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# CHRISTIAN ARRAY

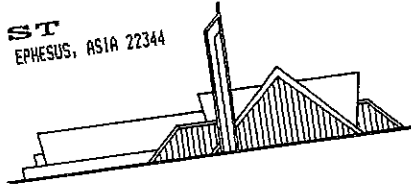
RESTORING THE RESTORATION  
IN OUR GENERATION  
AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION IN SUPPORT OF STRICT CONSTRUCTIONIST BIBLICAL TEACHINGS

NUMBER 16

JUNE, 1991

## WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

CHURCH OF CHRIST  
314 LAODICEA STREET, JUST NORTH OF THE COLLISEUM EPHESUS, ASIA 22344



17 Abid 91

Re: UNWARRANTED CRITICISM OF OUR CONGREGATION

Dear John:

We are highly offended by your cavalier criticism of our congregation. Maybe our congregation hasn't grown in the past few years, but no one else is growing either. What do you expect with the increased competition we have for member's time.

You seem to have no appreciation for the long hours that our elders work in our regular meetings.

We would like for you to consider the following:

1. We have an outstanding record of standing against those who would bring apostasy into the church.
2. We have just implemented our annual new programs for the next year. We have more programs now than at any time in the past. We have areas for everyone's involvement.
3. We have completed our new gymnasium, and are expecting a lot of visitors to participate in our sports programs.
4. We are sending a greater percentage of our regular contribution than ever before to missionary points to support personal evangelism.
5. Our deacons have organized the chores in maintaining the congregation and facility have a high percentage of our members have accepted these responsibilities.
6. Our Bible class program is well organized. Our youth pass thru the entire scriptures 3 times in 12 years.
7. Our neighborhood is becoming more heavily populated by Greeks, and you know it is hard to have a mixed congregation.

As you can see we are doing well to hold our own with the conditions in the world as they are. Rather than criticizing us for not growing, you should appreciate that we would be much smaller if we were not managing the congregation as well as we are.

In His name,

Charles Bishop, for the Eldership

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The letter on the previous page is compiled as a possible response to the Apostle John for his criticisms in of the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:1-7 and of the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14-22. The word "compiled" is used here because the comments are a collection of those which have been received to justify non-growth of local congregations.

It might be interesting for you to read the referenced scriptures and consider what John might say in rebuttal. He seemed to be rather sure of himself in the referenced scriptures.

We can read of the churches at Laodicea and Ephesus as being lukewarm congregations. We can muse at their apathy. We can also see the non-growth of the congregation across town from us and identify that they are lukewarm. But, we know we are not!

We know that our elders meet in long meetings and are overworked. We have numerous committees and ministries and several members on each. Maybe we haven't grown in the past few years, but we have recently made some adjustments (again this year) which we are confident will make a difference next year.

Has it occurred to you that you are the "across town congregation" that some other congregation is seeing as lukewarm? Are you a lukewarm congregation?

Do you think the leadership of a lukewarm church is not busy? Do not lukewarm congregations have committees and/or ministries? Do they not adjust their programs on an annual basis?

What is there about you that makes you different from the church at Ephesus or some local lukewarm congregation which makes you different? Do you think that they do not have reasons also?

Would it hurt to ask an elder from another congregation, a management expert, or a church growth expert to give you a confidential, critical evaluation of your situation? Can you afford not to?

## THE QUESTION IS: WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF REASONABLE CHURCH GROWTH EXPECTATIONS?

### ACTS 2:41 IS NOT THE MEASURE

Acts 2:41 relates that the 12 apostles converted 3000 on the day of Pentecost. If that were the measure of reasonable church growth, even the apostles failed. It would have meant that each person would have converted 250 people per day (3000/12=250). At that rate, all of the people approximately 5 billion people in the world could be converted by the apostles in 4 days, 0 hours, 16 minutes, and 48 seconds. If you start with having approximately 2 million members, the job could be done in approximately 1 day, 10 hours, 0 minutes, and 28 seconds.

Ministers sometimes say that a high conversion rate occurred in Acts 2, so we should be able to do it today. Consider thing not compatible with considering the day of Pentecost as an example of an expected conversion measure:

1. The 1 day was a consumation of the three year ministry of Jesus and the apostles, not just a single day occurrence.
2. A unique event in history had just occurred, the resurrection of a crucified person, clearly a supernatural event.
3. More than 500 individuals had seen the resurrected Jesus, surely thousands were primed by first hand testimony.
4. Supernatural events, i.e. miracles, had occurred on a regular basis, and were occurring on the day of Pentecost.

Clearly, the day of Pentecost was a special day and not the measure for a normal conversion day.

### MATTHEW 21:19 IS NOT THE MEASURE

The parable of the fig tree teaches that the fig tree was just maintaining itself and that it was not acceptable. The fig tree was as big as it was the year before, but was bearing no fruits. Jesus destroyed the fig tree.

### MATTHEW 25:24-30 IS NOT THE MEASURE

The one talent man returned the one talent to the master. He didn't lose the money, he just didn't bear fruits. Clearly, verse 30 indicates that the person in the parable would go to hell.

### MATTHEW 25:20-21 AND 25:22-23 ARE THE SAME

In case of both the 5 and 10 talent man, a time period existed, and the resources were doubled. It was approved. As we do not know what the time period was, we do know the growth rate of the resources. The time period could have been ten years with a 10% growth rate, 20 years and 5%, 5 years and 20%, or any other rate.

We cannot know the rate, we can just know that the master expected growth.

### MATTHEW 25:20-21 AND 25:22-23 ARE A MEASURE

In both of these situations they are judged "well done, good and faithful servant". Now we have a measure of what is acceptable.

### WHAT IS JESUS TALKING ABOUT

Is Jesus talking about money? Jesus is certainly not trying to become your personal stock broker. Jesus is talking about what Jesus always talked about - spiritual matters. Talents certainly occur on several levels.

Every individual has talents with which to serve the Lord. We are individually responsible to not conservatively bury our talents in a lukewarm congregation and be happy that we are no worse off than the rest. We must account for the use of our resources.

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# CHRISTIAN ARRAY

When we assume the leadership role in the church, surely we are responsible for not only our personal talents, but also the organizational impact upon the talents of the individual members. If we as leaders shepherd our individual congregations into a no growth situation, will we not receive the judgment of Matthew 25:24-30. Extreme cases such as when the church has saturates a community (never seen one) or a nursing home congregation may not see this criticism. Will not the other 99.9% of us?

Maybe we need to get together and work smarter, not just harder.

## A SISTER'S POINT OF VIEW

I recently talked with a sister about the apparent current lack of interest on the part of most church members in doing church activities.

She related that in the 50's a majority of the members were active and involved in the programs. Further, the social life of most members centered around the church.

The major difference which she sees is that we have many other competitive activities for the attention of the membership which did not exist then. Most of the members of her congregation did not have television sets.

The major change in the church she sees is in the membership. The elders we have today are as good as the elders of the 50's. If today's elders were put back into the 50's, they would be as successful as the elders were back then.

The real problem is with the attitude of the members. The elders are still doing what worked. The members are overcommitted to other activities in life.

.....

My understanding of her understanding is that if today's elders used the 50's methods in the 50's, they would have been successful in leading the church. Therefore, if today's elders use the methods which fit the situation of the 50's in the 90's, we should not criticize them if it doesn't work.

That may be my understanding of her understanding, but it not my understanding of life. My understanding is that every generation is faced with a new situation. The generation must deal with its situation, not the situation of some other generation.

"The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them."  
Mark Twain

## QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are frequently read as the qualifications to become an elder. They are not simply the qualifications to become an elder, they are also the qualifications to be an elder.

Likewise I Timothy 3:8-13 gives qualifications for becoming and remaining a deacon.

It is our understanding that one of our local congregations has appointed an elder who is a widower for more than a dozen years, has only one child, and that child does not attend church. We will be pursuing the subject of the qualifications of elders.

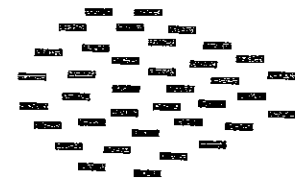
## OPEN LETTER TO "REV." DOUGLAS HARPER "REV." TOM TEWELL

We still have received no reply from the above mentioned gentlemen, however, the "vote" is now in. The Presbyterians "overwhelmingly rejected a committee report that would have recognized sex outside marriage, including homosexual relationships." (Houston Chronicle, June 11, page 10A)

The vote was by a margin of 534-31. The committee report was so blatantly immoral and unscriptural that it probably caused a backlash of sentiment against it.

We commend the Presbyterians for soundly rejecting this matter, and have concern for them for airing such matters in public so as to desensitize members toward the subject.

## THE FLOCK



IT DOESN'T WORK THIS WAY

"If you cannot find happiness along the way, you will not find it at the end of the road."  
Anonymous

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# CHRISTIAN ARRAY

## WITHOUT COMMENT

"Unfortunately, it has proved difficult in Christian history to maintain the tension between the ethical ideals of the Sermon on the Mount and the forgiving spirit of the one who spoke the words." by Everett Ferguson, p. 189, Early Christians Speak.

"For the New Testament text, it is the best documented book in history. Before printing began (about 1440 A.D.) all manuscripts were hand-copied, and of these we now have in the libraries of the world about 5,000 different ones of the New Testament in all languages and 3,000 of them are in Greek. No such tradition has ever followed any secular work. Of the noted writings of Homer (who wrote his famous Iliad and Odyssey about 1,000 B.C.) we have only 178 manuscripts in all libraries today." by J.D. Thomas, p. 51, The Well-Spring of Morality

## IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION - \$100

This publication wants to make a standing offer of \$100.00 to the first person who can give any reason (1 or more) as to why atheistic evolution is a better explanation for the universe and/or life than creation by God; the father of Adam, Abraham, and Jesus; as revealed in the Bible.

## QUICK RESULTS

The quickest way to find out if you are wrong is to tell someone else who disagrees with you that they are wrong. Tell him/her that what they are teaching is unscriptural. If you are wrong, he/she will show you why you are wrong right away.

## CHRISTIAN ARRAY

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Phone (713) 497-6042  
FAX (713) 497-7312

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS REQUESTED

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## AREA WIDE EVENTS :

SECOND ANNUAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE DAY  
Presentations of Christian education by  
Christian colleges  
11-24-91 @ 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Memorial, 900 Echo Lane, 464-0271

## NOTE :

It is the intent of this publication to be as scriptural as possible. This involves both the most reasonable approach to interpreting the scriptures, and the most reasonable application of that approach.

Our approach to interpretation is stated as "Guiding Principles" in the January 1990 issue. Our method of application is indicated in the title of the newsletter as strict constructionist. A copy of the guiding principles is available to anyone on request.

We request your prayers in following this plan if valid, or your comments where it is not valid.

## WHAT DO YOU TEACH?

The Catholics teach that the head of the church is the Pope in Rome.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the head of the church, and that Elders are over each individual congregation (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9).

What do you teach?

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