

FREEDOM'S RING

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"Proclaim liberty throughout the land" (Lev.25:10).

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THOUGHTS ON FELLOWSHIP

Carl Ketcherside

It would seem appropriate for me to once more suggest some of the ideas I have advanced concerning fellowship. In order to facilitate replies by those who are so inclined, I will number the various points.

1. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, and there is no single English word which is its exact equivalent. It connotes mutual sharing or joint participation, since it stems from the word *koine*, which means "common." *Koinonia* refers to that which is held in common, and in the new covenant scriptures it is the sharing of the common life created by the indwelling Spirit of God. Every person on earth in whom the Spirit abides is in the fellowship with every other such person in the universe.

Thus it is called "the fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14). Fellowship is not something we extend or withdraw, but it is a state into which we are called. "God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). The New English Version gives the best translation, "What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

2. Harmony is not essential to fellowship but is a goal of those who are in the fellowship. We do not achieve harmony in order to be in the fellowship, but because we are in the fellowship, we seek to achieve harmony. There is not a passage in the apostolic doctrine commanding harmony which was written to bring the saints into fellowship. Every such passage was written to those who were in the fellowship and because they were in it. We suggest that you study Philippians 2:1,2; 1 Corinthians 1:9-13; and 2 Corinthians 13:11. We are not in the fellowship because we walk in peace, but we walk in peace because we are in the fellowship.

3. Fellowship is not the endorsement of another's position or views. Fellowship is a state into which we are called by God through the Good News of Jesus Christ. We enter it by the proper response to that News. Every sincere believer who is immersed upon the basis of his trust that Jesus is God's Son and the Messiah, is in the fellowship in spite of his ignorance or warped opinions about many other things. Endorsement is an act of individual will in which one approves or supports the opinions or acts of another when he agrees with or concurs in such opinions or acts.

We endorse a lot of things done by people with whom we are not in fellowship; we are in fellowship with people who do a lot of things we cannot endorse. God certainly did not endorse a lot of things done by the saints in Corinth, but they were in his fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9).

In Galatians 2:9 Peter is said to have given the right hand of fellowship to Paul, but in verse 11, Paul withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. I do not think that anyone would be so rash as to say that they were no longer in fellowship. No congregation of believers on this earth is composed of those who completely endorse one another's views, interpretations, or ideas. It is for this reason that each faction has to arbitrarily agree upon some item on which there must be agreement as a criterion of fellowship and acceptance. And whatever that thing is it becomes the creed of the party.

4. Fellowship is not contingent upon unanimity of opinion and has no real relation to it, although the twisted factional mentality seeks to establish such a relationship. The unity of the Spirit is based upon community, not conformity. The only unity attainable by thinking men is that of diversity. The unity of conformity must first reduce men to robots. It belongs to the wax museum and not to the temple of God. Jesus did not die for puppets nor allow himself to be murdered for manikins.

In Romans 14 we learn that there were varied opinions in the early church. These were not allowed to become the basis of rejection. "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions" (verse 1). "One man believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables." Paul effectively spiked the creeping credal conformity which has so often blossomed forth in all of its inglorious tendencies in modern Church of Christism. The entire chapter is a stirring apologetic for unity in diversity. It stands squarely athwart the path of every partisan journalist in our day.

In our time one who ate anything or everything would be called a sectarian or liberal. The one who restricted himself solely to vegetables would be an anti, an extremist, or an ultra-conservative. To Paul, who rejected such asinine labels, they were children of the same Father or slaves of the same Master. "To his own master he stands or falls." It is ridiculous for one slave to try and throw out another whom he does not own because he will not eat meat---or because he insists on singing "Jesus is all the world to me," while someone else is pounding out the beat on a piano.

A considerable number of our brethren have been suffering from a Messiah complex, and they are anxious to save God from any undue worry, by taking care of as much of the final judgment as possible in advance. Every factional leader on earth begins by giving Jesus a shove and squeezing down in the throne as his authorized mouthpiece and representative. It is no problem to push the brethren around after you have shoved Jesus to one side. It will be a great day when all of us learn that Jesus has no prime ministers!

5. Equality in the attainment of spiritual knowledge is not the foundation of fellowship. This is obvious when one realizes that in spite of his ignorance he has been accepted into the fellowship of the Father and Son. Jesus would be very lonely if he eliminated all of his "brothers in error." If we must wait until

our knowledge equals that of the Father before he can receive us into his fellowship we have a long period of detention on the outside. Fortunately God accepts some fairly superficial characters, as almost any good mirror will reveal, and the apostle says, "In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

The family of God consists of babes and children as well as young men and fathers. These who are born of the water and of the Spirit are not born in a state of maturity. Some of them develop rather slowly and some are dwarfed from malnutrition and from being beaten over the head by their guardians. God has some children who are deformed because of being hastened to delivery before the period of gestation was completed normally. Not all of the saints enjoy perfect vision.

We must not forget that the Christian life is a walk and we are not going to heaven in a clump or cluster. We are strung out along the highway, but it is not necessary that we keep up with one another. It is only necessary that we keep in the Way. If the trumpet sounds while we are crippling along because of our blisters, God will find us. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save!

Life in Christ is a growth and all growth demands change and alteration. Not all children reach the same height. Some of our brethren are following Procrustes instead of Jesus. That mythical highwayman set up a bed on the main road and forced every traveler to lie upon it. Those who were too long had their legs cut off; those who were too short were stretched to the required length by pulleys. The perceptive reader will not need to be told whose height was used as a criterion of measurement.

There was a considerable latitude in the primitive community of saints. Take Corinth for example. There were some of the brethren who did not know there was one God. "But not everyone knows this. There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that they even now eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration." Others did not accept the idea of the resurrection. "How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" But Paul did not divide them into a "Resurrection Church of Christ" and an "Anti-Resurrection Church of Christ."

Instead, he said, "Of course we all 'have knowledge' as you say. This knowledge breeds conceit, it is love that builds. If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of knowing. But if a man loves, he is acknowledged by God." I sometimes wonder if Paul was rubbing it in on the "know-it-alls" in the congregation, by pointing out that they claim to know a lot, but they didn't even know how to treat brethren who differed with them, and that is about one of the first things God wants us to learn.

He did not tell the knowing brethren to separate from the ignorant Christians or to come out from among them as if they were pagans or unbelievers. His admonition was, "Mend your ways; take our appeal to heart; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

Foiling The Critics

Some of my earlier critics freely predicted that I would merely create another faction and complicate matters by starting an anti-party party. I have been able to prove that they were not possessed of the gift of prophecy. There are several things which have contributed to this.

1. When I learned that the factional attitude which prevailed among the restoration heirs was a work of the flesh, a sin

against God, and a sign of immaturity and carnality, I did not leave the brethren with whom I had been associated and go join another group. I simply repudiated all factionalism but I did it from where I was by accepting and welcoming all of my brethren. I stayed where I was and loved them where they were. I no longer recognize as valid any of the artificial walls which they had thrown up. I paid no further attention to the tests of union and communion devised by any group.

2. When I went among brethren I did so simply to share my thinking with them, and to share in their concepts. I did not seek to proselyte followers nor to persuade anyone to my way of thinking. I had already learned that I could love those who differed with me as much as I could those who concurred in my views and I did not worry about "lining them up." To me, a Ketcherside party would be as disgraceful as any other. I never asked any person to alter his methods to pamper my personal feelings. I considered every invitation from sincere saints as a door opened unto me of the Spirit.

3. I urged every person who advanced in learning not to leave the brethren with whom he had always labored to go join the faction which had taught him a new truth. This would only serve to remove the leaven from where it was needed and transfer it to where it was not, and it would breed hatred and envy. There have been some instances where brethren felt they were driven out but I have steadfastly refused to urge them to form another faction.

If every person stays where he is the spread of factionalism will be stopped cold at its present level and that level will gradually decline under the benign influence of the Holy Spirit. One of the most gratifying things that has happened is to see men who have grown in knowledge beyond their factional constituency, remaining with the brethren who have supported them in the past.

4. Now there is a vast army of the concerned ones and these are distributed among all of our factions. They will act as leaven for peace and we shall within our generation see a tremendous change of attitude. Brethren will repudiate the false propaganda that purity of doctrine can only be maintained by separation from other brethren. Many will help to build bridges across the chasms which Satan has created. There are still pockets of partisan venom. There are some men who are purveyors of hate against brethren. There are journals whose editors confuse the partisan status quo with first century Christianity. Other editors ride the factional merry-go-around and try to wave first to one side and then to the other. But these will gradually forfeit any real influence and those papers which drum up issues so they can project themselves as the defenders of orthodoxy will soon be seen in their true light.

As for myself, I would have it plainly understood that I intend to make no test of fellowship out of either the pro or con of a position on instrumental music, centralized control, colleges, orphan homes. leavened bread, unleavened bread, the manner of breaking the bread, fermented wine, individual cups, prayer coverings for women, Bible classes, uninspired literature, foot-washing, speaking with tongues, or any other of the "issues" which periodically raise their disturbing heads and breathe their fetid breath in our faces. Our real problem is not with those who claim to speak in other tongues, but with preachers who claim to speak English and are still talking in unknown tongues.

I have a firm personal conviction on all of these things but I will not impose it by force or coercion upon others. I'll express my view and listen to brethren who differ with me and go on their way rejoicing. If a man is good enough for God to receive he is

not too bad for me to accept. I am sick and tired of our whole sad, sorry and gruesome sectarian mess. I never intend to be a party to its promotion again, so help me God. I shall never be used as a cat's paw to pull partisan chestnuts out of the factional fire. And as Patrick Henry said, "If that be treason, make the most of it!"

(*Mission Messenger*: Vol. 29, No. 12; Dec. 1967; Book: *Apples of Gold*. This priceless essay, written 29 years ago, is also Chapter 21 of *Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship*, a 350-page book of writings of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett which I edited. This book is a treasure store of their material telling us of the original aims of our pioneers, the rapid growth of this movement, the disastrous effects of divisive legalism, and the course we must follow to be united again. It is a book full of material like the chapter above. Chapter 13 alone, *The Sand Creek Address*, is worth the \$10.00 price of the book, even as the chapter above is. Give one to your preacher and elders.)

Ketcherside Reprint Update

Bob Lewis reports progress toward the reprinting of all of Carl Ketcherside's writings. In 31 volumes averaging 500+ pages each, it would contain all of his books as well as all volumes of *Mission Messenger*.

As of August 15, \$34,750 have been pledged out of the \$75,000 needed to begin the project. Peace On Earth Ministries will set up an escrow account into which contributions will be deposited. Your help is needed. Tell others about it.

Only commitments are requested at this time. If you wish to pledge or learn more about the project, contact Bob D. Lewis, P.O. Box 427, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433; (904)-892-9692; FAX (904) 892-6257; E-mail: <lewisbd@aol.com>.

Ketcherside On World Wide Web

A church of about 20 "older" people in Alton, Illinois is studying an exciting possibility. Those disciples have long been supporters of Carl Ketcherside. They began to study how they might distribute his materials. Just recently they came upon our Web site and a light flashed. Why not put it all on WWW?

They are thinking in terms of selling their meeting house and using the money for that purpose! They are communicating with Vic Phares who maintains our site, Bob Lewis who is heading the reprint project, and Hans Rollman, a Canadian webmaster. The Lord's hand surely must be in this even though we do not know yet where it will lead.

This would be a tremendous project to prepare the material for easy access to the rapidly growing number of persons worldwide who are online. It is awesome to think of the limitless use that could be made of Carl's writings. The site would have to be maintained also. The cost and the amount of available resources have not been determined yet.

In our last mailout I put out a call for all who would be interested in supporting Vic Phares for full-time work on the Web, a sort of "Cyberspace Missionary." Perhaps these two (or all three) projects could be combined into one. I'm just "thinking out loud" on that, but I have no part in making the decisions in this exciting prospect.

You may contact the Illinois group through Natalie E. Murrie <nateatch@ezl.com>

Vic can be reached at <vic@softdisk.com>

Even if this proposed project does not involve Vic, we still need to support him **full-time** in this work, as we urged last issue. Can you or your congregation help in this ministry which stretches the imagination? To express interest or get information, contact Garry Knighton, Church of Christ/North,

3401 Market St., Shreveport, LA 71107, (318) 226-1305; Fax (328) 226-1306. Email: <kuon@aol.com>.

New Sights on Freedom's Ring Web Site

Our grandson, Daniel Hook, has designed a brilliant new graphic heading for our Web page. He put a lot of gifted work into it. We are proud of it and him.

Through Vic, we now have our own domain with a changed domain name: <<http://www.freedomring.org>>

I am no longer on Prodigy. I can now receive mail from these two addresses: <hookc@teleport.com> and <cecil@freedomring.org>

Changes are being made on our new domain. If you encounter difficulties, contact <webminister@freedomring.org> Vic is working constantly to improve the site.

Go to ><<http://www.freedomring.org/biograph.html>> or click on "About Cecil Hook" on our Web page to see and even print out a color picture of me. (But why would you want to? ☺) Vic may add some more pictures also.

By the click of your mouse on the Web page, you may access any and all of my writings, *Beyond The Sacred Page* and a long list of topical articles by Edward Fudge, and all of the contents of my mailout, *Freedom's Ring*. You may read, download, or print out the material. All of this is available to anyone anywhere worldwide who is Online.

Scrolling down our Web page, you may find "Gospelcom's Bible Gateway." There you may make rapid search for any location, word, or concept in the NIV, NASB, RSV, KJV, Darby, and YLT versions. You may read, download, or print out from these six versions of the Bible.

Next you will see "The GOSHEN Online Study Library." There you can access any information in *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, *Nave's Topical Bible*, *Torrey's New Topical Textbook*, and *Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary*.

By clicking on "LINKS," you will be directed to a list of other Web sites where information and discussion groups may be found.

Then you may also go to the MESSAGE BOARD and GUEST BOOK where you may leave notes for all to read.

Over 100 readers subscribe by Email so that FR is sent instantly as soon as I send it to Vic by Email. You may also. However, it arrives unformatted.

This all boggles my mind! It is awesome! And we are just getting into the age of instant information! Thousands of new people go Online each day.

My genuine thanks go to Vic Phares who maintains this and other sites as a ministry. Thanks to Debbie, his wife, for letting him take so much time for it. Thanks to Kevin Lovelace who works with the graphics. Due to their work, out of the 109 sites at Softdisk, ours was ranked 10th in August with 1536 hits.

Do you see why I say that Vic should be supported as a **Cyberspace Missionary**?

How To Start A Church

"We are a group of Native Americans who would like to start our own church. Can you be of any help? We need to know where to send info, how to create a Constitution and By-Laws, etc." -Bud (Email address)

(The following is a revised response I made to this unusual request.)

It is a joy to hear from you and to learn that you are eager to serve God. So far as I can recall, however, no one has ever inquired of me as to how to start a church! Although I claim

no expertise in the field of your inquiry, I appreciate the confidence that you have shown in me by asking.

There is probably much difference in your understanding and mine about starting a church. I hope that creates no gap, making anything that I express seem insensitive.

In the general sense neither you, I, nor anyone else can start a church. The Lord started it on Pentecost, and he is the one who continues to build it. I am referring to his universal church which is composed of all who are in Christ. We can help to add to it by preaching the gospel of salvation. When people are saved, the Lord adds them to the church, the saved group worldwide. Read Acts 2 to see how this was so in the beginning. We are baptized for the forgiveness of sin and to be in Christ and his body, which is the church (Acts 2, Romans 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13, etc.) So if you have obeyed the gospel, you have already been added to his church, and you have no need to join a church. I trust that you agree with this.

From your inquiry, I assume that you are wanting to start a congregation, a group of saved people who assemble and associate together in worshipping and serving God. I would hope that the purpose for such action is to be a mutual support group rather than a rejection of other saved people in the universal church and a move to distinguish yourselves from them.

A group of disciples does not have to gain permission from anyone or any organization in order to meet and serve together. If a group is to purchase property, your state may require that you be incorporated. You, as a part of the universal church, will be meeting in a local setting similar to those of the seven churches of Asia and the "house churches" of Acts 2 and Romans 16. You do not need a name to distinguish yourselves from others, however for purposes of address or listing, some designation is practical. Congregations could be identified as "Walnut Street Church," "Northside Assembly," etc. denoting no denominational affiliation. Christ is the only creed. You need no constitution other than his word lest you bind sectarian slants and goals. A statement of beliefs and aims would be all right as guidelines unless you make them binding. Of course, all must accept the basic gospel message that Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins, was buried, arose, and ascended to heaven awaiting his raising us from the dead. Accepting the basis of faith is necessary, but that allows for differing opinions and convictions. (See Romans 14.)

I meet with disciples who have designated themselves as the Church of Christ. Churches of Christ and Christian Churches developed from a very noble beginning even though they are now in need of correction of course. Let me tell you of some traits their movement had in the beginning which added the freshness of Biblical Christianity to the American scene.

The Movement was started by people who wanted to be Christians only---no denominational kind of Christians. There is no organization above the congregational level. Thus each group is independent of all others, bound only by brotherly love and acceptance of each other. As they grow in numbers and maturity, they may appoint elders and deacons, but they have no authority figures. There are no written creeds or constitutions. No ordination of preachers in order to control them is practiced. Anyone is free to preach, to start a congregation, or to leave one congregation in favor of another. These churches are composed of people baptized into Christ and his universal church. They are free to choose any local group of disciples with whom to serve.

Unfortunately, just as freedom given to Adam allowed him to sin, this freedom allows for polarizing of local groups so that some become very exclusive and sectarian by rejecting other disciples. The Lord does not add the saved to the local groups. We form them, as you are wishing to do, but individuals often associate themselves with groups who have a rejecting, sectarian spirit. They may claim to be no sect, but if they reject

others in Christ, they are sectarian. This is one of the pitfalls of freedom which we must be cautious to avoid. This freedom is better than authoritarian control and demanded conformity which God did not intend for his congregations.

Although a local group may organize its activities, the church is not an organization with any sort of hierarchy. Each person serves as his/her own priest serving under our High Priest, Christ. No person or persons stand between a disciple and God. Men cannot admit another to, or expel another from, Christ's church.

I would commend such a noble course for you, cautioning you to be aware of the pitfalls of sectarianism into which some have stumbled.

I cannot give you Biblical instruction on how to start a separated association of congregations generating another denomination. Nor could I advise you to take such a course.

It is unlikely that you expected the answers I have given. If you wish to inquire further, be free to do so. Please give much prayerful study to this matter.

My first book, "Free In Christ", has many points about the simplicity of the religion Christ initiated, and it gives corrective guidance. I will be happy to send you a free copy if you will send your postal address. After reading it, if you wish for more to distribute among your group, I will also supply them free.

Let us be praying together that whatever course you take will enhance the unity of the body and glorify God. [CH]

Hook's Points

As my energies lower and my faculties grow slower, there is temptation to just sit back and relax. But you won't let me! Your prayers, encouragement, support, and partnership give me determination to continue. God must not be ready for me to close shop for he sends so many of you into my life. By reading these excerpts from the numerous letters you write, one may see where I gain the incentive to continue.

The Postal Service has revised its mail classification and established new procedures for permit mailing in order to save us money. For my bulk mailing now, I will have to do a number of tedious things to comply. After doing this stuff for the last mailing, the cost of mailing per piece was \$.256 cents instead of the usual \$.226. That's the way the government saves us money!

Why have I not gotten a non-profit permit? I would have to engage the services of an accountant and an attorney to make the application! If I were a big operator, perhaps that would be all right. The big operators are getting cheaper rates.

So I think I will forget about my bulk mailing permit. My thoughts are to send *Freedom's Ring* out less often while doubling its size, and then to send it as First Class Mail. That will be much cheaper, FR will be delivered from one to three weeks faster, none of the sorting will be needed, non-deliverable pieces will be returned, a trip to downtown Portland will be avoided, and I will get the added calories from licking so many stamps.

In using book rate, I have stamped many hundreds of packages Special Fourth Class. No longer. Now they will be Special Standard Mail. No big deal---unless you are paying for those new self-inking stamps for each postal window in the United States. And guess who is paying for them!

For years I have stamped packages weighing less than six pounds and put them in the drop boxes. Now, because of the crazies and terrorists, any package of more than a pound will have to be taken to the window for mailing. So I will need to learn patience as I stand in line. I suppose loss of that freedom was inevitable.

Do I sound a bit cynical? We have the greatest postal system in the world. It has been the indispensable servant of

this ministry, drastically cheaper than UPS, and sometimes as fast. None of you who supply the money have complained about my spending so much for postage. I'm just stingy.

Have you heard---this is election year! Our disenchantment with politics should cause us to work harder individually to make a difference. We are not too surprised that a government official like our president has flaunted immorality. Many rulers throughout history have lived as though they were above the law of man and of God. What is more gravely disturbing to me is that ethical behavior and morality are not demanded of a president by the majority of the American people. When we deliberately choose immoral leaders, we are voting for further decay of our society.

As election days approach, many "do-gooders" beg, cajole, and demand that everyone register to vote and then vote. Really, are such unconcerned people the ones we want to choose our officials?

During August we sent out 162 *Free In Christ* with 125 being gifts from you, going to places like the Philippines, British Columbia, Zambia, and the Republic of South Africa. Our working fund stands at \$2,055.48. Thank you, partners.

The second printing of *Free To Accept* is done. No donated money is used for printing the books. Although printing costs have doubled or tripled since I started in 1984, I have not increased my original nominal prices. My books are printed in Naples, Florida and shipped diagonally across the continent at a unbelievably lower cost than when printed locally.

Brian Casey wrote that he had a display of the books I handle at a retreat in Delaware. Two fellows edged cautiously to the table. One was overheard to say, "Cecil Hook---he's just as loose as he can be on everything." After a few seconds pause, he continued, "I've never read these books."

An inmate in the federal prison at Pensacola told his chaplain of my free books. The chaplain called me and invited me to send books, which I did for you. Then he said he knew nothing of the COC, but he would like to know more so he could understand the inmates from the COC better. He invited me to send a book or material about it for him to read. What would you suggest that I send him---one of those (in)famous "Why I'm.." or "What is...?" books or tracts?

A family from Westside here went back to Michigan on vacation. Imagine their amazement on hearing the speaker warn the congregation of the evils of yours truly. After the lesson, the brother from here confronted the speaker, and he was informed, among other things, that he was sinning by being in the same congregation with me!

Shortly after moving here, I was told that a preacher in Pendleton, Oregon warned his congregation that I was now in their state! Watch out! A predator on the loose! ☺

You who read my stuff regularly may disagree with me, but you are gracious, seldom giving a negative response. Some who run on to my writings Online, finding it new and shocking, are not so gracious in their reactions. That is to be expected, I suppose, for too many of us feel satisfaction in denigrating the person with whom we differ. As time permits, we respond to all respectful inquiries. But we decline being drawn into a dog-fight with those who delight in such.

Last week, a critic who read some of my material at the web site was "appauled!" That reminds me of the pun by the critic of Norman Vincent Peale. He found Peale appalling and Paul appealing.

Some protested the killing of a serial killer in our state. Many defend killing by the "suicide doctor." Abortionists defend the killers of millions of innocent, unborn babies. God help us!!

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

"I just read your *Free In Christ*, and it was good. It really has gotten me to thinking. You really show how

inconsistent we as C of C people are. Most of this I have never thought of before but it is some very important information. Thanks for having the courage to put all this down. I know it was not easy to buck the status quo. When you have the backbone to stand up and start speaking the truth, it changes your old friends into enemies. Your old friends liked you and me so much, for what? Our weakness and ego support, I guess." - MGUNNELLS@worldnet.att.net

"I've found your writings very valuable and enlightening. I'm a member of the Worldwide Church of God in Cape Town, and I'd like to have a copy of your literature. Apart from personal financial constraints, currency control regulations, and the exchange rate virtually doubling the cost of any literature ordered from overseas, I would appreciate it very much if it would be possible for you to donate a copy of each of your books to our small group we have in our suburb.

My sister left us to fellowship with the Church of Christ. She's now been horrified by the legalistic views expressed at the congregation." - Henri Fortuin, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa.

"I do not know if you answer these comments, but I was led by God to these pages. I have been reading "One Great Chapter", *MISSION MESSENGER*, 1971 and wishing more could be found. I am struggling in the Church of Christ. I did not even know Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside writings could be found! The Holy Spirit is working great things today! Praise God!" -Paulie Dickerson, paulie@atmore.gulf.net

"Thank you for your note and your books. It is such a relief to find that I was not the only person in the Lord's church who could see so plainly the gaping holes in the litany of legalism that I was hearing. The same people who were leaving the church for having a kitchen in the building were busily defending how they were the only representatives of Christ's official program which had better be obeyed or else---" Rose Pettit, rrp@psln.com

"Where to begin? Conservative, dogmatic, legalistic Church of Christ member for twenty years....a study with my future son-in-law (to convert him) brought me to some undeniable truths. Now I'm scared, but smiling. Such a smart young man my daughter found. I had been praying for someone to study God's word with and assumed this young man was the answer to my prayer. He was, but not in the way I thought. It wasn't HIM who needed the help---but me!! I'm just not sure where to go from here. I have strong family ties in the Church of Christ and I worry still about some of the doctrines floating around "out there," but I can no longer fully support some of the attitudes that I've previously been guilty of. Who can help and encourage me? Thanks for letting me air my thoughts." Judy, sd24judy@wave.sheridan.wy.us

"I found your site through the WCGnet. As a member of the Worldwide Church of God, I have found your site a goldmine of information on God's truth and grace! Keep up the good work. I'll be back." - Sooke, British Columbia

"To Chita of El Paso (a place I haven't yet seen) and Vic of Shreveport (a nice place I visited as a child; even ate one of the best hamburgers I ever had there also): I Gordon Davis, am here too, laboring away in West Los Angeles. ... I really like the "Freedom's Ring" site---quite a breath of fresh air compared to the COC "party line" that I was raised on in Oklahoma. To Hook, Phares, Fudge and all responsible for Freedom's Ring, keep up the good work. I suspect that for every person who posts an acknowledgement of your work, there are about 5 to 100 people who are just lurking out ---like I have for about 3 months." Gordon Davis

"I have been reading your "on-line " version of FREE IN CHRIST, and I wanted to express to you how wonderfully enlightening and uplifting I found it. I have known so many brothers and sisters in Christ (in all denominations) including members of my own family, whose whole lives have been dominated by the "legalistic" approach to the scriptures. I have been guilty of this myself more times than I can possibly enumerate. To hear your message from a member of the "Church" (I use this in the old-fashioned, narrow manner) is like a breath of fresh air.". Jeff Haney, djjlh3@attme.cnet.att.com

"I did a little web search on the topic of *Galatians* and your site "What Is the Law of Christ" sounded like the most interesting. I was extremely pleased by the concise and scripture-supported work you have there. I just wish to thank you for making this material available as I'll be using it in the preparations for my Jr. High Sunday School class. -jon arntsen, ezra66@aol.com

"I'm sure you've heard it many times before, but let me add my thanks for your insight and boldness to express those insights regarding the truth that can set us free. I am an elder in an independent Christian church in Charleston, SC (Central Christian Church) of the NACC variety, that is (see? Look at those labels!) etc.

Anyway, my dad, a retired preacher of our fellowship was quite taken with the contents of FREE IN CHRIST. That is a testimony to your effectiveness: He is in many ways "old school." Once more, thank you for your faithful ministry. I thank God for you." -Tim Boden, TWBoden@aol.com

"Has anyone ever heard of this Cecil Hooks man? He is teaching complete error. If he links from any of your web sites I suggest you take it off. Read just this ONE letter on baptism" -Max Baker

"He is closely aligned with the teachings of Leroy Garrett and W. Carl Ketcherside--- also (insofar as I can tell) Edward Fudge. You are quite correct. We certainly don't need to (1) advertize for this movement (?); (2) In the interest of "do no harm" those weak in faith don't need this kind of exposure; (3) We need to exercise a certain amount of care that we not be "lumped" with them. Cecil Hook is up in years and does not preach anymore. To a very large extent he has been shunned by our brethren but still claims affiliation with the churches of Christ. He has authored a number of books which (incidentally) include some good thinking BUT are definitely "over the edge". -Fred Whitelaw, Leslie, AR.

"Brother Whitelaw, instead of urging people to shun stimulating Bible studies (by Cecil Hook, me, or any other brothers) which might actually help them grow spiritually, it would seem more biblical and noble to encourage them to have the Berean spirit to "receive the word with all readiness of mind and search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11-12). -Edward Fudge, Edwfudge@aol.com

"Just a few lines to let you know how thankful I have been to discover *Freedom's Ring* on the Web. I found out about you through Davis Grove on the Worldwide Church of God forum. Your material is exactly what so many of us need to escape the bonds of legalism and see the simplicity and power that is in Christ alone.

I grew up in New Braunfels, graduating from NBHS in 1974. My parents still live there on Academy Street, just up the road from the library." -Jerry Stock, <alamoguy@texas.net>

"In a several-month study of the restoration movement, I have reached some conclusions that have been truly liberating. Having grown up in the mainline Church of Christ, I always

suspected that our sectarianism was an affront to God and would be frowned upon by those noble men who sought first above all else the unity that Christ desired of his followers. My study of the instrument issue, of the role of women in today's church, of salvation by grace apart for a "common doctrine" demonstrated to me that there is enough scholarship on both sides of such issues to speak against making them "tests of fellowship." Recently I sat in a Bible class at Eastern College here in PA with a teacher that provided wonderful insights into scripture that had seemed "well-worn." The only "problem", she was a woman. Somehow, I just didn't feel like anything had been taken from me, rather that I had really been blessed by "sitting at her feet." In the early restoration church there were women preachers (though not the norm), female deacons and authors (as there were in the NT church as revealed in scripture.) Finally, I reached the disturbing conclusion that the "restoration of the NT church" is not possible or desirable in the perfect sense of the word. The church as a living organism must change to be relevant to the culture of the day. I do not think we want to bring back the slave-master relationship, or (I feel) the hierarchical husband/wife relationship of the Jewish culture of the Roman world. We are selective about the "binding examples" we choose. What about the holy kiss, fasting, footwashing, and a host of others. It is time to put away fellowship based on an unrealistic goal of common forms and practices and do what the restoration leaders set out to do--- "just be Christians." -Tommy Jones, Jones4PA@aol.com

"I was just thinking of you wondering how you are doing. I knew you had moved but I didn't have your address. Leroy Garrett gave it to me. I can not tell you how much your writings have meant to me. Your helping me get out of the little black ugly legalistic box has literally saved me in every way you can use the word 'saved'." -Glenn A. Tabor, Jr., Roanoke, VA.. [Dr. Tabor ministers in the Christian Church. He has distributed a great number of my books---and suffered recriminations.]

"The June 1, 1996 issue of FREEDOM'S RING just opened up enormous possibilities to so many who can get onto the internet and E-mail. I would hope that I will be able to find a truly responsive soul or two among the many Christians who have listed their E-mail addresses. Every one needs a person whom they can openly confide in. Someone they can trade notes with, share their concerns, doubts, and joys with. Someone with whom they can openly say "I don't understand this," or "I do not understand this particular scripture this way." Etc. -Reed Shackelford, lreed@calweb.com

"Legalism is a way of life in the Church in this state! I must submit to a form of slavery or leave the church. What a terrible choice to make." Ken Galloway, Lake Placid, FL, ken@ct.net

"My name is Susan Kowan. My husband, Art, is a frequent user of the Internet, and tonight by "accident" we found your website. I don't actually believe it was by accident at all, but were led to it by the Spirit. God is a good God.

I was raised in the Church of Christ, my father is an elder in the church in eastern Canada. We live in Vancouver, Canada. My husband came to the Lord a year after we married 12 years ago. Five years ago, our "church" suffered a split. I had witnessed two before it, but we were casualties of the third." (In three pages she tells their painful experiences which are similar to those many others are enduring.) akowan@direct.ca

"I really appreciate getting your newsletter. This last one is probably (at least in my thinking) your best work. My wife, Gayla, said that the subject you discussed in that article should be the foundation for your next book. She called it *Freedom In*

The Church. The information that you have in that article is SO needed in all the churches of Christ! If everyone realized the core of what you are trying to say, it would end division as we know it today. Isn't it strange how people are so unwilling to look at anything different from their own little comfortable perspectives. God help us all!" -Wallace Bradberry, Billings, MT

"I'm a little contemplative this A.M. I met you briefly a couple or three years ago at the ACU "book tent" during the lectures. I have read several of your publications and feel like I kinda know you. I perceive you are a kind and gentle person. I was up early walking and thought about how, in our effort in this life of trying to get "through it", we often neglect the greatest of opportunities. As I find at last I may be beginning to mellow a little, I find it rather pleasant. I struggled a long time with the idea of trying to get everything right in my effort to please God by correctly interpreting the scriptures. But the message is so simple. God is love. The only reason he made us is to love each other. And so I would like to say I love you, and I hope we can continue to mutually serve our Master. We'll go into more detail one of these days while strolling down the "streets of gold." -Dale McCreight, Sweetwater, TX. [Dale, we will give you the last word this time. Oh, that youth could realize these simple, mature, and mellow concepts. What comfort it would give in their lives of discipleship."

Liberating Books

Free In Christ, Cecil Hook, free for distribution (or \$4.00)
Free To Speak, Cecil Hook, \$4.00
Free As Sons, Cecil Hook, \$5.00
Free To Change, Cecil Hook, \$5.00
Free To Accept, Cecil Hook, \$5.00
Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship, (Garrett & Ketcherside writings edited by CH), 350 pages. \$10.00
The Twisted Scriptures, Carl Ketcherside, \$6.00
The Death of the Custodian, Carl Ketcherside, \$5.00
Beyond the Sacred Page, Edward Fudge, \$9.00
The Fire That Consumes, Edward Fudge, \$13.00
The Stone-Campbell Movement, Leroy Garrett, Revised and expanded, 573 pages, hardback, \$22.00
"I Permit Not A Woman"...To Remain Shackled, Robert Rowland, \$9.95
(Mailing: add \$1.50 for orders under \$20.00.)

Role Playing In Drama

Throughout the centuries, good people of the western world have given their children the names of their virtuous heroes. They named them for Biblical characters, popes, saints, emperors, kings, patriots, and revered ancestors. A child's very name pointed him or her to some lofty ideal for which to aim.

In our century, however, an idol has risen to supplant that tradition. To a vast segment of society, the movie or television personalities occupy the highest places of admiration and represent the ideals for which to strive. These figures are rich and famous so that news cameras and promoters search them out for us. They can flaunt their disdain for morals and traditions, push the limits of decency, and set daring trends in speech, dress and conduct. Multitudes, who also have a spirit of defiance for the standards of our culture, can fantasize with these who portray licentious freedom. Fawning crowds press to get a glimpse of them or to obtain their autographs. Stardom becomes the glamorous life for which to dream. Our children are given the names of these honored idols.

Most of those who make it to the magic screen sell their souls in attaining it, and there's no shortage of others willing to sell out in order to replace them. I know it is not considered nice

to make such a blanket indictment. Don't blame that drastic assessment on my senility. For many years I have held that opinion and I have seen nothing to convince me to change it.

You who would be actors, let me ask you some questions. Do you wish to make a career of portraying drunkenness as funny, lying and deceit as clever, cursing as appropriate expression of feelings, vulgarity of speech and demeanor acceptable, profanity of God's name as inoffensive, irreligion as preferable, nudity as artistic expression, sexual promiscuity as wholesome, and erotic titillation as innocent pleasure?

Is it proper to portray sexual activity outside of marriage, homosexual practices, prostitution, transvestite practices, casual divorce, and bearing children out of wedlock as normal, moral, and acceptable? Is feeding the public mind the most lurid, gross, and degraded aspects of depraved humanity a praiseworthy and honorable occupation? Is it in order for a disciple to undermine the holiness of marriage and the home and the role of the man in the home as supposed entertainment? Who are you helping when you make children's defiance of parents, teachers, officers of the law, courtesy, and clean speech matters to laugh about?

"Hold it!" you may be ready to scream, "the actors are not promoting those things. They are just role playing. They depict in drama what other people do, say, and write. The actor just puts himself or herself in the role of the character being represented."

Yes, I know they are playing roles. That's what acting is. But that is a fig-leaf defense to justify portrayal of evil as good and desirable. It is not necessarily sinful to portray evil in drama. The Bible presents some sordid scenes, but they are not described in order to make sin look appealing or appropriate. Its depictions are not close-up, full-color manipulations purposely designed by directors in order to stimulate the greatest degree of lust or desirability. Bible narratives are not designed to tempt us, but they emphasize the destructive ugliness of sin. A soap opera or sit-com with such design would have slim prospect of gaining a showing. Maybe you can name a few wholesome shows. If so, that is great. I would like to know that I am totally wrong in my indictment.

Actors want to portray realistic scenes. We recognize that. But an audience can be made fully aware of a murder, for instance, without being shown brutal, bloody, gruesome, and innovative means of torture and mutilation which would appeal to the depraved and sick mind. Since adultery is not an act committed publicly, why should realism demand that it be pictured as intimately and erotically as the "artists" of Hollywood can devise and our loose laws allow? We all know the answer to that.

A generation ago, we all loved *I Love Lucy*. As with many shows of that time, it was considered to be a good, clean show. But the show depended upon clever lying and deceit to develop its hilarious situations. That old theme is common in dramas. Did they affect our sense of honesty? *The Bad News Bears* made children's arrogance, disdain for adults, crude manners, foul speech, stealing, and law-breaking look funny, acceptable, and rewarding in the end. Many more movies have followed that formula. Have they affected our children and society?

Although we cannot measure the effect of those shows, we cannot deny their influence. When we make sin funny, we make it acceptable. "Vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness" (Burke).

Watching those movies and shows is just an entertaining fascination that has no lasting effect, you may contend. Just who are you kidding? Every time you hear a Budweiser commercial, you do not run to the ice box to get a beer. But the industry has proven that the repetition of their appealing commercial will eventually motivate enough people to

buy Budweiser to make the ad profitable. Each time you see an erotic sexual scene, you do not go in search of an illicit partner. But repetition breaks down the barriers and arouses the impulses so that sexual morals and inhibitions are weakened in society. Perhaps not in the stronger people, but in others.

purchasing the products advertised on them. But I am not that kind of a fellow!) ☺ [CH]

Does a God-fearing actor work in projects to put a good face on that which destroys morals? There's an old saying that is timeless: Modesty is a shield of virtue. By shameless intimacy and explicitness, whether in private or public, the reservations that protect our virtue are destroyed. Role playing has done its part in its destructive manipulation.

Some appropriate lines from Alexander Pope learned in high school were burned into my memory:

*"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

The fact that we may think filth is funny makes a bold statement about our compromising lack of abhorrence of evil.

Although I don't know where to find such a list, we will grant that there must be some good shows like *Touched By An Angel* that do not present sin in a good light. I would be pleased to learn that there are many wholesome shows to enjoy.

In some unsavory dramas, there may be characters who depict clean speech and proper conduct. May an actor fill such roles? Even if one actor has clean lines, if the overall projection of the play is evil, that actor's participation helps to make it so. He becomes a supporting actor for all the cast and cannot deny his complicity.

There is need for use of the arts to make life better. An actor or entertainer can and should accomplish good by the use of his talents. However, he must have enough conviction and power to call his own shots. That may leave him out of the mainstream productions that create the idols of our generation. Can an actor gain enough notice to get a role in *Touched By An Angel* without coming up through the sleazy roles?

Rather than being only a role-playing example, why not be the real thing? Paul urges, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have returned from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13). In doing this, "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). The "pay" is much better, God will give everlasting glory, and perhaps your children's children may wear your name in honor.

(I have completed this piece without meddling, for it is not likely that any of you aspire to be actors. If I should want to leave a thumb-tack in your seat, I could include something about persons who enjoy degrading television shows, movies, and other entertainment, and I could make some reference to disciples who provide the money to produce those shows by