon in the Texas Army, with distinction. (Ibid, p. 4)

These Alabamians were only the first of Christians to come to Texas. Many others came from other areas of the U. S. but a disproportionately large number were from Alabama. This explains why so many of us multi-generational Christians in Texas can often trace the origin of our family lines as well as our faith back to Alabama. 1 Cor 4:15, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

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## Genesis Key To Understanding God's Purpose For Life

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' ...And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden....Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it...And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' ...And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept...the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman..." (Gen. 1:28, 2:7, 8, 15, 18, 21, 22)

Genesis and its creation model gives meaning to life. God created Adam and Eve with purpose. Their mission was to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. . ." (Gen. 1:29). Man was also commissioned to keep and tend to that paradisiacal garden which God had planted for him to live in. Eve's purpose and therefore woman's foundational reason for living since creation was to be a "helper" for the man. God created Adam and Eve to live, reproduce, work and worship. Indeed, God's purpose for life gives life purpose! Man violates his fundamental purpose when he is lazy and ceases to work, when he ceases to worship and lead his family as a man of God (cf. Eph. 5:23-6:4; Is. 38:19; 1 Tim. 2:8; etc.). He also violates his purpose in creation when he ceases to live by choosing death over life. Woman also violates her purpose in creation when she harms rather than helps man in his spiritual and physical work (i.e., Jezebel 1 Kin. 21:25). Perhaps Paul says it best when he appeals to the God of creation saying, "God who made the world and everything in it. . .And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. . .so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being. . ." (Acts 17:24, 26-28).

Creation gives life purpose! Because God created us, our individual purpose in life is to seek Him and find Him. But if we displace the creation foundation with an evolutionary foundation, then life is expendable and without purpose. It really does make a difference of who or what is in our ancestry. If Adam is in our ancestry, then that means that God sets the rules and there are absolutes. However, if ape is in our ancestry, then man sets the rules and morality is relative; abortion is simply a choice being neither right nor wrong, euthanasia is simply one's right or prerogative. If ape is in our ancestry, then why not buy into the philosophy of "survival of the fittest" and destroy those who are least likely to survive, the unborn, the very young, the aged, the sick, the lame. As someone once said, "You kill spare cats, why not cut up unwanted children?" If ape is our ancestor, our existence is merely a product of chance and random processes over long ages of time. Human life should not be viewed any more special than the life of cats, dogs, birds, pigs, etc., for they too are simply products of chance. Even viruses should be viewed more equally, perhaps as a distant cousin if ape is in our ancestry. If there is no God, then all that anyone does is merely one's opinion and choice. The opinion that condemns would be considered no greater than the opinion that commits, but then again, that would just be considered my opinion! But if Adam is in your ancestry and Jehovah is Creator, then life is designed and given by God and should therefore be respected (cf. Gen. 9:4-7). Human life, unlike animal, bears the image of God. The choices that we make are based upon what God has said, rather than what man thinks. Where evolution is about vast amounts of death and enormous amounts of time trickled in with chance; creation is all about life and design! What viewpoint gives your life meaning? "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Eccl. 12:13).

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# Trends Among Conservative Brethren "Worldliness"

One who is worldly is one who is devoted to the cares of this world, and his concerns are the present world and the pleasures which the world affords. And, this distinguished from those of the life to come. Worldliness describes the state or condition which characterizes one whose lifestyle is influenced by the world or worldly things. However, worldliness runs much deeper than one's lifestyle.

The basic character of worldliness is rooted in the heart of the individual, and the heart cannot be passive, for it will attach itself to something. Jesus said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man ..."* (Matt. 15:19-20). This, no doubt, is the reason so much emphasis is placed on the action and direction of the heart. Worldliness involves the heart in so many things that are innocent and harmless; things which may be enjoyed by the Christian; yet, may become worldly. Within this context, Bob Harkrider wrote an article several years ago which was titled, "Respectable Worldliness." The article addressed those things which are lawful for the Christian to practice, but may become worldly with a disproportionate emphasis being placed on them, and this is the subtle danger in these things. We come to love sports, vacations, fishing trips, automobiles, houses, etc., to the extent that these become the attachment of our heart; and thus, respectable worldliness.

Sad, but true, we have preachers among "us" who defend worldly practices. Notice this statement from a sermon by a preacher in 1982: "If a man feels modest in a bathing suit, it is not wrong for him to go swimming with women, although he thinks it could be questionable if at a 'public display' area." The same preacher recently defended drinking in moderation, "but it is a sin if one becomes intoxicated." It's unthinkable that one who claims to be a gospel preacher could defend such evils, and sinful practices which have contributed to immorality, broken homes, alcoholism, and ultimately the loss of souls. And, we have preachers among us who are living in adultery; some are living with a second or third wife. Would you say, then, that there is worldliness in the church!

I want to go back now to a statement I made earlier: "Worldliness runs much deeper than one's lifestyle." When Paul said to the Colossians (3:2) "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.", he is implementing safeguards against worldliness. One's mindset determines whether or not he is worldly. One may isolate himself from society and live the life of a hermit and still be worldly.

The apostle John said, "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 Jn. 2:15). Here, another apostle of Christ is showing that our affection, service, and worship should be directed toward God and not the world. And, these passages, (and others) really identify worldliness for us; it is an attitude, a focus, an orientation. The works of the flesh described by Paul in Galatians 5 are the products of worldliness. Remember, Jesus said that these things proceed out of the heart.

A related matter which is really disturbing is the willingness of so many members of the body of Christ to compromise with worldly preachers. Friendship seems to be the basis of acceptance, and it is easy for some to make friends with false teachers, and many of these claim to be gospel preachers. It is sad to say, but it seems that preachers can get away with almost anything today, and still get the support of many in the body of Christ, Sad, indeed!

### **Church Origins: Nazarene**

The Nazarene Church, as it exists today, was brought into being at Pilot Point, Texas (north of Dallas) on October 13, 1908. On that date two denominations, the "Holiness Church of Christ" and the "Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene" united and agreed upon the name, "Church of the Nazarene." The "Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene" was the result of a merger in 1907 at Chicago of the "Association of Pentecostal Churches in America" (concentrated in New York and New England) and the "Church of the Nazarene" (of California).

"The background of the Nazarenes is definitely Methodist; they adhere closely to the original Wesleyan (from John Wesley-B.C.) ideology. Most of the early Holiness groups in this country came out of the Methodist Episcopal Church; five of the original seven general superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene were ex-Methodist ministers, and the Nazarene Manual has been called 'A rewritten and modified Methodist Discipline."" (Handbook of Denominations, by Frank S. Mead, page 58).

A Port Arthur, Texas Nazarene preacher, W. M. Lynch, wrote, "Near the close of the 19th Century the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection had become little more than a creedal matter among the larger denominations that once taught it as essential. The Church of the Nazarene was organized by church pioneers to conserve and promote this doctrine." ("Port Arthur News," May 11, 1957.)

The Nazarene Church teaches that one is regenerated and afterward, as a "second work of grace," receives sanctification by means of Holy Spirit baptism. The Bible makes no such distinction between regeneration and sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11) nor does it promise Holy Spirit baptism to any today.

The Nazarene Church is another of the many denominations which are entirely human in origin. In New Testament times disciples were called Christians by God (Acts 11:26); they were called "the sect of the Nazarenes" by men (Acts 24:5). They followed the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), not a manual drawn up by an assembly of uninspired men.

### **Church Origins: Lutheran**

Today there are almost a score of Lutheran denominations, but all of them wear the name "Lutheran," and look to Martin Luther as the founder of the Lutheran Church. Be it said to Luther's credit that he did not intend to found a church nor did he intend for anybody to become a "Lutheran." He even pled for those who followed in his footsteps not to call themselves Lutherans, but Christians.

Martin Luther was born in 1483. He was reared in the Roman Catholic Church. He entered a monastery at 22 and was ordained a priest at 24. Afterward he became a teacher in the University of Whittenberg in Germany. Luther's study of the Scriptures led him to oppose many of the doctrines and practices of Catholicism. He voiced his objections to the sale of indulgences and to the claims being made for them. In 1517 he nailed his famous ninety-five theses of objections to Catholicism to the door of the church building in Whittenberg. After defying a Papal "Bull," Luther was excummunicated.

Luther was the first great champion of justification by faith "only." In his zeal to support it he rejected the book of James, declaring it not inspired and added "only" to Romans 3:28 in his German Language translation of the New Testament. (Dr. Robert G. Bratcher, Baptist, has exceeded Martin Luther; in his translation, "Good News for Modern Man, The New Testament in Today's English Version," published by the American Bible Society, he has added the word "only" in Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16 and the word "alone" in Rom. 1:17.) In 1529 Luther wrote his Longer and Shorter Catechisms; in 1530 the Augsburg Confession of Faith was written by Luther's associate, Philipp Melanchthon. Lutheranism, therefore, traces itself hack to Martin Luther in origin, name and principle doctrines. It was not founded by Christ and is unlike the church founded by Christ in doctrine, name, organization, mission and worship.

CHURCH ORIGINS by Bill Crews, 9923 Sunny Cline DR, Baton Rouge, LA 70814 (504) 275-4684 [Copyrighted. Used by permission. --Editor]

#### Letter (Continued from Front Page)

If these brethren could simply hear a fair and open discussion of both sides (I can imagine how fairly brethren Guy Woods and Gus Nichols presented "both" sides.) of the present issues concerning the work of the church, the organization of the church, and cooperation among congregations, the situation would be quite different. Any man who refuses to make a thorough investigation, who does not want to hear or read both sides of every question, who is opposed to private and public discussion of differences, and who is not willing for all that he teaches and practices to be examined by the Scriptures does not have the truth on his side or is not on the side of the truth.

When I came for the meeting there, I had no intention of becoming the issue or any kind of an issue, but several people, some whom I have never met, seemed determined to make me the issue. One brother, as you know, who was not even acquainted with me was reporting that I had split two churches (and I was working with neither of them nor living in the towns where they were located). Some were circulating the report that I had changed my convictions and preaching since living in Lake Charles (I wonder what that would prove). Let me say that what Bill Crews has done or not done, what he has preached or not preached, whether he has changed or not, whether he has been consistent or not, and whether he believes and practices now exactly as he believed and practiced when he lived in Lake Charles will not determine what is right with reference to the present-day differences in the Lord's church. Only the Bible can do that.

There isn't any other man living who knows as well as I--and my memory is not acute--what I preached, wrote and practiced while I lived at Lake Charles. I have copies of the bulletins I prepared and outlines of the sermons I preached there. I had just become twenty-one when I moved to that city. At that time one might have asked me what I believed about a number of things and why I believed it, and I could not have told him. I had a lot of learning to do and know it better now than then. I did things then with reference to the work of the church that I would not do now. I used some verses in ways that I would not use them now. A man can be honest and sincere and wrong. If I had never changed on anything, especially after finding out that I had been wrong, I wouldn't be fit to stand in God's presence.

While I was at Lake Charles, I began to study a lot of things--church support of colleges, entertainment in the work of the church, benevolent work, cooperation among churches--that I had not studied before. Many of my present convictions were formed while I was there. While I was there, I preached against church support of colleges and entertainment in the work of the church. I, in time, was opposed to the "sponsoring church" plan of cooperation and church support of benevolent institutions that care for children. I am enclosing a complete copy of the outline of the sermon I preached in Lake Charles early in 1952. The Herald of Truth did not begin until 1952. While at Lake Charles I did not oppose it nor did I encourage the church to support it. Shortly before leaving Lake Charles, I became definitely convinced that it was an unscriptural arrangement. Not long after I left, I expressed my feelings to some friends in the Lake Charles church, and they stated that they would be opposed to the church sending funds to the Herald of Truth.

I left Lake Charles at the end of February, 1953 and moved to Opelousas, La. The second week in January I had driven 700 miles to Florence, Ala. to look into (at their invitation) the work with the Pine St. church. On the very night I arrived the elders took me to the building and asked me about my convictions upon sponsoring churches, children's homes, and Herald of Truth. After I told them, I asked what their convictions were, and they responded, "Exactly the opposite." Any one who cares to may contact the Pine St. church to corroborate this. I was allowed to teach a class and preach the next day (Sunday), but I was not hired because of my convictions. When I returned to Lake Charles, I told some of my friends in the church there what had happened in Florence. I was never reprimanded or opposed for any of my convictions or preaching while in Lake Charles. If any one there now believes (Continued on back page)

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# Letter (continued)

that I am wrong, they will be welcome in my home to show by the Scriptures the error of my way.

Time would fail me should I go into the things that have transpired in the church from March, 1953 to May, 1961. I have a file of quotations from bulletins printed by churches scattered all over America. They are demonstrations of the truth that many churches of Christ are drifting away from the New Testament.

Glenn, as you well know, I am not ashamed of my convictions nor afraid to submit them to investigation. I am ready to tell anyone what I believe and why. Let me close this rather lengthy letter with a quotation from a bulletin I edited (March 5, 1950) while in Lake Charles: "Everything must be done by the authority of Christ. Colossians 3:17. All must be done within his teaching. 2 John 9."

Yours in Christ, Signed: Bill Crews Bill Crews

PS: You have my permission to use this letter as you think best to "set the record straight" and to encourage brethren to investigate present practices in the church.

(This letter was written forty years ago, during the institutional controversy. Read and weep, but learn. Division in our own time over such things as Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, Nature of Christ on earth, fellowship, Genesis One, is causing the same things. I am rapidly going the way of all the earth. Other men will have to finish this battle. Will you stand up and be counted for truth and righteousness? God is looking for men. Will He see you? I write this with blinding tears in my eyes.

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