DEAR BILL

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Category: Dear Bill

title: **DEAR BILL....**

sub-title: ***an open letter to Bill Johnson of Bethel Church***

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Chapter one

Dear Bill....

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The purpose of this open letter is to relay truths that I have garnered over almost fifty years of christianity for your consideration.

I know you have been subjected to incessant criticism over the years. God forbid that I should heap further criticism onto that already monstrous heap.

Hopefully you might consider that this letter could possibly be from a loving Father who prunes every fruit-bearing branch “that it may bear more fruit”.

Why, you might ask, would the Father speak through a stranger when I am surrounded by proven disciples, some considered to be generals in God's army?

Perhaps a fair answer would be.... why not? And also....

You will soon realize that my perspective regarding the most vital issue of one's christianity – one's relationship with Jesus Christ – is quite dissimilar from that of your companions. Most, if not all of your associates are, like yourself, attached to a religion of one sort or another. I am not, and haven't been for decades.

My position is this: Jesus Christ never initiated a religion after He terminated the one, true religion - that could be referred to as “the law of Moses” - with His words, “It is finished!”

Of those attached to one of thousands of christianized religions, most would object to that characterization. How demeaning to consider their assemblage/fellowship a mere religion instead of a God-appointed mission. And yet every strain of evangelicalism of which I am familiar definitely

falls under any reasonable definition of religion.

I am of the strong opinion that *every* christianized religion vies with the Holy Spirit, and by extension Jesus Christ Himself, for governance of Christ's church. There is much theft within christendom but none so cruel as the looting of devotion to Jesus to be stashed within the deep bowels of religiosity.

Further, I define those giving leadership to, and those adhering to, a religion as religionists. (This is not meant to be disparaging; I simply do not know a word more suited to describe proponents of religion.)

Note: Religionists are not the issue, and not to be castigated; religion is the issue and is to be severely castigated. Religion contends with the Holy Spirit as "Helper (Comforter, Advocate.... Counselor, Strengthener, Standby)." (See John 14:16, AMP)

The heart and purpose of this letter is to present an opposite perspective regarding evangelicalism that you may not have seriously considered, this to your possible benefit and, subsequently, the profit of those you influence. I am certain Lord Jesus would 1) have me speak and 2) have you consider. ("Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said." NLT) You know the adage, "If the shoe fits wear it." I would add to this, "If the shoe fits, wear it.... or don't wear it.... what you do or don't do is none of my business."

Also, and primarily, the intent of this 'open' letter is to present to evangelicals worldwide a reasonable contention that the local church they diligently attend is a religion, just a religion, one of many thousands, and not worthy of their obeisance and financial support.

Let me further clarify my position. Although our God chooses and anoints some (every?) for leadership, I differ from most christians in that I do not believe the New Testament teaches *organized* leadership, leadership organized by religionists. An example....

Elders are biblical; a *board* of elders is a "tradition of men". The word *pastors* can (after diligent searching) be found in the New Testament. But Senior pastor? Assistant pastor? Youth pastor? Worship pastor? Like really?

Jesus taught us that tradition makes "the word of God of no effect". Jesus further said, "And many such things you do." What I hope to make clear is that "many such things" evangelicals do, though they evidently don't realize it.

I hope to make you (et al) see that every "tradition of men", though time-honoured by those at the helm of christianity, impairs the relationship between Christ and christian. What could be more devastating to every believer? And to Christ's Great Commission?

My brother-in-Christ, I fully understand your skepticism of one claiming to deliver a message from Lord Jesus. ("Here we go again.") But please also understand that I *sincerely believe* my message to you (and all reading these words) really is from "the head of the church", the "Lord of lords". Perhaps

my goodwill will be evident as this letter unfolds.

Chapter two

That pivotal day about two months ago began like most other days.... predictable. But before it ended predictable morphed into momentous. I received a mandate from Lord Jesus to write a book! In the form of a very lengthy letter! To Bill Johnson of Bethel Church! (Whom I had never met but highly regard.) I had the title, “Dear Bill....”. I had the sub-title, “An open letter to Bill Johnson of Bethel Church.” And I had the subject matter, collected over decades: religion vs Christ, religion vs Christ's bible, religion vs Christ's people, religion vs Christ's Great Commission.

It had been about fifteen years since I last wrote a book. Of my total of five books, all were mandated by the Lord Jesus through His most Holy Spirit. Being strongly devoted to Jesus Christ, I would never (never!) write except by His decree.

My brother, I had no idea, no desire, no inclination, no hint that I would ever write a book directed to you (or anyone else). I am convinced the Lord Jesus Christ is giving you a message through a canadian brother-in-Christ for your consideration.

Yes, it's a book of “hard saying”, one that will upset sacred cows passed on to you by 'the way it is', a lengthy letter that will take more than a little courage to hear and heed.

Of course, no one would expect you to drop your guard; every book, except *the* book, is flawed. My sole hope is that you have “ears to hear”. Not ear, but ears - not half-heartedly but attentively. Now this is my story about that day two months ago....

I must have been listening to you or about you on Youtube – I just can't remember - and, for whatever reason, I was mildly curious as to your age. Don't ask me why; I just was. I assumed you were younger than me, and a few clicks so confirmed.

Up popped a questionnaire that included: “How much is Bill Johnson paid?” So I clicked. I was not surprised you were on a salary. Though your income is modest compared to most mega church pastors, I was, nonetheless, seriously troubled.

Please understand, I am not critical.... over the years I have learned to mind my own business, my business being only what Jesus has made my business. And I was not surprised.... many in your position would have raked in millions and millions. You could have been extravagantly wealthy, but apparently you're not.

And yet my brother, I was *hurt*. Hurt? Yes, I was wounded. Let me explain. You have the grit to stand against certain evangelical absurdities.... but not all.... not even most. Religion is not your hated enemy as it is Christ's enemy. (“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.”) As it was Paul's enemy. (CEB: “I wish that the ones who are upsetting you would castrate themselves!”) As it was Stephen's enemy. (“They gnashed at him with their teeth.”) As it is my enemy.

Perhaps I just felt alone. Even my elder brother, this man of wise sayings, doesn't see what is before all to see? You may be a superior religionist, but a religionist nonetheless. Neither Paul or Peter or John or Stephen would tolerate the religion you so lovingly caress.

Perhaps the sadness I felt was the sadness Jesus feels for His people being coerced to support salaries that He has never sanctioned. I have felt His sadness before. Anyhow....

Back to your salary, if I may. A salary, any salary, is building on the sand of tradition. To make that point may I ask, "Who gave you permission to be salaried?" You didn't get that permission from the bible. You didn't get permission from Jesus. No, it was your religion, evangelicalism, that gave you permission to receive a salary.

Do you get it? Evangelicalism, not Christ, gave Bill Johnson permission to receive a non-biblical salary; doesn't that cause you to reflect? Although the New Testament, including words in red, has much to say about worthy labourers, it does not endorse a salary.

Contributions are God's way; the salary, which is a contract, is the secular way. To live by contribution (and one's own labour) is building on the rock of Christ's sayings; living by salary is building on the sand of tradition.

"And many such things you do." It seems the evangelical way has given you permission to build your christianity on a long list of accepted traditions, every one "making the word of God of no effect".

As I said, the Lord Jesus Christ, for whatever reason, unexpectedly gave me an assignment to write Bill Johnson of Bethel Church a very lengthy letter. (That's how I live out my christianity, assignment after assignment.) I have listened to you; now it's your turn to listen to me.

I ask myself, and you might ask yourself, Why *Dear Bill....*? Why not, *Dear Mike....?* Or *Dear Rodney....*? Or *Dear Joseph.... ?* Or *Dear Whoever....?* I simply do not know. Perhaps you should feel complimented; perhaps our Saviour-Messiah sees in you the necessary humility and courage to examine your christianity and adjust accordingly.

My obligation is obedience. Thus this letter from a nobody to a somebody.... from an insignificant to a highly significant.... from a non-credentialed to a credentialed.... from an unknown to a renown.

Note: My library of books, articles and videos can be located at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter three

I am a (retired) electrician. Occasionally it was necessary to climb into an attic. An attic is a lonely place, dark and dismal and depressing. Sometimes hot, sometimes very hot. And always itchy. On one occasion I was climbing through the attic access entrance when I fell backward and hit my tailbone on a two-by-four. It hurt.

Years later I attended a conference in Abbotsford, BC, Canada. You were a guest speaker. "Does

anyone have an injured tail bone?" you asked the audience. I immediately stood, as did others. You told us to do something that would indicate we were healed, like sit down hard or something. I did and I was, not fully but maybe 80%. Within two days I was completely healed. It took weeks to stop bracing myself for pain when getting out of a chair. That was maybe twenty years ago.

A friend and I travelled to Redding, California to visit Bethel. We both wanted a healing. At the last moment my friend flinched, having been told by church friends back home that people visiting Bethel get sick. I lightly chided him, reminding him of my healing. We spent quite a few hours in the small prayer room. I enjoyed walks in the wooded area where I once saw a huge rabbit about the size of a mid-sized dog; I didn't know our Lord made rabbits that big.

While there, my friend wasn't sure he got the healing he asked for during saturday's prayer for the sick. In his condition, running was life threatening, so I said, "Let's run!".... which we did in the parking lot. He told me he was going to admonish his friends for spreading false rumours.

It seems there is a campaign against Bethel by those believing Jesus no longer does the spectacular, thus denying ongoing reports from all over the world of miraculous healings. It seems heresy hunters constantly dog you, eager for a miscue they can publish on social media.

A facebook friend, very godly and Christ-centred, shared an anti-Johnson article on her timeline warning christians to steer away from you and Bethel. I commented, telling her the above testimony regarding my tailbone. She suggested – I am sure you heard this before – that my healing was of the devil and meant to deceive me. Yes, even the godly are being infected by these purveyors of absurdities. Sad.

I am sure you don't need reminding that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." I love the words of Jesus, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." You are in esteemed company.

I blame religion and religionists for the several irrational notions spawned within evangelicalism regarding the healing of the body, mind and soul.

Pardon me, Bill, as I digress to make a declaration aimed at whoever happens to read this material....

THE SAME HOLY SACRIFICE THAT PROCURED THE SALVATION OF OUR ETERNAL SOULS ALSO AND AT THE SAME TIME PROCURRED THE SALVATION OF OUR BODIES, MINDS AND SOULS. MORE THAN 2500 YEARS AGO ISAIAH PROPHESIED JESUS CHRIST WAS 1) "WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS" AND "BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES" AND 2) AMPLIFIED: "SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS (SICKNESSES, WEAKNESSES, AND DISTRESSES)" AND "BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED".

AS WE MUST ACCEPT CHRIST'S SACRIFICE BY FAITH TO RECEIVE SALVATION FROM HELL AND ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN, WE MUST LIKEWISE RECEIVE BY FAITH THAT SAME SACRIFICE AS PAYMENT FOR THE HEALING AND HEALTH OF OUR BODIES AND SOULS.

THE GOSPELS REVEAL MANY DISEASES, ETCETERA, ARE ASSOCIATED WITH AND CAUSED BY EVIL SPIRITS. CHRISTIANS WANTING TO SERVE CHRIST EFFECTIVELY AND FULLY MUST LEARN THE AUTHORITY THEY HAVE OVER OUR ENEMY.

Ahhh.... I feel better already.

Chapter four

An evangelical church road sign read: “WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER”. I emphatically disagree though that seems to be the mantra of every religion.

A poster reads: “CHRIST AND I ARE AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY”. Ahhh, that's more like it!

Evangelical narrative: *What we do we do together. Togetherness is godliness. Jesus loves unity. We accomplish much more together than individually. So.... bunch with the bunch, hang with the gang, flow with the flow, be a team player.*

We all started our christianity Jesus-and-me. (Paul: “Who loved ME and gave Himself for ME.”) At the coercion of the salaried, Jesus-and-me soon became Jesus-and us. 'Us' requires a leader and that leader is not the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit can only lead Jesus-and-me christians. The salaried know Jesus-and-me christians have little interest in financing their religious ambitions. So....

So there is an unspoken, even unintended and undetected struggle between the salaried and the Holy Spirit. Both vie for the devotion of the congregation.

Almost always the salaried wins. He wins because he coerces and the Holy Spirit doesn't. He wins because he has made himself so visible while, in contrast, the Holy Spirit is out of view. He wins because the powerful pulpit has made him bigger than he is. Much bigger.

This ongoing rivalry between the Holy Spirit and the salaried may be unintentional, and undetectable and indiscernible by most. Most, but not me. I've been around the block too many times. Never (repeat never!) have I heard 'the man' admonish the congregation, before collecting 'tithes and offerings', to check with the Holy Spirit for His authorization. Never did the man say to attend his services only at the Spirit's beckoning. Never does he consult with the Holy Spirit to determine who gives the message this sunday. Actually, he rarely mentions the Holy Spirit. It's like He is not in the room!

Jesus said, “If I depart I will send Him to you.” “He will guide you into all truth.” “He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.” So, I conclude, this is God's divine order:

Jesus, the “head of the church”, governs His church through the Holy Spirit.

Said another way: JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... CHRISTIAN. We can all say God's divine order is: JESUS.... HOLY SPIRT.... ME.

You can say: JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... BILL.

I can say (and do say): JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... LARRY.

Jesus governs our christianity, to the degree we bow to His lordship, through the Holy Spirit. We all know there is “one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” But there is also a Mediator between Christ and christian, the Holy Spirit. (“Whatever He hears, He will speak.”)

But religion, including the entire evangelical religion, doesn't work that way. There is no such deference to “the Spirit of the living God”. He is the invited guest they all hope doesn't show up. So the illicit evangelical order is thus:

JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... RELIGIONISTS.... CHRISTIAN. (Jesus governs His church through the Holy Spirit who in turn governs through pulpit-people who in turn govern the christian. So says evangelicalism. So says catholicism.)

Every church have made themselves, perhaps inadvertently, mediators between Christ and christian. And there can't be two mediators. If the church is the Holy Spirit isn't.

This is not complicated. This fully explains the impotence and lethargy (and very existence) of evangelicalism. This is why there is so little passion for Christ's Great Commission.

Jesus wants to rule His church through the Holy Spirit. Not in small bunches, not in mega bunches, but individually. “WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER” is simply not true. That sign should read: “WE CAN WASTE MORE TOGETHER”. The only entity that rivals religion for waste is secular government.

A.W. Tozer: “It is time for us to seek again the leadership of the Holy Ghost. Man's lordship has cost too much. Man's intrusive will has introduced such a multiplicity of unspiritual ways and unscriptural activities as positively to threaten the life of the church. These divert annually millions of dollars from the true work of God and waste Christian man-hours in such vast numbers as to be heartbreaking.”

Obstructing the divine order of Jesus.... Holy Spirit.... christian is not only unproductive, it is wrong! To violate God's will and ways and words is wrong! To usurp the governance of the Holy Spirit, and thus the governance of Jesus Christ, is wrong! Just plain wrong!

There is an unhealthy trust pew-people have for pulpit-people. Credentials, titles, the salary, the pulpit.... these create an unreasonable aura of credibility. It's like Pastor Whoever has a halo over his head. Impressionable sheep submissively line up every sunday for the next fleecing, a small price for acceptance and approval. “Cursed is the man who trusts in man” does not apply to pastors; they are far above skepticism. Are they not God's appointed?

Warning to all and every: The judgement seat of Christ is just around the corner!

A follower of Christ will do so much more than a follower of christians. I can only offer myself as an example, for your consideration. (Certainly there are many others who have accomplished more but

none so familiar to me as me.) I do this to eradicate the notion “we can do more together”. I will unfold my adventures-in-Christ intermittently throughout this letter. These are not the 'Acts of Larry Jones' but rather 'Acts of the Holy Spirit'.

But first I must convince you of my ineptitude: no trophies, no diplomas, a high school dropout, no credentials, no reputation, not much money. Leadership skills?.... you gotta be kidding. Charismatic?.... hardly. Special calling?.... not that I know of. Scholarly?.... I wish. How about a skillful orator?.... most definitely not a skilled orator.Talk about the Lord using “the foolish things of the world”. However....

Christ is my centre, my boast, my Lord, the vine in which I abide (though not fully, not yet). He alone is my qualifications.

I have done what very few can do: I signed the last page of the bible, under Revelation chapter 22, in the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as a declaration to obey the bible (as it is progressively revealed).

I told the Lord that I would choose His ways above man's ways even if His ways don't work. (I know, I know.... that's an impossibility.)

Bill, may I ask, what's so strange about obeying the bible?

Before going further I must clarify. I am not suggesting I have accomplished great things; I am suggesting that because of my ongoing submission to the Holy Spirit much more has been accomplished through me than typical/average evangelical. Yes, that would include the 10,000 or so members of Bethel.

Said another way, 10,000 times Larry Jones would equate to millions and millions of people snatched from “the power of darkness and conveyed.... into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

Each of the 10,000 bears fruit. (I am not suggesting otherwise!) But I am talking *much* fruit. (“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear *much* fruit.”) Okay?

I am saying a follower of Christ bears *much* fruit. (“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”) And I am saying a follower of christians bears, comparatively, little fruit.

Unfortunately followers of Christ *are rare*, perhaps much more so than you assume. Before you reject this “hard saying” please read the next chapter....

Chapter five

I became Christ's in february, 1972. (Paul: “You were bought at a price.”) In august of that year I discovered a 'catholic charismatic' group of born-again catholics. Being catholicized since the cradle, it was so good (and surprising) to find catholics who enthusiastically praised Jesus. Everything was going great until....

We were singing “I have decided” (to follow Jesus). Do you remember that song, Bill? While singing the words, “Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back” the Holy Spirit dropped a foretelling message into that babe-in-Christ. Plunk!

I can only para-phase: “THERE WILL BE A DAY WHEN YOU WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THOSE WORDS YOU JUST SANG.”

What did I just sing? “Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back.”

I was thoroughly disturbed. There will be a day everybody, at least everybody I knew, will stop following Jesus Christ? Including the dozens of people in that hall singing so fervently? Including my pentecostal acquaintances from a nearby pentecostal church? Could it be?

Back then I assumed if a person stopped following Jesus he/she would go to hell. I simply didn't know what to do with that scary word. So I shelved it.

It took me about five years to get the understanding. (Yes, five years. I can be real slow.) I was attending my crowded evangelical, charismatic-like church on a sunday morning. Suddenly, a veil was lifted and I could see 'into' the people. By the Spirit I knew these people were not following Christ. They were following christians.... who were following christians.... who were following christians.

Nobody was following Jesus Christ! And they *didn't know* they were not following Jesus Christ! They were not but assumed they were. Sure, they had a love for Jesus. They earnestly sang songs of praise to Jesus. They were on their way to heaven. But were they *following* Jesus?.... no way.

But what about me? Was I following Jesus after being forewarned five years previous? Did I cross that line from follower-of-Christ to follower-of-christians. Sometimes I think I did; other times I think I didn't, though coming very close.

Regardless, I determined to go back to my 1972 enthusiasm for Christ, to recapture “first love”. It wasn't easy and it wasn't quick. It had taken a long time to drift away and it took a long time to return, maybe a couple of years.

When I finally arrived I knew I had arrived, having recaptured the intimacy and fervour once held at my 1972 conversion. Now what? Where do I go from here? I felt the Holy Spirit say (paraphrasing): “Now you keep on going. There is always more of Jesus to be attained.”

So that's what I did and that's what I do. I pursue the One I had captured. I long to know the One I know. To dig deeper, always deeper.

Why did it take so long to recapture “first love”? Well....

I remained with that congregation, those followers-of-christians. They influenced me. The preacher-guy was accomplished and strong. So many can't be wrong, just can't. Who was I to question? And

what about my family? How could I uproot my family? Would we be safe if I left all this behind?

I did leave, and it was hard, hard, hard. I told the Lord I would not attend another church until He specifically directed me to one. He didn't. So I didn't. Several years past before I attended another church.

Back then the only reason one stopped going to church was because he was backslidden. But I stopped going to church because I wanted more of Christ.

Suddenly I became fringe, an outsider, suspect. I never left church (the real church), church left me. Followers-of-christians have little in common with followers-of-Christ. That's just the way it is.

A while back I wrote an article depicting institutionalized christianity as I see it, and I share it with you for your consideration....

A very large barn, this barn. On the side of this very large barn is a very large red dot, about three feet diameter. Fifty paces from this very large dot are a number of christian archers, varying in social status, men, women and children.

The first to shoot is Charismatic Charlie. Pulls back the string on his longbow, takes aim and.... misses. *Hmmm.* Next is Evangelical Ed. Looks confident enough, but surprisingly he misses too. Double *Hmmm.* Same with numbers 3 to 20.... all miss.... not even close.

But here comes Pastor Peter. He will show them how it's done. Looks real cool with his fiberglass flatbow, colourful arm-guard and chest-guard. But looky here! Doesn't come close to the target! Another pastor, another miss. *What's going on?!*

But there's still hope. Next guy is from elsewhere, keynote speaker at a big conference. This bowman appears super-capable, and even has a crossbow. Just can't miss with a crossbow.... but he does!

Next up, a new convert to Lord Jesus with an old bow and crooked arrow. Bulls-eye! Wow! Last to shoot is a little kid with a bow much longer than he is. Wow, another bulls-eye!

Take a look at the barn. Lots of arrows above and below and all around the red mark. Only a few stick out of the target.

Incredible!

Paul to the Corinthians: *I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds might somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

What does today's church look like?

Looks like the barn with all those arrows stuck in it, only a few in the target. Looks like a membership of, mostly, deceived Eves no longer devoted. It's in need of revival.

And heaven?

Heaven looks like that barn with every arrow stuck in the very large red dot. All, angels and saints, are devoted to Christ.

Don't be disheartened. Through sincere repentance arrows can be pulled out and shot again.

”

That, my brother-in-Christ, is how I see evangelicalism and every christianized religion. Evidence of missing the 'target', Christ being the target, is plentiful, but it takes courage to look and listen.

I am sure you have read Andrew Murray. I discovered his “Abide in Christ” a few years back. What was the condition of the church in his day, from his perspective? I quote from the first page....

“And yet you have had reason to complain of disappointment: as time went on, your expectations were not realized. The blessings you once enjoyed were lost; the love and joy of your first meeting with your Saviour, instead of deepening, have become faint and feeble.”

What our brother seen a hundred plus years ago I have seen for decades. But I don't think you do.

So what is Andrew's explanation regarding *why* christians lost “the love and joy of first meeting with Saviour”? Listen to our brother-in-Christ, my brother-in-Christ.... “YOU WANDERED FROM HIM.”

It is my observation that today 95%-plus christians, have “wandered from Him”. That's *the* problem. It's *the* problem of the born-again, *the* problem within Christ's church, and yes, *the* problem of the world rushing into eternal anguish.

Pastor Whoevers cannot fix the problem they created; they themselves “wandered from Him”.

Pastors shouldn't be surprised or slighted at this suggestion. They are the most religious person in the congregation. Religion passes from pulpit to pew, not pew to pulpit.

Most of that 95% assume Jesus Christ is “first love”. Yes, their love for Christ may run deep, but it is so obvious love for religion runs deeper.

Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep MY commandments.” Jesus said, “He who has MY commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep MY word.” Jesus said, “Follow ME.”

To determine “first love” pastors simply have to take inventory of what they do and teach. Surely it can't be so difficult for those who know the bible more than most to differentiate between what is New Testament and what is not, between Christ's commandments and “tradition of men”.

Religion bears no good fruit. None whatsoever.

Every believer bears some good fruit, even the lukewarm. The good fruit that does come from religionists is the result of abiding in “the true vine”, not abiding in their religion.

WARNING: The branch (“you are the branches”) that completely stops bearing gets removed. (“He is cast out as a branch, and is withered.”)

NOTE: The above article can be found at www.larryjones.ca. Scroll down to 333 Words.

Chapter six

My very first public assignment: “Write a book.” Just like that.

I was maybe five years old in the Lord. I had been rebuffed by the core group of our People of Faith catholic charismatic prayer community because of the sin of leaving the catholic religion. (It was hoped this rebuff would conciliate their apprehensive bishop.)

So there I was, stretched out on our sofa, complaining to the Lord that I seemed to be the only one with nothing to do. Just plain bored. And then, “Write a book.” I sat up; it had been so long since I heard from the Lord.

Being my first assignment, I wanted to make it real good. I prayed in tongues for maybe a month or two, asking the interpretation be given in the form of my book. This excerpt from the preface is as relevant today as it was four-plus decades ago....

> “Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but rather powers and principalities of darkness in which the sword of the Spirit is our most potent weapon, and softening or altering it for the sake of accommodation, or being double-minded in our allegiance, will certainly dull its edges. We are in a battle of good verses evil, truth verses lie, and compromise, while bringing momentary reprieve, weakens the awesome power of Truth, and the cause of Christ suffers.
>
> Compromise. How skillfully we compromise. The more we do it, the more we do it; drinking from its cup makes us thirsty for more. Every christian community is pressured to compromise, and to those capitulating it becomes a way of life. Compromise insults God. Compromise is a return ticket to the yoke of slavery.”

I titled the book “A Catholic No More”. It is a message to the many catholics who received Christ during what was (deceptively) tagged 'the catholic charismatic renewal' and since returned to their catholic “yoke of bondage”. I termed this phenomena 'the charismatic cycle'.

When I exchanged catholicism for evangelicalism I thought I would be safe. I wasn't. Compromise was prevalent. While catholics called their man *Father* Whoever, evangelicals called him *Pastor* Whoever. Both had a hierarchical order of government. Both claimed allegiance to the bible they blatantly disobeyed. Both regularly fleeced their sheep (though evangelicalism did so much more efficiently).

“A Catholic No More” is constructed on Matthew 7:24-26....

> Jesus: “Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.
>
> “But whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

My brother, my contention is this: Evangelicalism is not “these sayings of ” Lord Jesus. The buildings, the salaries, the hierarchy, and many etceteras cannot be traced to red words of the New Testament, not even the black words.

Should a catholic make a decision to build on Christ's words (which includes the entire bible) he/she would no longer be a catholic. And should an evangelical make a decision to build on Christ's words, he/she would no longer be an evangelical. What would they be?.... Jesus-and-me disciples of Christ.

A catholic priest, now with Jesus, was an amazing example of a servant of Christ. After he gave and gave, he gave some more. Even when no longer catholic, I had to admit he was endued with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Plus he was possibly the most authentic and accomplished orator I ever heard - not because he endeavoured to be, but simply because of his passion for Christ and Christ's righteousness. But....

But not only was he an ambassador of Christ, he was an ambassador of catholicism. By example, he preached Christ; by example he preached his religion. Though he blessed more than most, he injured more than most. How? His fine attributes were attributed to his religion, making the catholic more catholic and escape from that religion less likely.

I think you know where I am going. You are powerful, influential. You speak, multitudes hear. You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ. You demonstrate the power of God. You are in many ways an example to be imitated. But, but but....

You are also an ambassador of your religion. (And by extension, an ambassador of every

christianized religion.) Your 'success' is misconstrued evidence Jesus was mistaken when He said the house built on sand will fall; it really is safe to build on traditions of men.

My priest friend once said (paraphrasing): “I don't accept anything that doesn't have some reference in the bible.” How can a catholic priest make such a statement? Simple.... stretch, manipulate, misquote, ignore.... just like their evangelical counterparts.

An evangelical might have challenged this priest by asking, for example,“But how can you allow your people to call you 'Father' knowing Jesus said, 'Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father?'” To which he could respond, for example, “How can you have church membership when the word 'membership' can't be found in the bible you claim to obey?”

Both catholicism and evangelicalism only make sense to the person who realizes that neither are not built on God's bible.

NOTE: “A Catholic No More” can be located at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter seven

While walking through a neighbourhood unfamiliar to me, I came across a road leading to a mid-sized baptist church standing all by itself in the woods. The building was neat, the sign was neat, the pavement was neat, the shrubbery was neat, the entrance was neat. I am sure the inside was equally neat.... neat pulpit, neat pews, neat carpet, neat furnishing. Neat, neat, neat.

But I didn't see a neat church.

I saw waste. I saw extravagance. I saw a salaried Pastor Whoever, a salaried youth pastor, a salaried secretary, a salaried janitor. I saw wasted man-hours. I saw partisanship. I saw injustice. I saw a multitude of fleeced sheep. I saw christianized embezzlement. I saw disobedience.

I tuned into a favourite group of entertainers performing before a large audience in a mega-church building. The audience was happy, the singers were happy, the musicians were happy, the director was happy, the songs were happy. Happy, happy, happy.

But I saw beyond all that happy. I saw self-indulgence. I saw selfishness. I saw extravagance. I saw disobedience. I saw an unimpressed Jesus.

It seems more (much more) money is spent on entertainment than on Christ's Great Commission. The general populace of christianity lives in a playground, not a battle ground. Outside those church walls enclosing all those happy christians was a very unhappy population marching unified into a Christ-less eternity.

My brother-in-Christ, I think I grasp Christ's perspective regarding His church and His Great Commission, and I expressed that perspective in my second book, “Financing the Great Commission”. I include an excerpt for your consideration, aware that if I touch your heart I touch the

hearts of the multitudes you influence.

1 Cor. 4:2: It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

A wealthy landlord receives news that his homeland people had been stricken by a deadly epidemic. Fortunately he has in his possession the antibiotic to combat this ravenous disease. He immediately sends a number of his servants to their rescue and entrusts to his servants a large sum of money to meet the expenses they will surely incur. He instructs these servants to minister the medicine and to care for the stricken however they are able.

The servants love their good and generous master. And they know the antibiotic is powerful to save the sick and dying because they themselves have once been cured from the same disease by the same medicine. And so with much fervour and compassion in their hearts they set out for the master's homeland.

When at last they arrive at their destination they discover that the awful reports of these people were not exaggerated. Oh what a pitiful sight! Multitudes of people – men , women and children- helpless, hurting, confused, dying in their sickness.

The servants decide among themselves that before they begin the enormous task of ministering to the sick, they should establish a camp for themselves. After setting up camp they elect a leader, a man with a shepherd-like heart who will care for them and give direction. This leader shoulders the responsibility of caring for the stewards and proposes a permanent headquarters be constructed, a place they can rest periodically from the difficult task they will soon be encountering, a place where they can come together and encourage one another. Some are very enthused with this proposal, and some object. After some debate, a vote is taken and a building committee formed.

The building committee embraces the challenge with enthusiasm, and designs an edifice that will not only satisfy their needs but also give glory to their good and generous master. The passion burning in the servants' hearts for the landlord's commission is now temporarily diverted into an enthusiasm for the building project. At the urging of the gifted and determined leader everyone gets involved. Soon the foundation is laid and, brick by brick, the headquarter complex begins to take shape.

Unhampered, the epidemic rages. The increasingly pitiful cries of the helpless people can occasionally be heard over the clamour of all the building activities, so much so that some of the stewards lay down their tools and bring some of the precious medicine from the stock to give them. They also take a portion of the master's money to purchase bandages and blankets and other medical equipment. The leader is alarmed, fearing everyone will abandon the building project. He admonishes the mutinous stewards, pointing out their action is causing division. He calls an emergency meeting and makes an impassioned plea for unity and commitment to the group. Many of the dissident stewards repent of their rash behaviour, and almost everyone pledges commitment to the group and to the leadership. Some, a few, resist peer pressure and continue to minister to the

masses.

After some time the complex is finished. It is indeed a fine edifice. The stewards have proven themselves to be master builders. The project, however, ran over the estimate, as building projects often do, and the master's money is depleted. A message is sent back to the master requesting more funds. The master agrees to allocate a certain amount of money to the stewards every month. The leader forms a committee and they immediately draw up a monthly budget.

It has already been decided the competent leader should be given a salary. And he will certainly require a secretary. And an office and stationary. The new building requires chairs, comfortable chairs for the stewards who will soon begin the arduous task of ministering to the sick. The grounds around the complex are in dire need of landscaping. And there is need of musical instruments to give inspiration to their weekly meetings. And then there is money needed for taxes. And maintenance. And...

Well, the master's monthly allocation is simply not enough to meet the budget and supply these immediate needs. The steward's approach the moneylenders who gladly respond to their plight for a mere ten percent interest.

At least twice a week the leader dispenses a dosage of medication to each in his flock so there will be no chance anyone will contract the terrible disease growing more rampant with every passing day. By now most of the stewards' hearts have become crusty toward the master's commission. They become more demanding and selfish. Their ears become deaf to the sick and dying just outside the headquarter walls . Dress and fashion become more and more relevant. They involve themselves in social functions which had the effect of fortifying the commitment each had made to the group.

Word got back to the landlord that very little of his precious medicine has been given to the sick. The landlord was deeply troubled. His beloved homeland people are dying needlessly, and the stewards he trusted have proven themselves unfaithful. He writes a letter and sends it to his unreliable stewards.

My dearest children,

I want to express the undying love I have for each of you. Without hesitation I would lay down my life for you, and I gladly share all that is mine to meet your every need.

I am, however, distressed beyond measure and beyond description at the evil reports I have recently received about the way you have squandered my money. This money was not meant to build buildings or to comfort yourselves. It was meant to meet only your immediate needs and the needs of the sick and dying people. I had instructed you to minister my precious medicine to these people, but you have kept it to yourselves even though there is enough for everyone. I expected you to lay down your life for this cause but instead you have sought your own comfort and

misappropriated my funds. You have turned my money into blood money.

Because I love you with an undying love, I chasten you and call you to repentance. Give up your dead works. Complete the task I have given you. Be filled again with compassion for the hurt and dying people.

Remember, one day I will call each of you back to give an account. Each of you will be rewarded on the basis of what you have done and did not do. And remember my words I had given you, “it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”

Your loving master.

Some stewards weep grievously at their beloved master's words. How could they have been so blind? They turn from their selfishness and go out to minister love and compassion to the sick and dying people, bringing to them the precious medicine and passing on to them almost every penny of their share of the master's money, keeping for themselves only enough to meet their most essential needs. Others are indignant against their master's words and harden their heart against him. Had they not built this edifice to the master's glory? How can he be so insensitive to their zealous endeavours? They refuse to abandon their programs and social activities, convinced he simply did not mean what he said. And they continue to grow in self-centredness, blind to the fact that one day they must give an account.

NOTE: Financing the Great Commission can be located at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter eight

Before going further I should define religion, since I spend so much energy thrashing it.

Religion, as I define it, is a government, quite similar to any civic government. Obviously, the complexity of the ranking order depends on the size of the religion.

Every congregation is divided into the ruling class (the government) and the ruled class (the governed).

James speaks of a “pure and undefiled religion” which he defines as good works and pure living. But that's not the religion I speak of. The religion I denounce is man-made political machinery.

Evangelicals declare, “Christianity is not a religion; it's a relationship!” And yet those same people are themselves captives of a religion of one sort or another.

Religion is a compilation of “tradition of men”. Every religion has its own distinct assortment of do-and-don't which separates it from all others.

There was but one true religion. It was, as said earlier, “the law of Moses”. Paul states, “the law is holy.” Of course it is. Everything God establishes is holy.

God terminated His religion and didn't create a second one. There is no longer such a thing as a true religion. The baptist religion is not a holy thing. Pentecostalism is equally unholy. The charismatic religion, like catholicism, is man-made.

There are religions within religions. For example, pentecostalism has offshoots (sects) distinct from each other. Under the baptist umbrella there are a variety of sub-religions. Each of these is a religion within a religion.

Oh how people love their religion. That fellow who said, “Religion is the opium of the people” had a point.

If God never initiated any of the religions within evangelicalism (and beyond), who did? I think the answer can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:12....

“Each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.'”

The ESV (and others) say it this way: “Each of you says, 'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos,' or 'I follow Cephas,' or 'I follow Christ.'”

Some translations say “belong to” rather than “follow”.

Paul-ites and Apollos-ites and Cephas-ites were religionists. They were not “of” Christ. They did not “follow Christ”. They did not “belong to” Christ, not fully.

Christians, not Christ, devise religions.

The many religions today, every one of them, were created by men - adders and subtracters, compromisers, men driven by religious ambitions. It is certain Jesus didn't initiate them. (“Is Christ divided?”)

Bill, if you agree with this logic you must concede that your Bethel was devised by men and not by Lord Jesus. God empowers us and we 'spend' that power as we so choose. We cannot assume that a product is God's design simply because it was built by utilizing God's power. His grace is often misspent.

A.W. Tozer (The Divine Conquest): “The churches (even the gospel churches) are worldly in spirit, morally anemic, on the defensive, imitating instead of initiating and in a wretched state generally.”

Of course Jesus relates to every christian within Bethel; I am not suggesting otherwise. They are each a branch abiding, to varying degrees, in “the true vine”.

However, I am suggesting there is a better way. That better way is not complicated. That better way is removing that which was added to Scripture and adding that which was subtracted. That better way is Jesus-and-me christianity.

My christianity is a sample of life minus religion. The sky didn't come crushing down when I kissed

evangelicalism (not evangelicals!) goodbye. The connection between branch and vine has been strengthened, not weakened. Paul said, “To live is Christ”; Paul did not say, “To live is Christ-plus”.

Perhaps you think there is no way Jesus would allow a people (such as Bethel?) to stray so far from His will, His ways, His words. Oh yes He would. Oh yes He does. Every religion verifies that.

Jesus allows people to go to hell. Jesus allows serious abuse in His church. Jesus allows the salaried to redirect the congregation's devotion to themselves. Jesus allows His people to create a variety of religions. Jesus allows His own to build mega-churches with money intended to finance His Great Commission. Jesus allows new converts to be swallowed up by misdirected controllers. How can it be?....

While we may impose our will upon others, Jesus doesn't. As born-again believers we choose obedience or disobedience, wisdom or folly. We choose to be either Jesus-and-me or Jesus-and-us. He lets us choose, often to the detriment of ourselves and others. Both good and bad choices are heavily consequential.

I am sure many (most?) assume 'the way it is' must be God's way because God is sovereign. Not so. That's bible misconstrued. (I think you would agree.) If the bible is rock then that which is not bible is sand. Jesus taught us that the wise build on rock, the foolish on sand.

So how should one define a religionist?

As already stated, a religionist is simply one attached to and leaning on a religion.

It must be quickly said that it is quite possible to attend religious services without being a religionist. I had attended many church services but always (or almost always - my history is not without blemish) kept religion at arm's-length.

Nonetheless most attending an institutional church are religious indeed and have been thoroughly institutionalized.

Religionists don't know they are religionists, no more than the controller knows he's a controller or the selfish knows she's selfish.

A religionist is a Jesus-and-us christian. A Jesus-and-us christian is opposite to a Jesus-and-me christian. Paul, though not a loner, was a Jesus-and-me christian. (“To live is Christ.”) That's why he was so effective.

A.W. Tozer, the public person who most affected my walk with Jesus, was, in my opinion, a Jesus-and-me christian; that's why his writings are still in demand. Most certainly it wasn't religion that made Tozer a Tozer.

A Jesus-and-me christian is one guided by the Holy Spirit.... individually. We are so used to keeping stride with the bunch with whom we bunch instead of keeping step with the Holy Spirit. He wants to

lead us individually. There are many examples....

“Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness”.... Peter: “The Spirit *told me* to go with them”.... “Then the Spirit said *to Philip*, 'Go near and overtake this chariot”.... Jesus to the twelve: “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit who speaks in you”.... Jesus: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth”.... Acts 4:8: “Then *Peter*, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders....”.... John the baptist: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

A religionist is not, nor can be, Spirit-led.

Religionists don't keep company with non-religionists.

A religionist will be sorely disappointed at the judgement seat of Christ.

Most important: A religionist doesn't know he/she is a religionist. We can see others clearly but not ourselves. While completely missing the target we think we hit the bullseye.

So how do we know if we are or are not a religionist? It is possible to know. Jesus gives us the answer: “Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks”....

Chapter nine

Jesus (Luke 6:45): “Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Our words are an accurate measurement of the value of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Our words reveal if Christ Jesus is “first love” or something less. If Jesus is first love, we will speak Jesus *primarily*. (“Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”) If money is first love we will speak money primarily. If family is first love we will speak family primarily. And if church-ianity is first love we will speak church primarily.

We know what's in by what comes out. We can determine the worth of our relationship with Jesus by simply monitoring our own speech. How often do we speak the name of Jesus?

Likewise we can know the value of relationship between others and Lord Jesus by simply listening. It seems some (many, most?) evangelicals can go *months* without mentioning His name in conversation. How often have you heard His name mentioned in a crowded restaurant?

Likewise we can know the value of relationship between an entire congregation and Lord Jesus by their cumulative words. It really is simple.

I once did a study of what I supposed were the five largest evangelical churches in my city of Kelowna, BC, Canada (including a baptist church, a pentecostal, a charismatic, a non-denominational and a mennonite). I randomly chose three messages from each church, a total of fifteen, from principle speakers. (There is no reason to think that Kelowna is spiritually sub-par to other north american cities.)

I was interested in three words from these pulpit-people: GOD, JESUS, and CHURCH. So I listened (on the internet) and counted. I compared their speech with that of the New Testament. Keep in mind I wanted to confirm what I seriously suspected: these men were more church-centred (man-centred, 'us'-centred) than they were Christ-centred.

First, the New Testament (not including the gospels)....

God: 1171 Jesus: 1422 Church:108

Next the total of the five churches....

God: 646 Jesus: 199 Church: 269

Now I could (and you can) compare *the ratio* written/spoken by both the New Testament writers and the pulpit-people.

As you can see, for every time New Testament writers mentioned CHURCH, they mentioned CHRIST 13 times. Since “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” we know this is God's will and heart.Yes, CHURCH is important, but isn't CHRIST at least 13 times more important?

The speech of the Kelowna churches was quite opposite; to every time they spoke JESUS, they spoke CHURCH almost 1 1/2 times. Can it be said of evangelicalism CHRIST is important but CHURCH is 1 1/2 times more important?

Please note that the New Testament writers mentioned JESUS more than GOD. However the church pastors spoke GOD more than 3 times as often as JESUS. What is the significance of this disparity?

I once wrote: “The news media speak 'God'. The religious speak 'God'. Politicians speak 'God'. But christians ought to speak 'Christ'.... *primarily*. That's the will of God. Evangelicals speak differently then Paul, for example, because they are different. Typical evangelical has Paul's passion minus 75%.... and minus 75% his commitment.... and at least 75% more distractions.”

The next chapter I will concentrate on *why* evangelicals and other religionists rarely speak the name of Jesus....

Chapter ten

Why, oh why, oh why do evangelicals evade the name of Jesus? That they do is obvious to anyone having ears.

When someone speaks that beautiful name I notice. A niece lately spoke the name three times in a short conversation; it was like friendly lightning flahes streaking through a cloudless sky. It said so much about her walk with Jesus.

It seems evangelicals can go *months* without mentioning “the name which is above every name” in conversation. And that includes pastors. Why, oh why, oh why? I have wrestled with this question for

many years and still don't have full understanding. But I do have some.... . There is such power in that name, especially if said reverently. Saying the name *Jesus* fervently throughout the day brings Him relationally closer. If you don't believe me, try it. But the problem is....

The problem is that we don't *want* more of Jesus, relationally speaking, than what we have.

We already have as much of Jesus as we want. If we wanted more we would have more. If we wanted less we would have less.

More of Jesus costs plenty, our very self. More of Him means less of 'me'. Less self-rule, less self-importance, less self-everything.

Several years ago I wrote a series of articles entitled, "They Don't Want Him!" A sample....

I was talking to a family friend – well truthfully, I was talking *at* a family friend – my mouth motoring pretty good, saying stuff like, "what is missing in the church is none other than Jesus Christ." And, "I call Him *The Forgotten One.*" Etcetera.

She is a seasoned christian, this family friend, classy, her speech layered with grace, certainly not radical or opinionated. Had I gone too far, said too much? And then she responded:

"They don't want Him! They don't want Him!"

That's all she said. What is she talking about? Who is *Him*? Who are *they*? Perhaps she hadn't been hearing me. Days later – yes, *days* later – I got it.

Him is Jesus Christ. *They* are christians. (Yes, the born-again type, the only kind there is.) Wow! Even I had never said, or even thought, something so extreme. But she was right! "They don't want Him!" is both the problem and the bottom line within evangelicalism and beyond.

I would add one word to "They don't want Him!" *Enough. They* want Christ, but not enough.

Enough for what? Enough to seat Him (re-seat Him) on the throne of their lives.

But again, who are *they?*

First, *they* are not everyone. Some, praise the Lord!, want Him..... enough. Who love Christ more than life. Who *is* their life.

But *they* are definitely the majority. *They* are Joe and Jill Average Christian, family and friends, acquaintances and customers. *They* attend church, don't swear or smoke or spit, and don't hang with those who smoke and swear and spit.

They are the lukewarm, the spiritual sleepy, less than conquerors. For sure, they are as *in* as the fervent..... in God's grace, in the family, in the book of life. As the faithful, they are never ignored by

the Lord.

But life is a travesty. Not only will they – I am speaking of the majority! - miss their destiny, their high calling, they won't even know, this side of heaven, what that destiny is. I think there are multitudes in heaven who would trade *they* places, consider it a privilege to enter once more the battle zone for men's souls. You see, up there there is only fervency.

There is something wrong, and that something is a lack of want for our beautiful Jesus. The answer is conversion – again. The answer is not ahead – some experience not yet had or teaching not yet heard – but behind, an altar once a dwelling place, a fervour once kept. We know a viable relationship with Jesus is attainable because we once attained it. He was the centre and can be again.

”

When I made a decision to go back to my 1972 fervour for Jesus (chapter five) – that was maybe forty years ago – I *forced* myself to speak Christ. My reasoning was this: I know I speak the overflow of my heart; perhaps I can *reverse* the flow. In other words, perhaps I can fill my heart with Jesus by intentionally speaking His name. It seemed to work.

Speaking Christ does not come naturally in a world that rejects Christ and a church that neglects Christ. Mentioning the name of Jesus to evangelicals is like detonating small firecrackers, making them a little jumpy. (When I want to end a conversation I only have to change the subject to Jesus; my 'victim' will suddenly remember he/she has some matter requiring attention.)

Chapter eleven

There are three, only three, requirements to assure a successful christianity.

First, I want to say what is *not* required. Are you ready for this, my brother?....

We don't need seminaries or christian universities. We don't need congregational membership. We don't need a diploma. We don't need recognition. We don't need to 'go to church'. We don't need to bunch with the bunch. We don't need Pastor Whoever. We don't need wednesday night bible study. We don't need to be active in ministry. We don't need connections. We don't need man's permission or approval or assistance. We don't need a salary. We don't need charm. We don't need money.

So what *do* we need?

First, we need to abide in Christ. Second, we need to submit to the governance of the Holy Spirit. Third, we need to give allegiance to God's bible.

That's it!?

That's it.

Generally speaking (Warning: I do a lot of 'generally speaking'), there are three vital subjects pulpit-people ignore: First, one's need to abide in Christ, and second, one's need to be governed by the Holy Spirit and third, commitment to the bible.

In the next chapter I explain why, in my opinion, this is so.

Now, before going further, I will unfold my understanding of 'successful' christianity....

Favourable christianity is.... knowing you have fought “the good fight”.... laying up an abundance of “treasures in heaven”.... not being “ashamed of the gospel of Christ”.... being a competent “fishers of men”.... giving a good account at “the judgement seat of Christ”.... finishing one's unique “course” or calling.... bearing “much fruit” to the glory of the Father.... being crowned with “the crown of righteousness”.... being an overcomer.... plundering the devil's kingdom.

Again, to accomplish all this is simple: abide in Christ, obey the Holy Spirit, be devoted to God's bible.

Simple, yes. Easy, no way.

It's an ongoing challenge to abide in Christ, to be guided exclusively by the Holy Spirit, to have the tenacity to choose bible over religion. I have been a christian for almost fifty years and I still have ongoing struggles. I must be content with continuous increase. So very much I want to hear Lord Jesus say, preferably in King James language, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

First, abide in Christ....

Let's look at John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.”

Bill, if you agree that “much fruit” is successful christianity would you acknowledge that the way to attain successful christianity is to simply abide in Jesus Christ (who in turn abides in us)? We know this is so because Jesus said so.

Can you see how John 15:5 is a rebuke to all the spiritual stuff denominational officers have introduced to evangelicals? John 15:5 is utmost simplicity. Evangelicalism is utmost complexity.

What is so difficult to understand about Christ's promise, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit”? Does the young born-again have to go to seminary to learn that devotion to Christ results in “much fruit”?

The vine and the branch speak relationship. There is a beautiful concord between branches and vines (christians and Christ); the branch cannot bear fruit unless attached to the vine and the vine cannot produce fruit without abiding branches.

The remainder of John 15:5 says: “for without Me you can do nothing.” A good definition of nothing is.... nothing!

Without being relationally attached to Lord Jesus we “can do nothing”.

I conclude that.... if relationally attached to Lord Jesus, we can do all He calls us to do. (“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”)

.... we cannot do christianity successfully without being strongly attached to Jesus.

.... we don't need religious paraphernalia to bear “much fruit”.

.... we don't need Pastor Whoever. Only the one *not* abiding in Christ needs someone (a Pastor Whoever, an elder, a friend) to point him/her to “the true vine”. Sadly, those 'someones' are quite rare.

.... the fruit we bear is relative to the quality of abiding relationship we have with Jesus Christ.

.... our time on earth should be spent improving the quality of relationship with Jesus Christ. This is priority.

.... to bear more fruit we simply need to abide in Lord Jesus more fully.

This is the problem: Evangelicals (etcetera) seem to think that abiding in religion is the same thing as abiding in Christ. Bill, please give this “hard saying” serious consideration because your Bethel is fraught with religion (as I define religion).

Religion is not needed and not helpful. And not only not helpful, but detrimental. And not only detrimental, but devastating. Religion hinders the life-flow from vine to branch, from Christ to christian. Infatuation with Christ is diverted to infatuation with christians. I know; been there, done that.

Jesus was successful because of an abiding relationship with His Father. (“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do.... I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.... The Father who dwells in Me does the works.... You, Father, are in Me, and I in You”.)

The second requirement needed to assure a productive christianity is plainly stated by Lord Jesus: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”

I conclude that.... “He will guide into all truth.”

.... “He will guide into all truth.”

.... He only guides those looking to Him for guidance.

.... He dispenses “all truth” directly or indirectly though others.

.... only the Holy Spirit is able to lead anyone into “all truth”.

.... only the Holy Spirit knows what truth we need at every moment.

.... only the Holy Spirit is purely motivated.

To be guided by the Holy Spirit alone is swimming upstream against the flow of religionists who constantly and zealously propagate the presiding Jesus-and-us narrative.

Warning: JESUS-and-us will in time become US-and-Jesus. Religion does that.

Religion is a false vine competing against the true vine. (Jesus: "I am the *true* vine.")

Successful christianity requires that religion must go - be disallowed, refuted, renounced, cast out.

The third requirement is allegiance to the bible.

Jesus taught us, Matthew chapter 7, that the wise man is he who hears His sayings and builds his life on those sayings. That house will not fall. Evangelicals build partly on rock and partly on sinking sand.

Why is it so difficult to recognize traditions of men? Is it because we don't see what we don't want to see? Traditions of men are simply practices and doctrine that are not the sayings of Christ. (The sayings of Christ are not only the red letters but the entire bible. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.")

Ask yourself: are New Testament teachings and examples the formula for successful christianity? Or not? Would the evangelical say to Jesus?.... "Lord Jesus, Your bible is precious but insufficient. That's why I add this and that to my christianity."

Years ago I heard a sermon warning that mixing the bible with traditions of men always results in confusion. That moved me. I often recommit my life to Jesus Christ but that message moved me to also commit myself to the bible. I signed the last page of the bible in the presence of the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit as a solemn declaration of obedience to the bible.

Though everyone can make such a declaration, very few will.

Allegiance to the bible means that every time traditions/teachings clash with the bible the christian will choose obedience to the bible. Obedience to the bible is obedience to Jesus Christ. Obedience to "tradition of men" is obedience to religion.

The Pastor Whoever who makes such a decision to obey the bible will soon be unemployed.

The pew-person making such a declaration will be lonely.

Chapter twelve

I repeat, there are three, only three, requirements for successful christianity.... 1) abide in Christ, 2) submit to the Holy Spirit, 3) sign the bible.

Why are these three vitals ignored by local pastors and celebrities? There are no nice answers.

First, pulpit-people do not themselves abide in Christ *primarily* - Jesus is less than “first love”. (Their speech affirms this.) And second, pulpit-people are not themselves governed by the Holy Spirit. (Their perpetual repetition affirms this.) And third, pulpit-people long ago gave themselves over to *the way it is*. (Their obedience to “tradition of men” affirms this.)

In my third book, “The Way It Is”, I tried to remove the veil between (so called) laity and (so called) ministerial. I suppose my perspective is quite different than yours, my precious brother-in-Christ. And not yours only but possibly every person in your bubble of contemporaries.

But being minority, even tiny minority, doesn't make me wrong, no more than super majority makes you right. The bible is right. While you have the numbers, I have the bible. While you have generations of evangelicals in your corner, I have the bible in mine.

I am going to assume you have “ears to hear”. Surely someone as influential as you must want to be certain you comprehend the condition of Christ's church. (Paul: “What comes upon me daily; my deep concern for all the churches.”)

A quote from “The Way It Is” about a fictional pastor of a fictional church....

'Pastor' John is a man of divided loyalties. He is a product of both the Holy Spirit and the word of God which he has studied more than most AND the denomination that schooled, trained and certified him.

It was his proven willingness to cooperate that procured him the position of pastor of Bread of Life Assembly, and he is determined to prove himself faithful to those above him. There is much pressure on John to conform to *That's Just the Way It Is!*, and to lead others into conformity. Like the plumber and doctor in the congregation, he needs that paycheck to feed his wife and kids. And like the plumber and doctor he has no desire to change his occupation.

John has his eye on a larger congregation. The bigger the church, the better the pay and benefits. He wants to be a good provider for his growing family, and there's retirement to think about. But the competition is heavy; he must prove himself responsible to those higher in rank or his chances of advancement will decrease.

'Pastor' John is a connecting door between two spiritual spheres, one being the denomination that endorsed him, the other the assembly he serves. Whereas the 'laity' lives in one world, John lives in two. From the one he is sent, to the other he has arrived. The one has trained him, the other is his ministry. The one has his loyalty, the other his energy. He listens to one, he speaks to the other. His peers and friends live in one sphere, his followers in the other. The perspective he receives from one he passes on to the other.

John's 'ministerial' realm is exclusive to fellow 'ministers' and the people John serves. Most in the

'laity' do not know how the denomination operates – its bylaws and governing process. People will never meet those who make decisions that, through 'Pastor' John, affect their lives. There is a wide gap between the two spiritual worlds, bridged only by 'Pastor' John.

'Pastor' John is five feet, eight inches tall (about average). If, spiritually speaking, he were five eight, he would be much taller, about six foot six, in the sight of the congregation. And growing.

Every time he ministers behind the pulpit, he increases in their estimation. He becomes wiser, more discerning, more anointed, more favoured. Bigger, increasingly bigger. Such is the power of the pulpit. To the wife he is bigger than husband; to the children dad and mom are comparatively spiritual midgets.

On Sunday morning 'Pastor' John steps to the pulpit. This is his hour. He is meticulously attired in his suit-and-tie uniform, hair recently trimmed, shoes polished. He has been trained for this hour, he has had much practice, he has prayed, he is ready to go.

John breaks his sermon into three easy-to-remember points. He raises and lowers his voice and inserts a few jokes to keep monotony from setting in. He is an impressive, authoritative figure. He is practised, poised, professional. Preaching over, he has grown in stature in the sight of his listeners.

And the people have imperceptibly shrunk in their own valuation. As John becomes bigger, they become smaller – less wise, less anointed, less valued. And more subservient to this man who obviously has a special position in God. John does not often preach "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He speaks of principles and keys and responsibilities and being good enough. But rarely Jesus.

John has taken various courses in psychology that will help obtain promotions within the sphere of *the way it is* which provides his livelihood. Since there is a mixture in John's heart, there is a mixture in his message. And since there is a blend in his preaching/teaching, there is a mixture in the hearts of the assembly. The Jesus he presents to Bread of Life is not New Testament Jesus, not the miracle-working Jesus, not Christ the healer. Whereas Paul's preaching was not "with persuasive words" or "excellence of speech", but "in demonstration of the Spirit and in power", John's preaching is void of power but dependent on "excellence of speech".

The preaching is different because the men are different because their relationship with Christ is different. Paul was a bondservant of Christ, John a man of divided loyalties, trying to serve both Christ and *the way it is.*

John is not less spiritual than most, perhaps even more so. He didn't create *the way it is*; he is, in part, its product. He is a victim of victims. He is in bondage to those in bondage. When he stands before Christ at the judgement seat he will have an assortment of *"gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw"*, just like the rest of us.

I know of some who sit in the office of pastor who have a passion for Christ that is far above my own. But the point is, 'Pastor' Whoever should not be idolized. Pastor-worship is sin. Though *the way it is*

has made him to appear to be something he is not, the Word teaches that he is simply a brother, spiritually taller than some, shorter than others. He is not 'Reverend'. He is not your pastor.

If this book were addressed to christian catholics, I would tell them they must refute man-worship – the priest, bishop, cardinal, pope. I would tell them there is a reverence that is good in God's sight, a reverence for each other on the basis of who we are in Christ. And I would tell them there is a reverence that is *un*-sanctified, one that lifts one brother above another, based on position established by *the way it is.*

I would tell them we are all priests unto God, and God did not appoint someone to make sacrifices on our behalf. There is one High Priest, and under Him we are all equal. There is no 'clergy'; there is no 'laity'. And you, looking in from the outside, can see clearly that such homage to man is sin. How much easier it is to see the flaws of other faiths.

Do not make the same mistake. Your bible teaches that partiality is sin. Allegiance to non-biblical traditions is disloyalty to Jesus Christ. Do not let your heart be a mixture, a blending of *the way it is* and the Word of God. Commit yourself to the bible, God's lone authoritative Word, and to the lordship of the “Spirit of truth”.

”

The evangelical ministerial is not a holy thing, though most assume somewhere in the fuzzy, mysterious background of evangelicalism there must be an approving Jesus.

Lord Jesus, “head of the church” - *His* church –, does not want us considering a work that is of the flesh to be His work. (Paul: “I do not want you to be ignorant.”)

Question: How can we be certain the evangelical way isn't God's way? Answer: Read the bible.

I have more to say about evangelical pastors in general. Why? Because I, too, “do not want you to be ignorant”. And neither does Lord Jesus. So please bear with me....

I wrote a series of short articles entitled, Dear Pastor Whoever which I post weekly on social media. I share a few of these with you...

Dear Pastor Whoever....

You and Father Whoever down the street have more in common than one might think. Both of you are intermediators between a complex religious hierarchy and your congregation. Both are titled. Both are wage earners. Both are tethered to the religion that endorsed you and placed you behind concurrent pulpits. And sadly....

Sadly, your loyalty to God's Word is wanting. Neither one of you can sign the last page of your Bible as a declaration before Lord Jesus that you will obey His Bible (as you progressively understand it). It's so easy for all to see that should Father Whoever make and keep such a solemn vow he would

soon be unemployed. Life-as-is would be no more. He may be forced to learn a trade. Or perhaps McDonalds is hiring. For sure, he would never be an employee of catholicism again.

And should you, Pastor Whoever, make and keep a solemn vow to obey the Bible, you too would soon be unemployed. You would be the fly coming under the wrath of an angry fly swatter. *Bam!* Evangelicalism can no more tolerate rebellion than can catholicism.

Oh the irony! Both church leaders, assumed by trusting congregations to be Christ's appointees, cannot give allegiance to Christ's Bible. Both 'shepherds' are forced to lead their people away from the lordship of Christ and into stagnant tradition. Oh the irony!

Please reconsider the walk you walk, and the talk you talk.

Respectfully, Larry Jones

And one more, my brother-in-Christ....

Dear Pastor Whoever....

Ask yourself a very important question: Am I appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ as shepherd of His sheep, or have I been appointed by men? This question, it seems to me, should be answered before the up-coming "judgement seat of Christ". And certainly the congregation has a right to know. So let us reason together....

As you know, many of your colleagues teach their congregations that Lord Jesus no longer heals. Signs and wonders, healing miracles, all supernatural manifestations, ceased, it is said, with the passing of the first apostles. This teaching is called cessationism. Simply said, cessationism is a doctrine that declares the discontinuance of the supernatural. I suppose millions have suffered and died unnecessarily because of this false teaching.... but that's not the point.

Jesus taught, "By their fruits you will know them." Can we not con- clude that a Christ-appointee would not teach heresy? And if one did teach heresy, is that not a sure sign that he is not appointed by Christ to shepherd His sheep? Assuming cessationism is a false teaching, and assuming half of your colleagues propagate this false teaching (I think the percentage is actually higher), would you agree that at least half of all the Pastor Whoevers *could not be* Christ-appointed? Regardless of your personal position on this doctrine, you must agree that at least half of your colleagues are teaching heresy.

"But, but, but", you may conclude, "while 50% of us are wrong, 50% are factual." True, but the half that are correct are themselves divided over other serious matters that have divided evangelicalism into numer- ous sects. To me, this suggests that most must be man-appointed, not Christ-appointed. Since you can so clearly see this is the case in other religions, why not yours?

Evangelicals assume you have been placed by God. That is what has been heavily inferred. And so they have accepted your leadership over that of the true Sent-one, the Holy Spirit. Sad. Very sad.

So, my brother, in your opinion, how have the multitudes of Pastor Whoevers within your religion (evangelicalism) been doing? This obvious question, though an obvious question, is rarely asked.

Let's go to a pastor of a past time for his assessment of evangelicalism, A.W. Tozer:

“Let me state the cause of my burden. It is this: Jesus Christ has today almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by His name. By these I mean not the Roman Catholics nor the liberals, nor the various quasi-Christian cults. I do mean Protestant churches generally, and I include those that protest the loudest that they are in spiritual descent from our Lord and His apostles, namely, the evangelicals.

It is a basic doctrine of the New Testament that after His resurrection the Man Jesus was declared by God to be both Lord and Christ, and that He was invested by the Father with absolute lordship over the church which is His Body. All authority is His in heaven and in earth. In His own proper time He will exert it to the full, but during this period in history He allows His authority to be challenged or ignored. And just now it is being challenged by the world and ignored by the church.

The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited, constitutional monarchy. The king.... is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty, much like a flag or a national anthem. He is lauded, feted and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions.

.... Among the gospel churches Christ is now in fact little more than a beloved symbol. “All hail the power of Jesus' Name” is the church's national anthem and the cross is her official flag, but in the week-by-week services of the church and the day-by-day conduct of her members someone else, not Christ, makes the decisions.

.... Those in actual authority decide the moral standards of the church, as well as all objectives and all methods employed to achieve them. Because of long and meticulous organization it is now possible for the youngest pastor just out of seminary to have more actual authority in a church than Jesus Christ has.

Not only does Christ have little or no authority: His influence is also becoming less and less. I would not say that He has none, only that it is small and diminishing.

.... The idea that the Man Christ Jesus has absolute and final authority over the whole church and over all of its members in every detail of their lives is simply not now accepted as true by the rank and file of evangelical Christians.

My brother, I could go on and on quoting this brave brother who traversed the world telling evangelicals (etcetera) that which they didn't want to hear.

My strong conviction is this: The cure for all evangelical woes, some expressed in the above

quotations, is that which I have already stated: 1) abide in Christ and 2) submit to the governance of the Holy Spirit and 3) solemnly sign the last page of the bible. The problem is....

Power is a hard thing to let go. Just ask Pharaoh. Every congregation is lead by a little Moses with lotsa power. He has what many secretly want.... an audience. Unlike most in the congregation he is heard, never ignored. He can sway, reprove, even dominate. His identity is his position of captain of his spiritual ship.

This little Moses is not Christ-centred. (There I go, 'generally speaking' again.) He is certainly not Christ-appointed. His ministry is a mixture, bible and "tradition of men". His true lords are those who positioned him, and them he faithfully serves. Under no circumstance would he set his people free to 1) abide in Christ independent of him and 2) be governed individually by the Holy Spirit (who he himself has long ago discounted to chase after *the way it is),* and 3) allow his people to determine for themselves the truths and priorities of the bible.

NOTE: All quotes from A.W. Tozer printed by permission.

NOTE: *The Way It is* and *Dear Pastor Whoever* articles can be located at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter thirteen

Let me tell you about my second assignment....

I was maybe seven or eight years old in the Lord, I purchased a full page in both of our newspapers, the Kelowna Courier and the Capital News, for the purpose of publishing my testimony. I never heard of anyone doing something like this and I was more than a bit anxious about the reaction of christians.

Even back then I was committed to the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit while most were devoted to their local churches. I remember one pastor saying that we should be as committed to the local church as the nose is committed to one's face; you just don't leave.

Wisdom told me to just do what the Spirit was directing without consulting anyone; expressions of doubt and anxiety could deflate what little courage I had. So I saved the money, wrote my testimony and fearfully presented it to the newspapers. "You want to what!?" they silently said.

I did confide in a friend, and the two of us fervently prayed the night before distribution. Nobody was aware that tomorrow the gospel of Jesus Christ, packaged in my testimony, was suddenly going to crash into thousands of homes.

Ain't Much, Junior Burger, Micro-me preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to Kelowna! I did more in one night than all the churches combined in a year or more! Bill, that's what I meant when I said that one person surrendered to the Holy Spirit is more effective for God's kingdom than many surrendered to religion and religionists.

Did the churches imitate me by using this powerful media to reach Kelowna for Christ? (Hint: Is the pope a protestant?)

One voluminous church invested many thousands to present the gospel message during Easter season every year, publicly inviting Kelowna people to its semi-professional passion play. There were two brothers, both in tuxedos, responsible for the entire production, one I met years later at a job site. In conversation he revealed most of the actors in those plays were paid! I couldn't believe it! Christians paid for presenting to their city "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"!?

That gobs of money could have been used to publish the gospel every week for years, in one form or another, in the same papers I used to publish my testimony. Most attending the Easter extravaganza were christians, only a relative few were unsaved. But money invested in a newspaper outreach would reach, primarily, the lost. How little it would cost each evangelical church, *in any city,* if they together purchased a page in their newspaper. (Anyone ever hear of the Great Commission?)

I remember Tozer writing, "Evangelicalism is a poor investment." Amen and amen!

Well the sky didn't fall on my head. The pastor of the church I frequented posted it on the bulletin board. I got reports of christians, young and old, being encouraged. And who knows the result of all those gospel-seeds planted in the hearts of the unsaved? ("It shall not return to Me void.")

Every believer "born of the Spirit" has a powerful, soul-winning weapon in their possession.... his/her testimony. Their story is both unique and interesting, especially to those desperate for Christ's salvation. Why not do what I did? Why not do what they will wish they would have done when they step up to the "judgement seat of Christ"? Almost every christian *worldwide* has an opportunity to package the gospel of Jesus Christ in their testimony, and present it to their city. But will they?

Thousands throughout the world will, in time, be reading these words in "An Open Letter to Bill Johnson of Bethel Church", but very few, if any, will have their testimony published in their local papers. Why, oh why, oh why? I think I know....

They are scared. No, not so much a fear of the non-christians who would read their testimony (though there is that reality), but their own christian bunch with whom they bunch! Yes, christians! Yes, Pastor Whoever who taught them to be a team player! Yes, the mighty *the way it is* that just might be threatened by such a display of independence.

Pastor Whoever has restructured the young convert who happened into his church from a Jesus-and-me to a Jesus-and-us, from a One-to-one to a team player.

This new convert soon learns to 'keep his place'. In time he will be stamped with an unspoken, but very real, status of *lightweight.* He is taught, non-verbally, that it is not his 'place' to preach. Leave that to the heavyweights.

Yes, most Jesus-and-us christians are *afraid* to preach.

They are not only afraid of Pastor Whoever, they are afraid of each other. They have been conditioned to 'keep their place'. Much of what we learn we learn non-verbally. Pew-people have been taught, non-verbally, it is not their 'place' to preach. Preaching is reserved for pulpit-people. That message has been consistently relayed *in code* from pulpit to pew.

No, I have never heard it said that pew-people are not called by Jesus Christ to preach, but I have also never heard it *un*-said. Bonhoeffer: “Not to speak is to speak.”

Pastor Whoever could release the congregation from this unreasonable and un-Scriptural mentality. But he won't. He won't because he doesn't want to. He doesn't want to because sharing his special status as the lone preacher makes that status less special.

In every society people learn to find their 'station'. Harmony depends on it. Unspoken rules are unspoken because they are ludicrous. Nonetheless all must learn what is allowed and what is forbidden. The approval and acceptance we all secretly crave depends on it.

Bill, this bondage is as real as the prisoner's shackles. The proof is in the fact that christians don't preach (generally speaking). When they surrendered themselves to the bunch they weakened themselves exceedingly. Their strength - which was in 1) their relationship with Jesus and 2) their dependence on the Holy Spirit alone – has shrunk severely.

We are all called to preach “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” both privately – to friends and family, etc. - and publicly – to groups of people, small and large. We need not wait for Pastor Whoever's invitation to borrow his pulpit (that will never happen); be assured, Jesus will open a door of opportunity to those who are devoted to Him and prepared. (Jesus: “Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”)

Try to find one person of significance in the New Testament that did not preach. The baptist preached. The twelve preached, the seventy preached, Mark and Luke and Stephen and Phillip preached. Barnabas and Silas preached. Timothy and Titus preached. The healed blind-from-birth preached. Etcetera, etcetera.

They preached and we should preach, privately and publicly. How can we claim the bible is our standard and not preach?

Jesus-and-us christians can set themselves free from shackles that bind by simply declaring themselves, from this moment onward, under the direct rule of the Holy Spirit. And they must fiercely (repeat, *fiercely*!) defend that freedom. They lost it once; they could lose it again. There's lotsa zealous controllers out there. Jesus: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.”

Chapter fourteen

My third assignment (which I share chronologically) was my second book, “Financing the Great Commission” as mentioned in chapter seven.

Before going further, I don't want you to get the impression I was a loudmouth. I wasn't. I was not a troublemaker. I was the quiet introvert content to be unnoticed in a small group. My 'sin' was twofold: I was determined to 1) abide in Christ and 2) obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. This is my story....

A small group of us put together about 5,000 copies of this book, a booklet really, at an elderly couple's covered sundeck. One person aggregated the pages, complete with cover, another stapled, another trimmed, another boxed, etcetera. I was quite impressed at how fast we did this menial job.

Kelowna Christian Center, the church we attended at that time, was unusually pushy with tithing, what I now call the 'awful evangelical tithe'. Financing the Great Commission challenged the evangelical tithe as illegitimate and somehow the book found its way into that church. Oh-oh!

Soon the assistant pastor confronted the elderly couple in their home, warning them to have nothing to do with the book they helped finance and produce. It shook them up. Fortunately their son had read Financing the Great Commission by this time, was thoroughly impressed, and encouraged his parents to hang in there.

Soon after I happened to bump into that assistant pastor exiting a grocery store. He was livid and I was silent. Without any provocation he defended his calling 'into the ministry' many years ago. Had I ever said otherwise? I meekly suggested we meet for a coffee sometime, “a *friendly* coffee”, but that never happened.

I was particularly naive. I assumed those in leadership, though certainly flawed, were honest and reasonable and mature men, Christ was their Lord and Example, the bible their code. When one 'misbehaved' I considered him to be unusual or just having a bad day.

I am no longer naive. Pastor Whoevers are not followers of Jesus Christ, but followers of each other. *The way it is*, not the bible, is their code and standard. Long ago they have given themselves over to another way. Long ago they stopped preaching “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” and took up the banner of evangelicalism. They are not humble and honourable men laying prostrate before “the Lord of lords and King of kings” but rather defenders of various wayward religions that challenge - quite successfully, it must be said - the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Why was that assistant Pastor Whoever so outraged? If there was an objection to something I wrote why didn't he ask to discuss the matter? Isn't that normal, mature behaviour? I helped pay his salary; didn't he owe me common courtesy? That salaried brother was not only angered because of *what* I wrote, but *that* I wrote. Had I not learned 'my place'?

Many of my questions are answered in Johnson's and VanVonderen's “The Subtle Power of Spiritual

Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church".

They write of the "can't talk" rule. The *what?* The can't talk rule is one of many decrees that is relayed to the congregation in code. *In code?* Well, pastors can't say directly, "No one is allowed to say something I disagree with" because that's so preposterous. So they get the message across obscurely, in hints, innuendos, body language or by what is *not* said. The congregation must learn to decipher coded messages or risk offending Pastor Whoever.... which can thoroughly upset everything.

I trespassed against the 'can't write' rule I never knew existed, a much more severe transgression than merely vocalizing a contrary opinion. And yes, I most certainly offended Pastor Whoever. And yes, church life was thoroughly upset.

Financing the Great Commission exposes the awful evangelical tithe as contrary to the words and heart of Lord Jesus. I call it the evangelical tithe because it is evangelicals who created it and propagate it. (Incidentally, in all my years as a hostage of catholicism I never heard the word *tithe* mentioned.)

These are my grievances against the evangelical tithe....

.... There is no precedent – not the slightest hint - in the New Testament regarding a new covenant person being required or encouraged to tithe.

.... There is no precedent in the Old Testament for the tithing of one's income.

.... There is no reason to think that Jesus the carpenter tithed. His tithe would not be acceptable as only the tithe of the land was accepted.

.... Likewise the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John, as well as Matthew the tax collector, did not/could not tithe.

.... The Mosaic tithe was applied to the Israelites only.

.... The awful evangelical tithe promotes the Jesus-and-us narrative which in turn depreciates the Christ-christian relationship.

.... The awful evangelical tithe is contrary to the life in the Spirit, which includes conferring with the Holy Spirit as to how much to give and where to direct one's giving.

.... The awful evangelical tithe is used to build unsanctioned buildings.

.... The awful evangelical tithe is used to subsidize unsanctioned salaries.

.... The awful evangelical tithe is used to undergird evangelicalism.

.... The awful evangelical tithe is contrary to "Cursed is the man who trusts in man" because one

entrusts others to invest his/her money wisely.

.... The awful evangelical tithe robs from Christ's Great Commission; this theft is why, at this very moment, millions of people are in severe unending anguish.

My brother, doesn't it make you suspicious that?....

.... there is robust contention between evangelical churches on many (most?) issues but agreement on the issue of the tithing of income.

.... the lucrative tithe is the *only* Old Testament mandate evangelicals have dragged over into the new covenant era.

.... it is self-serving for the salaried to promote tithing.

.... there is no commonality between the Mosaic tithe God imposed upon the Israelites and the evangelical tithe the salaried impose upon their congregations.

Pastors have a responsibility to teach their congregations the two sides of the tithe issue. They must know there is a strong argument against christians surrendering ten percent of their income to christians. They must know that the awful evangelical tithe is not bible but bible-plus.

Chapter fifteen

It was a cold night but my pace in the fresh, deep snow was slow, very slow. I was thoroughly unhappy. I was cold, but I didn't care. All I had wanted the past few years was to serve the Lord full time instead of filling my days with working at my trade. So I stepped out in (what I thought was) faith.

I have said that one of the conditions for successful christianity is to be lead by the Spirit. I was, at that time in my christianity, not lead by the Holy Spirit but by god reason and god intellect and also by religious ambitions. My stupidity costs me immensely and put real hardship on my family. And now I was dejected and disillusioned.

I was headed to Richard's house. Richard was an elder brother and my best friend. Richard would have an encouraging word. The walk to his place was maybe 25 minutes. When I got there I could see he had out-of-town company. So I turned around and headed home.

Then the Lord spoke to me. It had been a long time. He quoted from Matthew 10:8: “Freely you have received, freely give.” Pardon me! Freely give what? I had nothing to give so how could I give freely? I was deep into self-pity needing comforting and encouragement, but the Lord 'changed the subject'.

Nonetheless I heeded those words. I vowed I would never charge for my written material or christian service. Not that I had much of either to give. Perhaps one day I would.

To date I have never sold. I have given freely and will so continue.

Years later I heard a preacher say that “freely” in Matthew 10:8 doesn't mean without charge, it means liberally. Have you heard that one, my brother? I didn't pay much attention, assuming he was simply justifying his salary and book sales. But then, lately, I heard it the second time.... “freely” doesn't mean without without charge; it means liberally or bountifully.

Had I been wrong all these years? So I checked every translation I could find. They all said 'without charge' (or its equivalent). I checked Strong's concordance. The word freely is *dorean*, #c1432, meaning, “as a gift.... gratis.... without a cause.... for nought.... freely”.

Seems like all those dozens of translators knew what they were doing. “Freely” means without charge. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge (*dorean*).”

'Bible-believing' evangelicals sell books and services and teachings and music and concerts and seminars and.... everything. It's like Jesus never said, “Freely you have received, freely give.”

This marketing of spiritual goods isn't done slyly, “in a corner”, but openly for all to see. Books and concerts and films and many etceteras are marketed, the merchandizers having much in common with those Jesus chased out of the temple. (“You have made it a den of thieves.”) Millions of pastors worldwide sell their services; if they weren't salaried they wouldn't be there.

Can you see that if freely really means freely, corruption and disobedience is thoroughly entwined throughout evangelicalism?

Jesus: “A tree is known by its fruit.” Religion is known by its fruit. Evangelicalism is known by its fruit.

If you think it's easy to give one's material freely you're wrong. Though “Free ain't cheap!!” it's considered to be cheap. The world has taught us north americans the higher the price tag the more valuable the product. And yet....

Jesus gave freely (“I lay down My life”). The Father “so loved the world that *He gave* His only begotten Son”. Paul: “I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.” The gospel writers didn't sell their material. Can we assume Luke never charged Theophilus for his lengthy account? Do you think John got a kickback from the messengers of the seven churches? Did the seventy take a collection after healing the sick?

I mentioned god reason and god intellect and religious ambitions. I have no doubt that somewhere most churches (if not every church) were built by these three culprits. I call reason 'god' reason and intellect 'god' intellect because they trump both the bible and the “Spirit of truth” in the affairs of religionists.

So why am I saying all this?

I dunno. Perhaps Jesus wants you to see another perspective. Though you have the numbers

endorsing your perspective, it is so obvious to me that your perspective does not have the endorsement of Jesus Christ. The bible should be our standard, not beloved “tradition of men”, entrenched though they be. What does your bible say – does anything else matter - about selling spiritual wares? About salaries? About the awful evangelical tithe? About all the evangelical etceteras?

Perhaps “the vinedresser” is pruning the branch “that it may bear more fruit”.

Perhaps the One we both call “Lord, Lord” wants you to release your Bethel from a Jesus-and-us mentality to return to a Jesus-and-me intimacy.

Perhaps Jesus wants to raise another “voice of one crying in the wilderness” urging His people to renounce religion and return to “first love”.

Perhaps Lord Jesus is calling His own back to where they once were (Andrew Murray: “You wandered from him.”) through this open letter.

And perhaps the purpose of this message from Jesus to you is simply none of my business.

Chapter sixteen

My next assignment, chronologically, was my biggest. I created a newspaper-like publication, “The Main Issue”, which I had distributed door-to-door throughout my city of Kelowna. Jesus Christ is the main issue, and I used issues familiar to most unsaved residents to point them to Christ.

My brother, please keep in mind that I share my humble exploits for one reason, to show you that a Spirit-lead, Jesus-and-me christian will benefit both the world and Christ's church more than dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Jesus-and-us christians combined. Okay?

It all started as a thought, a preposterous notion, that I could reach Kelowna with the gospel of Jesus Christ through a publication. Over the months and years thoughts piled up on each other until I had quite an accumulation. Could this possibly be the leading of the Holy Spirit? No way, couldn't be.... could it?

To the Lord Jesus I said, “Lord, I think there is a 10% chance that this is You and a 90% chance this is me.” After a few months passed, thoughts continuing to roll around in my upstairs, I said, “Lord Jesus, I think there is a 20% chance this is You and not me”. Over several months and much prayer 20 grew to 30, then 50, up, up, up.

I told the Lord I would never begin this assignment without a clear word from Him. Months after that commitment I was tired of waiting, picked up pencil and paper and began to write.... about two sentences. I repented, and went back to waiting upon the Lord. And then it happened....

I like breaking up my workday (I was a one-man electrical contractor) by having lunch at a restaurant. An acquaintance came in accompanied by his friend and they sat at another table. Soon

this friend, I think his name was Levi, came to my table, asking to talk. I immediately discerned him to be a sound and sure elder-in-Christ. He was from England. He said the Lord Jesus sent him to Canada but had no idea why. This was the beginning of a friendship.

A few weeks later he asked to pray for me and passed unto me what he said was a word from the Lord: It was time to begin my assignment.... the Lord would be with me.... there would be much fruit.... things like that.

He had previously narrated another occasion whereby the Lord told him to drop everything, leave His England and travel across Europe. He had no clue as to why. Eventually he encountered a young, very discouraged evangelist by the name of Reinhard Bonnke. He prayed over this brother and prophesied. That was, it seemed to him, the prime reason he was sent to travel throughout Europe.

Before leaving Kelowna Levi phoned me to say goodbye, saying he did not previously know why he was sent to Canada, but now he knew at least one, if not the only reason. Did our Lord Jesus Christ send this dedicated elder brother to Canada for the purpose of delivering a message to me? It really seems that is so.

While driving away I prayed something like this, “Lord Jesus, I believe I heard from You, and I hereby begin the assignment You gave me.”

The Holy Spirit revealed some details regarding this project. The paper was to be called *The Main Issue*, there would be exactly ten issues with a space of three months between, I was to cover all of Kelowna and areas beyond. He also gave me the subjects of the first five or so papers, the first being “Evolution vs Creation”.

Please understand that my only qualification for such a huge undertaking was that I was a Jesus-and-me christian.

And please understand that I have as many faults as most. At times I can be a real jerk. I am slow to learn. I lack gratitude. I have a temper. I have bouts of discouragement. Forgiveness doesn't come easy. Though I know Jesus hates hypocrisy, I even fail at that occasionally.

I knew with a certainty this project would only succeed by direct intervention of the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit. I had no money, I had no publishing experience, I had little spare time. But I was a branch connected to “the true vine”. All accomplishments, if any, would come via relationship with Lord Jesus. I had long ago made it a practice to spend the first hour of the day with Lord Jesus.

This is my story....

My teen-age, computer-savvy son told me I definitely needed a computer. Where would the money come from? I got a call to rewire a large old house that a broken-down lawyer purchased and wanted transformed into nine rental units. It was a lot of work. There were disputes between

contractors and lawyer, and I think I was the only tradesman that got fully paid. Ta-da, I had my computer. My son demonstrated the wonders of my pc. Having only used a typewriter, I was thoroughly impressed. With this marvel I could correct a mistake without having to retype the entire page, I could move entire sentences and paragraphs at will, I could italicize and change font size with a click or two. Absolutely amazing!

My wife not only surrendered her sewing room but bought me a large L-shaped desk. A friend who ran a printing business gave me access to a huge assortment of photos, cartoons, illustrations.

I soon realized I could not work my five-day work week and accomplish *The Main Issue;* the amount of research and writing and design was incredible. So I asked our Father if I could drop to a four-day week. Still insufficient, I asked permission to work three days.

How could I possibly work two days less and cover this heavy expense? I couldn't. The cost of each issue was, (by today's comparative) about $12,000 every three months, half for printing, half for distribution. I considered selling space, just like every other publication, but that could demean 'the main issue', the gospel of Christ. Perhaps I could market a product, using the paper to advertise. No, that just didn't seem right.

How did the cost of printing and distribution of all ten issues get covered? God did it; I certainly didn't. My wife worked part-time at Kelowna General Hospital and I was now limited to part-time at my trade. We had rent to pay and teens to feed. The only bible comparative I have is the feeding of multitudes with “seven and a few little fish”. What Jesus did He did again.

After a few missteps (a few? did I say a few?) I arrived at a strategy. I carefully packaged and forwarded my complete layout to a printer in Montana (everything is cheaper in the US) and a few weeks later they delivered between 38-42,000 copies to our post office for door-to-door delivery. I drew strength from my friend Richard. I published his phone number so he could take most of the calls. (The angry calls always came first, followed by encouraging calls.)

For two or three days after each distribution there was an evil oppression hanging over our house; the enemy did not like us preaching “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” to his people.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was delivered to every house throughout Kelowna. (Apartments were difficult to reach.) Some only received a few issues, others all ten. Many thousands have read testimonies of the reality of God and the precious gift of His Son. Seeds were planted throughout Kelowna approximately every three months for about four years.

Today and every day someone somewhere is reading *The Main Issue*, not in hard copy but via the internet. Soon someone will be reading it in spanish, hindi, german, russian and every other major language.

What was accomplished by a few Jesus-and-me christians can again be accomplished through a few Jesus-and-me christians in every city of the world. I proved that.

NOTE: The Main Issue is available at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter seventeen

The first paper was “Evolution vs Creation”, a 12-page newspaper-like publication, about 38,000 copies. I always used a subject that was of interest to most to emphasize their need for Christ's wondrous salvation. I confess I can be a bit.... what's the word?.... abrasive?

“

Dear Mr. And Mrs. Evolutionist,

So you believe our ancestors walked on all fours, swung from tree to tree, and ate bananas for breakfast, lunch and supper. And you insist that you and I are products of a lengthy series of chance happenings and 'natural selection', and our existence has nothing to do with a superior being that many call 'God'.

Well, Mr. And Mrs. Evolutionist, as an adopted, born-again, blood-washed, Spirit-filled child of the living God, I want to tell you I object to your insistence my multi-great grandpa was an ape. Your spurious account of existence pushes our nation away from a reliance upon God....

.... And here is something else to chew on. Nothing out there in our universe is as complex and wondrous as you are. Think about it. Do you know of any stars or planets that can see and talk and hear as you can? Or jump or walk or do sit-ups? Can't you understand that you yourselves are living proof of the reality of God?

Why is it that when you first laid eyes on a computer you knew immediately that someone made it, but when you look at yourself in a mirror you do not come to the same conclusion? Could a computer just happen? Yet you are much more complex than it is. Can a computer taste or breathe or whistle? Or bend or yell or snore? Or hope? Or dream?

Can a computer believe? Or love or hate? Or forgive? Or enjoy? Or relax and appreciate and laugh? Or regret, console, reminisce?

Really, Mr. And Mrs. E., how could something so intricate as yourselves just happen to be? Look again at that wonderful machine that is you. You can think and imagine and observe and converse. You can remember, cooperate, recognize. You can choose and estimate, question and suggest, scold and pretend.

And more! You can hunt and argue and visit and play. You can plan and gamble and write and study. And purchase and inspect and memorize and spell. You can sing a song, have a baby, come to a conclusion, tell a joke, eat corn flakes, play charades, drive a car, read a book, catch a ball, fry an egg, flip a coin.

”

I also included testimonies, several quotations from authors, “Teen Probe” - directed to teenagers - and several articles challenging the theory of evolution.

Of this I am confident, anyone infected with evolution and/or atheism would be less so after reading “Evolution vs Creation”.

Chapter eighteen

Second issue, “Jehovah's Witnesses: Christian or Cult?” More people asked for extra copies of this 16 page paper than all others. So many have parents or children or siblings ensnared by that religion.

In this publication I exposed the checkered history of the Watchtower Society from its inception, spoke of its many false prophecies, included testimonies of those that escaped its iron grip, compared its doctrines with New Testament teachings. I am convinced anyone reading this issue would be protected from this cult.... at least for a while.

I wrote an article, “Husbands Beware”....

“

It could never happen to me!, you say. *My wife is too smart to fall for anything the Jehovah's Witnesses have to offer. There's no way she would ever get caught up in their religion. And so what if she did? What harm could a little religion do?*

Husbands beware!

Of course every member of the family is susceptible – husbands, children, grandparents, etc. But it seems that the wife, the one left alone in the home most often, is more so. Many husbands have lost their wives, and subsequently their children, to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Brooklyn, New York. You think it can't happen to you? Think again. It has happened to husbands all over the world. How they wish they would have put a stop to it while they still could.

You leave the house for work. A few hours later, *Ding Dong*. Oh your wife has a visitor. I wonder who it could be. *“Good morning Mrs. Jackson* (nice teethy smile)*. It's just me again making my rounds. Ha ha. Isn't it amazing what's been happening in Eastern Europe since the last time I was here? Your neighbour, Mrs. Gray, was telling me she hopes all this will lead to world peace. Do you think we will ever see a time when we can all live in harmony with one another? In this magazine that I have here, it tells of a real hope for peace whereby God's faithful followers will all be able to live together in peace. Don't you long for such a world, Mrs. Jackson?”*

Yes, I know. Your wife told the JW that she really wasn't interested. But did you notice she didn't sound as emphatic as she once was. Now just suppose you went to a meeting every week just for

the purpose of learning how to 'get through' to people just like your wife. You would get pretty good at it, wouldn't you? Well some of the people that knock on your door have been in training for many years. They know how to drop a provoking word, when to back off, when to press a point, spot a weakness, ask the right question.

And keep in mind they have been coming to your wife for years. They have become familiar. They are not the threat they once were. Their persistence pays off. Your wife, over the years, listens more attentively although she pretends not to. She really does long for peace – in the world, in her country, in her soul. *Perhaps,* she reasons, *these JWs really have the answer.... maybe it wouldn't hurt to listen to what they have to say.... perhaps some day I will take them up on their offer of a Bible study in my home.... what harm could it do?*

”

A jw phoned asking for extra copies of “Jehovah's Witnesses: Christian or Cult”, saying he was leaving Kelowna in the morning and could he please pick up the papers at my house tonight; he wanted to give copies to the elders back home. No, I replied, nobody comes to my house; I didn't want any tension disturbing our family haven. But after he assured me he wouldn't be contentious, just wanted to pick up the papers, I relented.

He was in our house, standing near the door, extra copies of *The Main Issue* now in his possession when he said, “What kind of an animal are you?” Ouch! That gentleman, maybe 5-10 years my senior, is quite possibly at this very moment suffering indescribable torment in a place he was assured doesn't exist.

You must understand that there was a time when he was *not* a jw. He wasn't and then he was. Apparently they got to him before introduced to the gospel of Christ. People must know *before* that knock on the door the awful truth of that cult. Once ensnared, the chance of escape is less than that of a catholic escaping catholicism, a mormon escaping mormonism, and yes, an evangelical escaping evangelicalism.

Their power is in their perseverance. They just don't stop knocking. And hot or cold, they are standing on the corner, *Awake!* magazine in hand. Christians know that almost every day of the week Jehovah witnesses are preaching their fraudulent gospel to their city. And what do the Kelowna churches do about it? Nothing.

Nothing, nothing, nothing!!

Bill, can I assume your Redding, California churches also do nothing, nothing, nothing?

Kelowna (and Redding?) and perhaps most other cities throughout the world have no defence whatever against this salvation-by-works gospel that denies the deity of our Lord Jesus and the very existence of the Holy Spirit. Why is that?

It is ongoing spiritual coercion that motivates the jw; it is intimacy that empowers the christian. Eroding that intimacy not only diminishes the christian's power but also compassion and every good thing. This is what I am saying: That erosion transpires, unintentionally and undetected, during every sunday morning service. To me, that's a viable explanation as to why Jesus-and-us christians don't see, don't know, don't care.

Chapter nineteen

As I said, I chose issues familiar to most to point to life's major issue, “What will you do with Christ?”

Everyone, even those rejecting Christ, know of the bible. They see people carry their bible to church, heard granny quote from it, saw the televangelist wave it in the air. Who hasn't heard Billy Graham declare, “The bible says!”

“So what's so unusual about this book?” is a question rolling around in the unsaved's head and heart at one time or another, perhaps more often than they would admit.

Issue # 3 responds to this question with a question: “The Bible: Just Another Book?”

I offered the reader a ton of evidence that validates both the Old Testament and the New. I don't know how many read this issue of *The Main Issue*. I only know that some did, and those who did gained a deeper respect for God's bible.

While it's hard to imagine everybody reading the publication beginning to end, it's also difficult imagining someone picking it up at their front door and immediately chucking it. It's easy believing that most having the paper in their hands would open it up, if only out of curiosity. Seeds were planted in thousands of Kelowna hearts. Perhaps when I get to heaven it will be revealed how many.

Every christian should realize that what I did in Kelowna B.C. Canada can be done in any province in Canada, any state in the US, every city throughout the world. It would be a very worthwhile investment into the kingdom of our God.

Chapter twenty

Everyone, saved and unsaved, has heard of, thought about and fretted over heaven and hell. Thus issue # four: *Heaven and Hell: The Big Controversy.*

There seems to be a law of opposites: Heaven is as blissful as hell is hideous. Or: Hell is as hideous as heaven is blissful.

By presenting both the reality of heaven and the reality of hell, I think I brought the readers to a place whereby they could make an educated decision as to their eternal dwelling.

An aged brother from somewhere in the prairies, having read *The Main Issue*, sent me a box of his tracts that told of his visitation to both hells, Hades and Gehenna. The tract was extremely vivid and

extremely scary. I mean *really, really* scary....

> Hell is an area in the spiritual world of outer darkness. The dark is so intense it seems to have a pressure per square inch. It is an extremely black, dismal, desolate, heavy, pressurized type of darkness. It gives the individual a crushing, despondent feeling of loneliness. The heat is a dry, dehydrating type of heat. Your eyeballs are so dry they feel like red hot coals in their sockets. Your tongue and lips are parched and cracked with the intense heat. The breath from your nostrils as well as the air you breathe feels like a blast from a hot furnace. The exterior of your body feels as if it were encased within a white hot stove. The interior of your body has a sensation of scorching hot air being forced through it. The agony and loneliness of hell cannot be expressed clearly for proper understanding to the human soul, it has to be experienced, but unfortunately the soul in hell has reached the point of no return. The sad, horrible fact is that the worst is yet to come, for there is a one way road from hell to the Lake of Fire .
>
> The agony that is experienced in the Lake of Fire is far more horrible than that which is experienced in Hell. God says that at some future time, Hell and all those therein shall be cast into the Lake of Fire. The angelic being once again said to me, "Come", and we entered this other area of outer darkness called the Lake of Fire. This will be the final resting place for the Devil and his Angels and all those who reject God. The souls who think they have suffered in Hell will have a change of mind when in the Lake of Fire.
>
> Being in the Lake of Fire is like being submerged into a lake of molten lava. It is a lake of liquid fire just as the term indicates. The liquid fire fills your eye sockets ....

Okay, okay, I'll stop there. I know how uncomfortable this is.

So I was faced with a dilemma.... should I print this in "Heaven and Hell: The Big Controversy" or should I *not* print it? Was the tract exaggerating the awfulness of hell or was it factual. How could I know?

So I decided to publish it in full; better to warn the unsaved of the place they were headed than not to. And I'm not ashamed to say I was quite scared. We had received complaints and even a few threats because of the first three issues, but they were tame compared to this one. I fully expected an uproar.

About ten the morning of delivery I phoned Richard from the electrical wholesaler. Poor Richard, I thought, left alone to take all the nasty calls. But there were no calls! None! Noon, same thing, no calls. All day long, no calls, not one. I thought somehow the papers hadn't been delivered. (But they were.)

My only explanation is that the public was so shocked by that tract and the entire subject of hell that they had little strength for objection.

Bill, I think this is a good time to pause and say this is why I call the awful evangelical tithe the awful evangelical tithe. This christianized embezzlement is the chief cause why so many will perish in that place we get queazy thinking about. *Trust us,* the pastor says to the congregation. *We know how to spend your giving much better than you do. Remember, we can do more together.*

And can you see why I hate the salary? That salary costs more than money; it costs millions, perhaps billions of perishing people. This aged brother's tract as a backdrop, how pathetic is the defence of a salary that has no bible precedence. How weak the argument, "The labourer is worthy of his wages".

My brother, I take you back to chapter two: "Perhaps the sadness I felt was the sadness Jesus feels for His people being coerced to fund salaries He never sanctioned." I am certain the sorrow I felt was not a Larry Jones sorrow; that's not me. Perhaps it was the distress of Lord Jesus Himself as He beholds multitudes falling into everlasting remorse *and* many thousands of salaried 'shepherds' placing their own needs, even their comfort and convenience, above their horrific plight.

The salaried may be wise to ask themselves, this side of "the judgement seat of Christ", who gave them permission to receive a salary. They must know it wasn't the bible that gives them that permission.... and not the Lord Jesus. *Hmmm, who could it be?*

Bill, your salary is not extravagant compared to most offered by mega churches. But can you see that you, by example, are sanctioning *the principle* of salaries?

Chapter twenty-one

In this chapter I will wrap up *The Main Issue*. But first....

I want to make the point that the bible has (what I call) a certain tone. By tone I mean a blend of attitudes that makes a 'sound'. The bible sounds like the bible.

One pastor might make a harsh sound, though his preaching may be occasionally sprinkled with softness and patience. Many pastors have a tone of frustration or anger because their !#*!#* congregation 'just doesn't get it'. Another makes a sweet sound, kinda sugary.... "You're nice, I'm nice, everybody's nice. Let's just praise the Lord!"

The bible also has a tone. It is not angry but contains anger. It is not harsh but is often stern. It has the sound of love, but never sugary.

The tone of most preachers, it seems to me, is far from that of the bible. Lately, the last few decades, there is a conciliatory tone that borders on compromise. For example....

Most believe catholicism is a false religion. But most pulpit-people won't say catholicism is false because that would be considered inflammatory. Must not upset catholics. Must not sound unloving

or judgemental. However, being conciliatory is not bible (and therefore not 'God').

The Main Issue states very emphatically that catholicism is a false religion. I believe that candidness is being in tune to the heart of the "head of the church". To Jesus, truth matters most. I believe the tone of *The Main Issue*, and all my writings, are more 'in tune' with the bible than most (certainly not all) preachers/teachers.

In issue # 5, *Christ the Healer*, I confront those who say Jesus no longer heals. In # 6, *Satan: Dark, Deceptive, Defeated*, I confront the occult that has furrowed its way into society unaware, including innocent children. In # 7, *Christianity vs Religion*, I challenge masonry, mormonism, catholicism, secular humanism, christian science, etc.

What's wrong with calling a spade a spade?

In issue # 8, *Heroes of the Faith*, I used stories of outstanding people as testimonies of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I speak of Arthur Blessed (1940-) who carried the cross about 38,000 miles throughout the world. I wrote of Haralan Popov (1907- 1988) and the atrocities he suffered at the hand of communism. I wrote of Demos Shakarian (1913-1993), founder of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, whose grandfather left his Armenia homeland after being forewarned by a boy prophet of the Turkish invasion (1914) which wiped out the entire village. My favourite story was that of Samuel Morris (1872-1893) who was born of the Kru tribe in the West Coast of Africa, escaped from a rival tribe by divine intervention, somehow ended up in New York where he influenced many to serve Jesus wholeheartedly during his short lifetime.

In issue # 9, *You.... In Perspective,* I helped the reader see him/herself from a perspective they had probably never considered. I pointed out that they lived on a planet spinning about 500 miles per hour AND were travelling 590,000,000 miles every year around the sun AND at the same time travelling 12 miles *every second* within the Milky Way AND moving at a faster speed as our galaxy continues to separate from other galaxies; I made the argument they had to be the creation of someone much greater; I helped them see that the person they are is a result of influences in their life, including the media; they are living in what the bible calls "last days"; they have an enemy, unseen but real, who has blinded them from their need of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; they are at this moment on one of two roads, both leading into eternity. On the last page I wrote, "If Jesus had not invited you into His kingdom, you would not have a decision to make. But He did and you do. A non-reply is considered a refusal."

Issue # 10, *Jesus Christ: King of Kings and Lord of Lords* was the last issue of *The Main Issue*. I used all of my limited skills to exalt the name of our extremely gracious Jesus. Eternity will reveal the fruit of that issue and all ten issues.

Today, more than twenty-five years after the final edition, my desire to know and please "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is deeper than ever.

Chapter twenty-two

My brother-in- Christ, please get this: It was a Jesus-and-me christian that published and distributed *The Main Issue* (although others contributed, some of whom were Jesus-and-us christians).

Though outnumbered by Jesus-and-us christians dozens to one I did more to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Kelowna than all of the churches combined.

The apostle Paul was a Jesus-and-me christian. ("*I* can do all things through Christ who strengthens *me*." "That *I* may know Him.") "The disciple whom Jesus loved" was *alone* when Jesus instructed him to "write in a book and send it to the seven churches". Do you think blind Fanny Crosby, the lyricist who wrote 8,000 hymns, was primarily Jesus-and-me or Jesus-and-us? And John Newton?.... and Andrew Murray?.... and A.W. Tozer?

Jesus-and-us christians don't do much. Yes, they do, but they don't do much. Though active, they do little; they do little because they live, mostly, outside the governance of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit does not control the rudder of one's christianity, how can he/she expect "much fruit"?

In the ninth issue I suggested that one of the churches, or a combination of churches, could create a similar newspaper to reach Kelowna with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Within their ranks were accomplished writers, free labour, lotsa money and a ton of testimonies, each having the power to save....

The purpose of this article is to find out if there is a group, a church or even an individual that feels lead of the Lord to carry on the work of reaching the lost in Kelowna through the newspaper media. How good it would be if there was a persistent voice from the body of Christ – a monthly or bi-monthly, year after year – expressing the gospel message.

It has been said that freedom of the press is limited to those who own a press. In this publication I spoke of the power of the media. Generally, I feel, the media leads people away from Christ, away from their salvation freely paid for. The power of the press should also be in the hands of the redeemed. There ought to be a voice, a persistent voice crying in the wilderness of humanistic, ungodly voices, pointing to the way of salvation.

Much time and energy and talent should be invested outside the church box. I once read a statistic that more than 90% of world ministry is directed toward 6% of the world's population. I wonder what percentage of local ministry is directed toward the lost in Kelowna.

A paper the size of *The Main Issue* is affordable for even a small congregation. There is so much talent in most assemblies, talent that could be used to present Biblical truths in a compelling manner. One can write, another is an artist, someone has computer skills, one has the finesse to do layout, another can oversee finances. One has an idea, another a testimony, another a prophetic

word. A congregation has the manpower to man phones, answer letters, do follow-up, make visits. And in an assembly there is much prayer power.

The most distressing part of producing *The Main Issue* is the lack of prayer support. I understand that long before a Billy Graham crusade multitudes are laying a foundation of prayer, and the success of the crusade is relative to those prayers. Although I have received encouraging letters and phone calls, I feel there is very little prayer for *The Main Issue* before delivery.

To have a voice in the community is a powerful weapon that very few possess. Surely the Body of Christ should have access into the community, whether it be radio, T.V., door-to-door visits or a newspaper. For a congregation of believers intent on reaching Kelowna for Christ a paper perhaps is the most effective way of making inroads into the community. The paper could be used to focus attention on an evangelistic crusade, draw the unsaved into Sunday services, promote home Bible studies.

”

My brother, what's your guess?.... do you think there was a response from at least one of the forty-plus evangelical churches in Kelowna and area?.... just a little interest?.... maybe a hint of excitement? You guessed correctly. (Is the pope a protestant?)

There will, I suppose, eventually be church people all over the world reading this *Open letter to Bill Johnson of Bethel Church*. How many will take up the torch? A printed publication isn't expensive when the cost is divided by hundreds. My wife and I did it without appealing for help. (Approximately 20% of the cost was covered by unprompted contributions.) A newspaper-sized publication in every city in every country would make a powerful impact on God's kingdom. (Multitudes would get saved!)

Why haven't, and why won't, churches reach out to their communities via a printed publication?

The simple answer is because churches consist of, mostly, Jesus-and-us christians. Jesus-and-us christians direct the bulk of their giving to the care of themselves (buildings, salaried pastors, etc.). They are paying for services rendered, yet somehow conclude they are being generous.

How does a Jesus-and-me backslide into a Jesus-and-us?

Everyone begins his/her christianity Jesus-and-me. But soon the overwhelming Jesus-and-us crowd, motivated by salaried pulpit-people, seduce the young Christ-centred, making of him/her another bored and discontent church adherent.

Jesus-and-us doesn't and can't work. The Holy Spirit cannot direct *us*. So *us* requires a leader through whom the Holy Spirit can direct the bunch. Who will that leader be? Well, he must be someone trained and capable. He must be credentialed so the people can have confidence in his integrity and ability. He must be salaried because he has a family to support and kids soon going off

to college. Let's call this leader Pastor Whoever.

As Jesus-and-us christians (not disciples, christians) proliferate, Pastor Whoever must have an assistant pastor, a youth pastor, a secretary, etcetera. And what's a church without a choir? And of course the Jesus-and-us gang needs to be comfortably housed. Church expenditures pass from generation to generation. There is always a need for replacing, repairing, repaving, re-*something!*

Who is going to pay for all this? Pew-people, of course. *But can they be coaxed to cover the burgeoning overhead?* No problem, we just impose a ten percent tithe? *Is that biblical?* Sure it is.... just stretch the bible here a little, there a little, and if needed reach back into the Old Testament; we can always find something in there to justify anything. *But why would the people give their tithe to the church instead of elsewhere?* Hey, no problem. We just create a church membership and make one of the requirements support of the church. *Support the church? You mean you tell them they must pay to be a member!?* No, no no, silly! You don't just blurt it out! You simply assume people will support the church through their giving. *Assume?* Yes, if you assume people will give to the church they attend they will soon get the hint that it is expected of them. Jesus taught us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." People's money is their treasure. They sweat for it, scheme for it, trade life for it. Where it goes, so goes their heart. If their treasure goes to Jesus, Jesus gets their heart. If that same treasure goes to church, church gets their heart.... their attention, their affection, their loyalty.

Chapter twenty-three

Somewhere around issue # 7 Richard informed me he was unable to assist me with the remaining editions. He was the only one I leaned on, and I was suddenly alone and lonely.

What Richard didn't tell me was that he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and wasn't expected to live long.

One sunday morning I responded to an altar call for those wanting a touch from God. (I loved those altar calls, often the first to respond and lingering the longest.) When Richard came and knelt beside me, I knew he was giving me a message: *I am with you.*

Richard was an elder in my life, though he never considered himself as such. He wasn't appointed by man to be an elder; Richard was an elder because the Holy Spirit moulded him into one over the years. Only Jesus makes elders.

We would spend hundreds of hours together over the years walking a nearby railway, Richard the chatterer and me the tagalong. He was a man of the bible, sometimes cutting out a page to carry in his shirt pocket, to later be taped back in place.

Richard was tough, never complaining of the serious aches riddling his body. What he wanted more than anything was time, time to spend with Jesus, time to feed on his bible. There was no guile in

that Jesus-and-me brother.

Richard had two major visions. In the first the Lord caused him to feel what the damned are feeling, the hopelessness of hell. He didn't see or feel the anguish of hell ("Jesus spared me that.") but was made to feel what it was like to live an eternity without any hope whatsoever. But that's not the vision I want to share with you, my brother....

Richard's second vision was the judgement seat of Christ.

I often wondered why this relevant subject was ignored by most. Christmas and Easter are maybes, even probablies, but the judgement seat of Christ is a certainty. Every christian of every city of every country "must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ". Why the silence on this event that is just around the corner? Why is it not in our conversation?

In issue # 6 of *The Main Issue* Richard writes....

I was at the Evangel Tabernacle one Sunday about fifteen years ago, in the old church on Bertram Street, listening to a guest speaker. This speaker was exhorting the people to use the gift of tongues to press into God. He reasoned that if we ignored what many consider the least of the gifts, the gift of tongues, how could we expect God to give us any of the greater gifts. It made sense. I took this message home with me and prayed in the spirit with new fervour.

Suddenly I was thrust into another dimension. I was given a vision. This vision was not what I expected a vision to be in the sense that it did not leave me feeling joyous. On the contrary, it upset me to the point where I became ill and remained so for days.

I was shown the judgement seat of Christ.

A great multitude of Christians were bowed on their knees facing Christ who was seated on the judgement seat. Each was dressed in a white robe. Each had his face hidden, almost touching the floor. A sea of white robes. None could look up. None could face their Judge. It reminded me of the verse, " the pure in heart.... shall see God. (Mat.5:8)"

In my vision of the judgement seat of Christ, Jesus was grieved. Deeply grieved. Perhaps it was grief mixed with disappointment. Or grief mixed with anger. Of this I am certain – the Judge was not pleased.

This was the day that these Christians were to receive rewards for their obedience on earth. Jesus ached to give His beloved many precious rewards, the rewards that a Christian was meant to receive on this day "when each one of us will give an account. (Rm.14:12)" But Jesus couldn't give them out. He ached to, but could not. His justice would not allow it.

Three times Jesus spoke, "I told you not to do it! I told you not to do it! I told you not to do it!" Jesus was emphasizing the "I". It was like He was saying, "Yes, I know you heard many voices saying different things. But *I*, Me, the Eternal One, *I* told you not to do it!"

What was it that Jesus told them not to do? What command had they disobeyed. The Spirit gave the answer, bringing to mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19: “DO NOT LAY UP TREASURES ON EARTH.”

There was silence. No one had anything to say. Not one could look up.

“He shall suffer loss. (1 Cor. 3:15)” That is what these saints were now suffering: *loss*. They would be eternally poorer than what they could have been. If only they would have been obedient during their life on earth, how different this scene would be. But they forfeited their rewards for earthly gain. They had not looked upon the unseen (treasures in heaven) with the eye of faith, but that which they could see (worldly treasures) with the eye of the flesh. They had hungered for the temporal, the passing, the useless. And now they were in deep remorse, embarrassed in the presence of the righteous Judge.

Oh, what agony. Oh, what remorse. Oh, what losses.

I do not believe that for every Christian the day of accountability will be a day of remorse. Certainly not. For some it will be a time of great rejoicing whereby their cups will be overflowing with praise and joy and thanksgiving. Their rich rewards will never fade away. They will hear their Master say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” But this is the vision I saw, nothing added, nothing deleted. This was the vision of the judgement seat of Christ that God chose to give me that day about fifteen years ago. Do with it what you will.

And now I have something to say to you:

Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! This is the word I want to speak to you. I speak Jesus to you. Not a sermon. Not admonition. Not advice. But I speak Jesus to you.

Jesus saved you. Jesus hung suspended between heaven and earth by three nails, bearing your sins “on his own body on the tree”. Jesus is the only one who died for you. Do not spend your life impressing anyone else. Do not serve yourself. Do not be the foolish man who heard the words of Jesus but built his life on the words of another. Your house will surely fall. If you build your life on the words of anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, your Christian life will end up in comparative poverty. Yes, you may make it “as by fire”. But you will suffer loss. You will be eternally poorer than the man who heard the words of Christ and had the wisdom to build on His words.

Can you see Jesus in the garden sweating drops of blood? Can you not picture Jesus suffering rejection before Pilate on your behalf? See Him now. Jesus being disrobed, left naked in shame. Spit upon. Crowned with thorns. Sneered at. His hands and feet pierced through with nails. He cried out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” Jesus taking your place and mine so that we would not suffer eternal damnation.

It is this person that you put your trust in to save you. It is this Jesus who promises rewards for faithfulness. It is this Jesus who loves you and aches to give you priceless eternal rewards. It is this

Jesus who cries out to you now. It is His voice alone that matters. Jesus calls you to turn from your dead works and build on His words.

Would you reject your Christ to build on the words of another? It is the *I am* that calls you. It is the eternal one who reasons with you to turn from dead works. It is He who longs for you to complete the course that He had laid upon your life.

There is an appointed time for you to stand before this Jesus. You will have to give this Jesus an account. Paul declared, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The terror of the Lord. Though blood-washed, though His adopted, you will witness the terror of the Lord if you appear fruitless at the judgement seat.

Jesus will deliver you from any hindrance from doing His will. Jesus is on your side. Jesus does not condemn His own, but out of *agape* love He would warn of the certain tragedy that you are walking into if your life is consumed with laying up treasures in this life.

"Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Help me to hear Your words! Jesus, help me to prepare for that day of accountability. Jesus, I want to have the rewards that You want me to have. Jesus, let me feel the impact of Your words; may they move me, change me, challenge me. Jesus, help me to turn from dead works and selfish pleasures. Jesus."

Chapter twenty-four

Bill, I do not know how much thought you have given to the upcoming judgement seat of Christ. I would like to share a few thoughts that you may have not considered. Okay?

In my opinion, every person in that "great multitude of Christians" of which Richard wrote, all too ashamed and embarrassed to look up at Jesus, was a Jesus-and-us christian when on earth. (Jesus-and-us became Jesus-and-me the instant he/she entered eternity.)

This is so important because, as I see it, every christian who has become a member of a church is a Jesus-and-us christian. (Membership is a public declaration of one's commitment to a church. The religious trap has been sprung.) A Jesus-and-me christian would never make a pact with anyone other than Jesus Christ.

A Jesus-and-me could do the very same good deed as a Jesus-and-us and the Jesus-and-me would be rewarded at the judgement seat of Christ and the Jesus-and-us would "suffer loss". How could this be?

Jack and Jill, not related and not acquainted, are both on the streets handing out gospel tracts, one on the west side of town, the other on the east. Jack was moved by the Holy Spirit; Jill was motivated by Pastor Whoever. Jack responded to the Holy Spirit because he was a Jesus-and-me; Jill responded to Pastor Whoever because she was a Jesus-and-us. One was serving Christ, the other was serving a christian. When he sang, "Though none go with me, still I will follow" he meant it;

when she sang those same words she didn't.

Jill began her christianity the way we all do. Jesus was “first love”. In time her loyalty shifted from Jesus to christians. (Paul: “I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted.” NLT) Before, she loved her brothers and sisters, now she followed them, doing what they did, going where they went, saying what they said.

Jesus said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.”

One might conclude that since both Jack and Jill were doing the same thing they would be equally rewarded. I don't think so. Jack was obeying Christ's command; Jill was obeying the pastor's call to action.

I don't think it's a stretch to amplify Christ's words thus: “If you keep My commandments *because they are My commandments,* you will abide in My love.”

I am sure catholics and the mormons obey certain mandates of Christ because they are catholics and mormons. Same with church members. They obey certain commandments of Christ because they are members of a local church. They do what's expected of them.

To Jesus, motive is everything.

There wasn't in that “great multitude of Christians” one Jesus-and-me. Not one. How can I be so certain? Jesus promised, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” Much fruit is “treasures in heaven”, eternal rewards that “neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

You and I will see that great multitude of barren (or mostly barren) christians. Hopefully we will be observers only.

Chapter twenty-five

My precious brother, there is a huge difference between a salary and a contribution. There is therefore a huge difference between being salaried and being supported by contributions.

Jesus was supported by contributions, not by salary. (“Many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him.”) Paul was supported by contributions, not by salary. (“That you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.”) The twelve and the seventy depended on contributions, none were salaried. (“Eat such things that are set before you.”)

How much impact should these examples make? I suppose that would depend on one's loyalty to the bible.

The Adders and Subtracters, that don't “bear much fruit”, have found a 'better way' to finance their christianity than those earliest christians who had an abundance of fruit.

I have written a series of articles addressed to “Pastor Whoever”. I present a few excerpts for your consideration.....

.... Many do not understand the significance of a salaried pastor compared to one supported by contribution. Do you? To clarify the matter, let's do some supposing. Suppose I was one of the pew-people in your congregation and.... no, no, no, let's get wilder yet! Let's suppose that *I* am the pastor and *you* are one of hundreds of pew-people. I know this calls for some powerful pretending on your part, but be a sport. Okay?

If the collection envelope were itemized in such a way that you could write down the amount to be contributed to me (let's make that *Pastor* Me), it would compel you to make a prayerful decision. Yes, Jesus would be the actual decision-maker, a positive step toward making Him Lord in fact and not name only. On the other hand, if I, Pastor Me, were salaried, you do not have a say in the matter, no need to consult Lord Jesus.

Only the Holy Spirit knows the will of Jesus. Jesus may want your contribution directed elsewhere, perhaps to one within (or without) the congregation with a severe need. Or directed to an evangelist. Or to a sunday school teacher equally worthy. Or to whoever. Who knows the will of Christ except the Spirit sent by Christ? You might conclude my preaching lately isn't doctrinally sound. Or my preaching isn't Christ- centred. Why should you support me?

A lack of congregational support might cause me to go deeper in Christ. Perhaps Jesus is telling me my lifestyle should be simplified, as was His. And if I balked at such a correction, perhaps He would have me (horror of horrors!) get... a... job! (Yes, a part time job. A real estate agent, maybe. Or a self-employed whatever.)

The day I demanded a salary instead of support through contributions is the day I became, by definition of the word, a *hireling*. (Hirelings, I understand, do not fare well at “the judgement seat”.)

.... You might conclude your pay should be equal to those employed in the world system. But they are hirelings, almost every one of them, just like I was. Jesus has never hired a disciple to do His bidding. “Freely give” has never fizzled over the centuries. Thousands upon thousands of salaried church personnel does not alter, “Freely you have received, freely give.” Pastors are exchanging eternal rewards for a salary.

You are in a difficult space. You do it all because you are paid. And you are paid because you do it all. And you do it all because you are paid. Around and around and around. If I were you I would run, not walk, from that church system. After the Lord told a friend to shun all religion, he returned his credentials to his denomination. That's my suggestion to you, my brother-in-Christ. Your effectiveness will not lessen but increase.

.... When you became salaried you became elevated, special, not from Christ's perspective, of course, but that of your brothers and sisters. You went from one of the guys to 'the man'. From

ordinary to official. From 'brother' to 'reverend'. From influential to powerful. From follower to followed. From mere attendee to boss. And you became lord of the pulpit. In short, you replaced the lordship of the Holy Spirit with yourself. You garnered (unintentionally?) loyalty intended only for Jesus. You replaced Lord Jesus as decision-maker, comforter, counsellor. Your salary did all this.

Had you lived by contributions (subsidized by outside wages?) you would have remained ordinary, one of the guys, a team player, respected but not acclaimed. Were it not for the salaried, Jesus would be the hub of the local church, and all others mere spokes in the church wheel. Also, others "who labor in the word and doctrine" - the sunday school teacher, the evangelist, the FB preacher, the missionary - would not be disadvantaged; they too would receive contributions, freeing them to serve Jesus more effectively.

Jesus ministers to His people through the Holy Spirit. "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak." The Holy Spirit, in turn, wants to minister to christians through christians. Not through a singular christian, but several. Your salary has seriously limited the Holy Spirit; people turn to (rely on), not Him and Jesus who sent Him, but to the one they have hired. Thus your salary, while elevating you, has weakened the grip christians have on Christ and Christ has on christians. Very not good.

Chapter twenty-six

I titled my third book, *The Way It Is: confronting evangelical traditions*. Page 21....

"

A young man from the Watchtower Society (a Jehovah's witness) came knocking on my door and soon we were in a debate. He argued that since the Christian church was split into so many factions, it could not possibly be God's representative on the earth. On the other hand, the Jehovah's witnesses were in strong unity throughout the world, a sure sign they are God's true agent.

I knew much about their history and asked if they had ever been united in error. Listen carefully to his answer: "Yes, but it's better to be united in error than divided over truth."

"

That twisted rationale is not limited to the Watchtower Society; it is lodged in the heart of every religionist. If the religionist solemnly prayed, "Lord Jesus, please show me where my religion is in error, and I will turn from that error" he/she would no longer be a religionist. What would that christian be?.... lonely.

But chances are paper-slim that he/she will ever pray those words. Why? Simply because "it's better to be united in error than divided over truth."

While there are eternal benefits to walking in truth, there are here-and-now advantages to walking in god unity. Unity assures the acceptance the heart longs for. Acceptance and approval – two rewards that motivate every follower of christians. To belong, to be accepted, to be complimented is the yearning of the mormon, the catholic, the evangelical.

The Way It Is, in challenging beloved traditions, simultaneously affronts the evangelical religionist. Like catholicism, evangelicalism is oh so powerful, rivalling the bible. Pastor Whoever doesn't need permission from the bible to charge for services rendered; his religion grants all permission required, thank you. And membership? And credentials? And appellations? And control of the pulpit? No need to get authorization from Lord Jesus (*Lord* Jesus? Did I say *Lord* Jesus?); he was already sanctioned by his denomination; what more could he possibly need?

Around midway of writing this book, Ain't Much was weakening. Please understand, this wasn't David vs Goliath - evangelicalism is much more powerful that hundreds of Goliaths combined, and I had but a fraction of David's grit. I was the small child struggling to carry his daddy's bulky suitcase.

Evangelicalism is the love of most (certainly not all) christians, even "*first* love". In "*confronting evangelical traditions"* I was confronting the majority of christians I know or had ever known.... and the thousands upon thousands of pastors worldwide that earn their livelihood through this religion, and who zealously defend their right to be sole occupants of their pulpits.

Evangelicalism is as established as catholicism, and deemed equally sacred. It is so powerful that to be unattached to one of its thousands of factions is to forfeit all credibility. Only a malcontent would dare scrutinize evangelicalism and, worse, only an insurgent would criticize.

Every public preacher I know of, a few facebook featherweights excepted, buttresses this religion, by word and by example including.... *Mike.... and Howard.... and John.... and Benny.... and Pat.... and Joseph.... and many etceteras*. Add to this chorus of voices of the past like.... *Billy.... and Oral.... and Kenneth.... and Rex.*

And add Bill Johnson, the man Jesus used to heal me of a painful injury.... the man of wise sayings.... ambassador of Christ.... ambassador of evangelicalism (sigh).

All these voices compose an enormous choir singing in harmony the praises of evangelical "tradition of men". And standing defiant against this mighty army of Adders and Subtracters was Ain't Much, Junior Burger, Micro-me.

Can you understand, my precious brother-in-Christ, why I asked Lord Jesus to send me an encourager, some rare christian who would strengthen me in my lonely campaign against *That's just the way it is!?* (By this time Richard was with Jesus in heaven.) I expected flesh and blood, a brother to reassure and edify. Instead Jesus gave me a book....

Even the title is powerful, *Jesus Tells the Man Who Cares,* by A.W. Tozer (1897-1963). I think I read his book 6-8 times. The very first words: "The Bible was written in tears and to tears it will yield its best

treasures. God has nothing to say to the frivolous man."

To me, weary from writing words I knew most didn't want to hear, this book was a tonic. I was not alone after all. Though I couldn't (and will never) match this brother's depth and love for God and truth, as well as his ability to express, as well as his raw courage, I was heartened to know there was someone who saw what I saw and heard what I heard.

I already quoted from *God Tells the Man Who Cares* (chapter twelve) and I do so again for your consideration. Okay?

Page 33: We must protest the light casting away of our freedom. The simple liberty of early christianity is being lost to us. One by one we are surrendering those rights purchased for us by the blood of the everlasting covenant – the right to be ourselves, the right to obey the Holy Spirit, the right to think our own private thoughts, the right to do what we will with our lives, the right to determine under God what we shall do with our money.

Page 45: Along with the gift of eternal life, the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the believer's heart and the induction of the newborn soul into the body of Christ comes the instant obligation to obey the teachings of the New Testament.

Page 83: *We must acknowledge the right of Jesus Christ to control the activities of His church.* The New Testament contains full instructions, not only in what we are to believe but what we are to do and how we are to go about doing it. *Any deviation from those instructions is a denial of the Lordship of Christ.*

Page 114: The tendency to make a mere front of religion is strongest among persons engaged in professional Christian service, such as pastors, evangelists, teachers, Sunday school workers and those who write, edit, publish and promote religion generally.

Page 128: If we offer our converts something beside Christ or something in addition to Christ, we should not be disappointed if they do not run well or long.

Chapter twenty-seven

Next assignment, a novel, *Pulpit Power.*

It all started with thoughts, fun thoughts, silly imaginative thoughts. Week after week and month after month they just kept coming. I had no idea I was building a book. *A novel? Me? You gotta be kidding.*

Pulpit Power demonstrates the power of the pulpit, power to change an ordinary into a remarkable, power to mould an entire congregation into something better or something worse, power to amalgamate or divide.

My story occurs at Bryden Falls, skirting the Canada-U.S. Border, somewhere in western Canada.

Bryden Falls Community Christian Center has an impressive baseball team. Since there was no serious canadian competition nearby, Pastor Mac, a competent pitcher, challenged the American Men's League south of the border. After some scoffing at the audacity of a canadian team challenging americans at their own game, they allowed the *Challengers* into their league, and they usually ended the year last place. But not this year. The *Challengers* had a chance to make the playoffs for the first time ever, and had their sights on winning the coveted championship, which would nullify the shame accumulated over several years. So anyhow....

The story begins when Roo - Reuben Tanner, plumber, usher, skilled back catcher - asks the pastor - Pastor Mac - for permission to speak to the congregation two successive sundays, claiming he had a message from the Lord Jesus. Never before had Mac heard of a layman requesting permission to use the pulpit. When Mac refused, Roo appealed to the board of elders. Crusty Donald Williamson, a retired pastor, immediately concurred with Pastor Mac, as did the entire board. Until.... until young David Tomas asked.... *Why not?* So anyhow....

That lead to quite a discussion, a heated debate really. Why shouldn't Roo be allowed to speak to the congregation? Does the bible forbid such a thing? Suppose Roo *really did* have a message from Jesus? Would saying no to Reuben Tanner be saying no to Jesus? One of the elders was so agitated he abdicated his position on the council. So anyhow....

The board threw the matter back onto Mac, Mac consented to Roo's request, asking him to give his first of two messages on the same sunday Mac was to be the keynote speaker at his denomination's bi-annual leadership conference. Because this conference, though a thousand miles away, happened to be due south of Bryden Falls and therefore in the same time zone, Mac and Roo were scheduled to give their respective messages at exactly the same time. While sunday morning found Mac encouraging pastors of congregations less successful than his Bryden Falls Community Center, Reuben - petrified Reuben - was given his very first public sermon to Mac's congregation back home. So anyhow....

On returning home, Mac turned on the phone messager. “You have twenty-six messages”, the mechanical voice droned. *What!? Twenty-six messages!* “Message number one: 'Pastor Mac. Donald Williamson. I guess Vivian told you about the service yesterday. Get back to me right away!' ”.... “Message number seven: 'Pastor Mac. Sheldon Waters. Hope you had a good weekend. I guess you know by now we've got serious problems. I think we are facing a church split. I think we better call an emergency council meeting. I want you to know I am with you.' ” *No! No! No! A church split? I'm gone one weekend and my church is rendered in two?* So anyhow....

They had their emergency meeting, Mac and his Vivian got into a nasty fight, Donald Williamson secretly contacted the denomination's superintendent, Roo was in deep remorse, Mac was reluctant to break his word to Roo by disallowing a second message, Superintendent Johnston demanded a solution, both the church board and the congregation seemed hopelessly split. And to add to the

chaos the *Challengers* faced a team for last spot of the playoffs, and Mac's closest friend Tree – tall, ex-marine, superior pitcher for the *Grizzlies* - was planning a suicide after losing his family to booze. So anyhow....

NOTE: *Pulpit Power*, a full-length novel, is available at www.larryjones.ca

Chapter twenty-eight

Perhaps, my brother-in-Christ, this is a good time to recapitulate the purpose and theme of this letter/book. I am of the opinion that what I say is utter simplicity and biblical. I am not an Adder and I am not a Subtracter. I do not confront religionists ("Judge not, that you be not judged.") but I do confront debilitating "tradition of men". I advocate a Christ-centred, Jesus-and-me christianity, a life surrendered to the *direct* governance of the most Holy Spirit, and complete adherence to the New Testament.

I do not attempt reformation of institutional churches; Jesus has no such interest. I speak repentance and reformation to individual christians. The evangelical cannot sing, "On Christ the solid rock I stand" simply because he/she doesn't. He stands on Christ ANDhis religion, the "solid rock" AND"sinking sand".

My life is so different than yours and most.... no sunday service.... no collection plate.... no Pastor Whoever.... no team players.... no wednesday night bible study.... no pulpit.... no awful evangelical tithe.... no pews.... no hymnal.... no choir.... no church bulletin.... no home church.... no men's saturday morning breakfast.... no church politics.... no two-tiered christianity.... no building program.... no board of elders.... no reverends.... no laymen.... no denomination.... no baptists.... no pentecostals.... no hierarchy.... no membership.... no church family.... no secretary.... no janitor.... no church mortgage.... no can't-talk rule.... no speaking in code.... no program.

Does my christianity remind you of anyone? Paul perhaps? Timothy? The corinthians? Peter or John? Every New Testament saint?

I am trying to convince you that my way is better than your way, that building on the bible is better than building on bible plus. Much better. That is why I tell you of my Holy Spirit assignments. The Holy Spirit assigns those submitted to the lordship of Christ, yes even nobodies like me. If you detect brag in me you discern amiss. (That is, I *hope* you discern amiss. Few things I fear more than pride.) The One who said, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" also said, "Let your light so shine before men." Only the Holy Spirit can safely navigate us through our christianity. So with that, I tell of my next assignment....

Chapter twenty-nine

I know of no other way to reach my brothers- and sisters-in-Christ than through the media. I suppose I could petition all the Pastor Whoevers in Kelowna to use their pulpit. *Hmmm*. "Well certainly, Larry.

Anytime you feel you have a word from Lord Jesus just let us know. Our pulpit is always vacant 2:00 am."

So I concluded if Martin Luther can write his Ninety-five Theses and post them on the door of catholicism, why not post mine and have them delivered door-to-door? I began: "*Theses* is the plural of *thesis*. A thesis is a proposition or statement to be considered, discussed and possibly disputed. Martin Luther wrote his famous *95 Theses* in 1517, a challenge to accepted religious beliefs and practices of that day."

I gave the *Why not?* question serious consideration....

Would the heathen become more heathen when they learn christians are in serious need of reform? Did Jesus ever refuse to preach to the Israelites because roman soldiers were nearby? Doesn't truth, even ugly truth, still "make you free"? Is God's way concealment or exposure?

I used my publication, posted in the Kelowna's *Daily Courier* (June 24, 2009), to preach the salvation message of Jesus Christ by directing the last eight theses to non-christians.....

1. The most feeble, slack christian is immeasurably wealthier than the most successful non-christian.
2. Failure of christians do not make Christ and His gospel less authentic.
3. Non-christians are incapable of committing a crime Jesus is unwilling or

unable to forgive.

1. More than any other person in the bible, Jesus warned of an eternal hell.

Eternity is a long time.

1. There is no Redeemer on the other side of death. Immediately after death

the non-christian will fully realize his/her opportunity to attain Christ's salvation has passed.

1. Non-christians attempting to gain heaven by self-effort or religious

observances will fail.

1. The love of Christ for the non-christian far surpasses the love of any

man or angel for Christ.

1. A non-christian becomes a christian by embracing Christ into his/her life

and accepting Christ's cross as payment for his salvation. This is done in prayer. Embracing Christ is submitting to Christ. Submitting to Christ is submitting to the bible (as one is progressively

enlightened to understand it).

But of course I directed my *95 Theses* primarily to evangelicals. Under the sub-title *Leadership* I wrote....

1. When one considers church leadership one should think of Jesus Christ

and not any man or group of men.

1. The pastor, not Christ, is the actual leader and shepherd and teacher of

the evangelical congregation.

1. Three similarities place the pastor above the rest – his license, titles and

salary; none of the three have bible precedent.

1. The pastor is the connecting door between two spiritual spheres, the

denomination that licensed him and the congregation he serves. It was the man's loyalty to the denomination that secured him his post as pastor.

1. The pastor is expected, by his church and his denomination, to capture

the congregation's loyalty. He is usually successful.

1. Many evangelists 'turn' pastor because only the pastor is salaried. This

results in less people spending their eternity with Jesus in heaven.

1. The pastor dictates who speaks from the pulpit. Almost always he

appoints himself.

1. It is non-biblical and unhealthy for one (or a few) to have excessive

influence over many.

1. The evangelical pastor who repents of compromise and makes a decision

to obey the bible will lose his position.

At the risk of boring you, my brother-in-Christ Jesus....

Evangelicalism

1. Since evangelicalism seriously affects the relationship between Christ

and evangelicals, evangelicals would be wise to evaluate evangelicalism.

1. Refusing to examine evangelicalism under bible light is certain evidence evangelicalism is an idol. (An idol is that which has captured one's

focus and loyalty.)

1. As loyalty to Christ is evidenced by loyalty to the bible, so loyalty to evangelicalism is evidenced by loyalty to evangelical traditions. Neither

centuries of observance nor endorsement of most validates non-biblical practices.

1. Evangelicals choosing evangelical traditions over bible teachings have

a feeble relationship with Jesus.

1. Evangelicalism would bear much more fruit if it discarded traditions

not rooted in the bible. There are many such traditions.

1. The dividing of Christ's church into two groups, the clergy (or

ministerial) and laity (laymen), is a harmful, non-biblical practice.

1. The notion that a few are to spiritually equip the many is contrary to

Ephesians 4:16: *the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body.*

1. Choosing the licensed over the anointed has always been a practice

of evangelicalism.

A year or two later I wrote my fifth and final book: *Another 95: Another 95 These For Another Reformation.* This book amplifies all 95 theses that I posted in the *Daily Courier*.

I have a high regard for Martin Luther, his courage and intelligence. But his reformation was very, very incomplete. Since his day many have tweaked, contorted, stretched, shrunk, manipulated, and adjusted evangelicalism in the hopes of finding a better way of doing church. Yet we seem to be more unproductive and confused than ever.

Lord Jesus gave us the recipe for fertility. It's not complicated. Though expressed in different ways throughout the bible, John 15:5 says it best, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.”

Evangelicalism gets in the way. The same Holy Spirit that lead each of us to our Saviour also wants to lead each into deeper, ever deeper, intimacy with that same Person. It is intimacy - not

expediency or intelligence or skill or programs - that assures “much fruit”. Amen?

Chapter thirty

I was staring out the window at my white van parked in our driveway. I recently purchased this vehicle from a friend to be used for my one-man electrician business. I wasn't *talking* to Jesus, I was *complaining* to Jesus, like big time. I worked so hard and so long to come up with the cash to buy this very used van and all I had to show for my labour was.... a van.

Suddenly I seen a vision. Streaked across my van just a few feet away, on the driver's side and at a forty-five degree angle, was a *big, black, bold* John 3:16. This vision lasted about two seconds.

I instantly got it. A John 3:16 on my van would add much relevance to my van. Wherever I went the John 3:16 went with me.

Was John 3:16 to be applied to my vehicle now or some future time? I really didn't know. Would my customers be uncomfortable with a *big, black, bold* John 3:16 in their driveway?

After professionally applying the lettering, I parked my van in a large mall parking lot, walked away, turned around to look at it from a distance – trying to get people's firsthand impression. Yes, it really was *big, black, bold!*

I like to walk, what I call walk-talks, most days. I park my John 3:16 in a conspicuous spot near one of my walking routes. I nose the van as close to the traffic as possible. Sometimes there are well over a thousand vehicles driving by while I am walking. How many notice, I don't know. Perhaps eternity will reveal it. It is easy to imagine many thinking, “What is that guy trying to prove? What is John 3:16 anyhow? Sounds like a bible verse.” I get occasional honks, not knowing if they're angry honks or supportive.

My precious grandson was returning to his workplace, his boss driving. His boss points at my parked 3:16 and says, “Look at that !#*!#* idiot!” My grandson replied, “That's my grandpa.” I cracked up laughing. I remember as a child seeing “Jesus Saves” signs painted on boulders and farm buildings. They got my attention; I asked my very catholic mom, “What does “Jesus saves” mean? Many thousands of Kelowna residences and many thousands of tourists and truckers have seen my John 3:16, I suppose some as many as fifty times. Only eternity will reveal the amount of seeds sown in the hearts of men, women and children.

Chapter thirty-one

My memory tells me, chronologically speaking, my next assignment was 333 WORDS.... *exactly!* (I have written several series of articles that I post on facebook, etcetera.) 333 WORDS is exactly that.... 333 words. (Yes, Bill, I counted them.)

I want to share one 333 WORDS article that I was thinking of this morning. I suppose many christian

writers are the same.... we get thoughts and then try to discern if they are Jesus-thoughts or me-thoughts. (I think this was a Jesus-thought.)

“

Poor Horse.

Head drooped over the gate of his stall, Horse could see the heads of the other horses lined neatly in two opposite rows. Life in the stalls was looking around, though nothing interesting to see, perhaps staring longingly into their yesterdays.

Yesterday. The days when earth shook from the wild herd racing the wind to nowhere in particular, great manes flagging defiance to the elements. Days of devouring grasses of the wild and drinking its waters. Finding their own shade and shelter. An abundance of fresh air and freedom and zest.

Yesterday. No steel bit in their mouths, no harness or rider, no squeaky wagons to pull. No smelly barn or cramped stall, no walking in their own manure.

Poor Horse. Didn't listen to that inner voice warning him to resist the yummy grain and apples the man had placed just inside the corral. Didn't notice that every day this feast was placed deeper into the corral, further from the wide-open gate. Too busy munching to detect the man sneaking to the gate. In an instant Horse lost his freedom and became another's subordinate.

Poor Horse. He panicked, kicked, cried and snorted. He could see the herd, his beloved family, so close yet unreachable. The herd must and did leave him, distancing themselves from Horse's distress and the man's cunning.

The man talked soothing words.... *good boy.... nobody's gonna' hurt you.... everything's gonna be okay.* Soon there was a noose around poor Horse, and under the spell of the man's calming words allowed himself to be led to the stable. In time, he was tamed and saddled and submissive.

One day the corral gate was ajar. The man's mistake was Horse's opportunity. He froze. The other horses froze. All stared at the gate, but only a few dared escape and rejoin the herd.

It was then that Horse realized his spirit had been irrevocably tamed. He was now a dependent, less than half what he once was.

Poor Horse.

Poor evangelical.

”

This is my perspective....

Horse and evangelical have much in common. Both have lost their freedom. Both were victims -

careless victims, it must be said - of an entrapment. Man is now master of both. Both are submissive subjects of *the way it is*.

I sense a prevailing fear hanging over the evangelical. This is not “fear of the Lord” but rather “fear of man”.... afraid to speak, afraid to do, afraid to not do, afraid to step out of step. He instinctively knows independence threatens acceptance of the bunch. In this low-lying cloud of anxiety the unusual (the Holy Spirit is Lord of the unusual) draws scoffs. Either go with the flow or don't go.

In this religion.... sameness is holiness.... much is said, little accomplished.... much activity, a sparsity of fruit.... “We can do more together” is its deceptive mantra.... “It is better to be united in error than divided over truth”.... we do together or not at all.... the judgement seat is a wispy uncertainty.

In this religion there is a palpable divide between the 'ministerial' and the 'laity', the credentialed and non-credentialed, the special and not-so-special. In this religion sheep are regularly fleeced by salaried shepherds, “tradition of men” often trump the bible, the Jesus-and-us rule and the Jesus-and-us are ruled.

The evangelical is where he is, spiritually speaking, because this is where he has been stationed. There are perimeters around this placement, never to be traversed. Spiritual officers of *the way it is* are alert to pounce on anyone foolish enough to stray from groupthink.

Yes, my brother, this is my perspective. But is it the perspective of our Lord Jesus? Do I see what He sees, hear what He hears? What else matters? It's so tempting to get our perspective by looking around, rather than peering into God's bible. We think so many can't be wrong though every other religion proves otherwise. Even the 'generals' within evangelicalism espouse *the way it is*, after minor adjustments to fit their individual personalities.

From my perspective, the evangelical desperately needs a “voice of one crying in the wilderness” to draw him back to “first love”, someone more than a Martin Luther satisfied to renovate his evangelical cage, someone more than a grumbler who sees the waste and injustice but is frozen in fear. (“The fear of man brings a snare.”)

Evangelical needs a Paul. Yes, a “Paul, an apostle (not from men or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.)”

I like Paul. Years ago I determined if I couldn't imagine Paul doing it - 'it' being whatever - neither would I. And if I could imagine Paul doing it, than I can also.

I simply cannot imagine Paul advocating church membership. In my perception of the man, formed over almost five decades, it is not something he would ever do, or condone. (“Is Christ divided?”) Frankly, I think he would find the church membership thing revolting. But not near as repulsive as....

The awful evangelical tithe, an illicit invention of evangelicals to finance an illicit religion.

The awful evangelical tithe aside, would Paul endorse the practice of collecting donations? Let's

look at it....

The New Testament offers only one example of a collection, and that was for the benefit of outsiders, hurting saints of Jerusalem. I repeat, there is only one example, and that was for the benefit of others. So how are we to apply this bible reality to our christianity? Do we simply ignore it and still claim the bible as our only standard?

Jesus said, (NLT): “You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.” To this the pharisees objected because “they were lovers of money”. Actually they were lovers of all the things money can buy. Are Pastor Whoever and those who stationed him likewise “enslaved to money”? What else can one conclude of religionists that never miss an opportunity to take an offering?

Do you think Paul would approve of our two-tiered system of ministerial (or clergy) and laity (pew-people)? Of a board of elders? Of leadership conferences? Of an unshared pulpit? Of mega churches?

However, I have no problem imagining this man endorsing every christian making it his/her determination to abide in Christ.... to lean on Him and Him alone.

And I think Paul would encourage every and all to be individually lead by the Holy Spirit.

Horse needs a man, a good man, to give him the freedom he once had. But it has been so long and Horse is afraid. This good man must assure him there is a better life for the taking. The stall is no place for a horse. Freedom is much better than captivity. Life is meant to be more than looking around, anticipating the next drab meal of hay.

Evangelical needs a Paul, a good man, to give him the freedom he once had. But it has been so long and evangelical is afraid. This good man must assure him there is a better life for the taking. The pew is no place for an evangelical. Freedom is much better than captivity. Christianity is meant to be more than looking around, anticipating the next drab sermon.

The Galatians were no more bewitched than today's evangelical. (“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?”) Both have lost the freedom in Christ they once had. Both have “been entangled again with a yoke of bondage”. There is a life in the Spirit for those courageous enough to walk away, just walk away, from their religious stalls and embrace, once more, the lordship of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who represents Him. (“Whatever He hears He will speak.”)

Chapter thirty-two

Bill, please continue to tolerate my 'generally speaking'. Thank you.

I want to reiterate what I believe to be a formula, the only formula, to become an overcomer christian. It is so important. It is so simple. Some things should be repeated over and over and over.

Amen?

Guaranteed blueprint for victory: First, abide in Jesus, second, submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit and third, sign the bible.

I think christians are blind to the fact that Jesus is not “first love”. He who was is no longer. Pastors assume their congregation, under their influence, love Jesus supremely. They don't. (“*If* you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.”) Pew-people assume Pastor Whoever loves Jesus supremely. He doesn't. (“*If* you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.”)

Everybody can verify or invalidate because everybody can look around. Is the name of Jesus acclaimed or ignored? Are multitudes being saved or are salvations rare? Are people bowing to the lordship of the Holy Spirit? Is there freedom? Are there “wonders and signs”? When is the last time someone mentioned Christ's Great Commission in conversation?

Now onto the second requirement, submit to the Holy Spirit. Pulpit-people couldn't argue that “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit”, but I can hear them choke over the second....

What! Be lead individually *by the Holy Spirit? Without our oversight? Bypass our leadership? Be an independent? You gotta be kidding!*

Objection: *How can we be accountable to each other if we all try to be individually lead by the Holy Spirit?*

Accountability.... let's look at it from the perspective of the bible. Let's go to Bible Gateway, type in a-c-c-o-u-n-t-a-b-l-e and see what comes up.... hmmm.... nothing.... okay then, let's type in a-c-c o-u-n-t.... that's better. There are many instances of christians giving an account to God but never a christian giving an account to another christian. James was not accountable to Peter who was not accountable to John who was not accountable to....

Objection: *How can one trust his/her ability to be lead by the Holy Spirit without the discernment of the local church?*

I do not trust my ability to be directed by the Holy Spirit. Nor do I trust that of others. I certainly do not trust Little Moses' capability to hear from God; he has proven himself quite languid in his allegiance to God's bible. My trust is not in my ability to be lead, but the Spirit's ability to lead. If I am patient, if I am not compulsive, if I am prayerful, the Holy Spirit can and will communicate. Like the Father and like Lord Jesus, He is faithful and able.

Objection: *How can a pastor create a team of workers if they do not adhere to his leadership?*

God never called Little Moses to be a little Moses. Jesus never relinquished His place as “head of the church”. Pastors must learn to mind their own business. A true pastor can teach but not build, oversee but not interfere, influence but never coerce.

A pastor once told me that he wants to oversee any and all bible studies of everyone attached to his church. I should have told him to mind his own business. What goes on in someone's home is between him/her and Jesus Christ.

Objection: *How can we trust that someone really is being lead of the Holy Spirit and not by "flesh and blood"?*

Again, it's none of our business unless it affects us directly. Should a pastor say, "I feel the Lord is directing us to expand our building to accommodate the influx of people", everyone should pray, "Lord Jesus, I will support this expansion if You so direct me personally. If You do not speak to me I will not invest one dollar or one hour of my time. I bow to Your lordship."

In my opinion most pursuits and activities are not in response to the Spirit's leading. I see christians selling and buying and investing and building to satisfy their itch to do something. I've been there, done that.

The Holy Spirit is always leading us deeper into Christ. That's just what He does. That's what He is doing at this moment. That's what He will be doing tomorrow and all our tomorrows. Pursuits and activities must be the outcropping of relationship. Only the branch abiding in the vine bears fruit. The fruit we bear is relative to our relationship with Lord Jesus.

We must relate to Jesus by His terms. We don't dictate the terms; He does. His ways are non-negotiable. He decrees, we obey.

Let's go back, way back, to Old Testament saints. God related to the Israelites through His chosen man, Moses. The divine order was

GOD.... MOSES.... ISRAEL.

The individual would not dare approach God on His own. God did not communicate to the individual directly. He spoke through prophets. That's just the way it was. "Fear of the Lord" was having a profound respect for *the way it is* of that era.

And then Jesus changed all that. The old order, though divine, was no more. It was exchanged. In the new order there is no Moses. One could say the Holy Spirit replaced Moses. Or, Moses was a 'type' of the Holy Spirit. Now the divine order is

JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... CHRISTIAN.

The christian who faithfully abides by this new divine order is a Jesus-and-me christian. He is on his/her way to abundant rewards to be dispersed at the judgement seat of Christ.

There are plenty of examples in the Book of Acts whereby christians were directed by the Holy Spirit.... "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them".... "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Holy Spirit by which spoke".... "Then the Spirit said to Philip".... "The Spirit told me to

go with them”.... “Paul was compelled by the Spirit.”

As the centuries rolled by, this divine order was woefully disregarded by religions' salaried officers. Thousands and thousands and thousands of Little Moses pastors stationed themselves between the Holy Spirit and christians. Now the very *un*-divine order looks like this

JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... LITTLE MOSES.... CHRISTIAN

It is not wrong to speak candidly of Little Moses. It is wrong to *not* speak candidly of this fellow who shapes the evangelical more than anyone.

Is he a blessing to the evangelical or an interfering third party? Is he causing the branches (“You are the branches”) to bear much fruit or little fruit? Is Christ's Great Commission being honoured or ignored? Will his people receive “the crown of righteousness”?

How did Little Moses become a little Moses? I suppose it started in one of evangelicalism's seminaries. I have little doubt that the graduate had less fervour for Jesus than when he was the plebe. He walked in the door a Jesus-and-me and walked out the door a Jesus-and-us. He graduated with a headful at the cost of a heart-full. The disciple of Christ was fashioned into a disciple of his denomination.

The denomination gave him permission to collect a salary. He was never coached to build on Paul's example - “Nor did we eat any man's bread without paying for it, but with labour and hardship we worked night and day so that we would not be a financial burden on any of you ”(AMP).... “You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me”.... “Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”

It is certain these teachers do not highlight these verses in a manner equal to “the labourer is worthy of his wages” and “you shall not muzzle an ox”. Is this not blatant compromise? (It must be said - because the salaried won't say it - that the wages Jesus referred to was food, drink and shelter.)

How can seminary teachers instruct their student to do what they themselves would never do? So the salaried cookie-cutter compromisers beget another salaried cookie-cutter compromiser who will soon demand his share of the fleece.

Little Moses has been taught that he is to be the intermediator between the Holy Spirit and all adherents. To do this he must bunch the bunch. Thus the creation of team players.... a family.... a home church.... accountability.... discipleship (inverted discipleship). How does Little Moses do all this?

The seminary taught Little Moses that he was to be king of the very powerful pulpit. There is a condition of course - he must adhere to denominational policy and doctrine. And he is to steer the entire congregation to that same devotion.

From the pulpit's high ground Little Moses convinces his weekly audience of their need of him.

Obviously only he, as God's appointed leader, can rightly discern God's direction for the congregation. It is so easy and natural for the bunch to assume this man is spiritually superior to the common folk. Is he not credentialed?.... is he not eloquent?.... is he not titled?.... is he not salaried?

But, but, but.... he is *not* superior. Average, maybe. More educated in the bible, definitely. But *not* a spiritual heavyweight. A true disciple of Christ would never demand a salary.... would never be an ardent Jesus-and-us.... would not be a bible-plus-plus-plus christian.... would not bow to the lordship of man.

And he, obviously, is not Christ's appointee. Jesus never stationed anyone as mediator between the Holy Spirit and the christian!

Am I the only one who sees the obvious? Is *the way it is* so powerful that one dare not demand biblical evidence of authenticity?

So many can be wrong. Every sizeable religion proves it. Christ wants to govern us *individually* via the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants us to cut the umbilical chord attaching us to religion. ("I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.")

I never had the trouble most have separating themselves from religion. I don't know why. I certainly credit Lord Jesus. I attended but was not attached, or, more accurately, I was not as attached as most. Many years ago when still attending a catholic church I said to friends, "I am not a catholic, I am not a protestant, I am not a charismatic, I am not a pentecostal. I only am what Christ made me to be - a christian, a child of God."

God never made us a baptist or a mennonite or a charismatic or a protestant or a whatever. If we are one it's because we have made ourselves one.

Chapter thirty-three

Almost finished, my brother-in-Christ Jesus. Hope I'm not boring you.

This letter is about JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... CHRISTIAN vs. JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... LITTLE MOSES.... CHRISTIAN. After this chapter, I rest my case.

Learning to live by the Holy Spirit begins with a decision. After the decision the apprenticeship begins. Self-rule must go, and self ain't easy to dethrone. It can take years.

Men are builders. Women are too, but men more so. We like to build things. I am convinced all christianized religions are the product of this itch to do, to accomplish, to build, to conquer. Every religion, small and large, was birthed from carnality with the help of you-know-who. God gives His people grace and we spend that grace as we so decide, exercising the free will God gave us. His people misspend regularly. That's why....

That's why I don't trust me and I don't trust you and I don't trust him, her or them. I try, really try, to

trust the Father and His precious Son, but in that I often fail. I believe the bible is God's book to us, but that confidence has not fully slid from head to heart. “Help me, Jesus!”

I believe that if typical evangelical would remove Little Moses from his life he would no longer be an evangelical. Perhaps he would be a Peter or a Paul or a John or a Stephen. Perhaps he would be a Tozer or a Murray or a Blessit. Perhaps he would be a Richard.

The majority, even the vast majority, can be wrong. Remember lonely Joshua and Caleb. Jesus wants us to trust Him not them, His words not their words.

And so I continue my report, my JESUS.... HOLY SPIRIT.... LARRY JONES account of my christianity....

I produced a folded tract that I had delivered through the Kelowna Courier newspaper. I appealed to the evangelical to spend his/her own money rather than trust others to spend on their behalf. I suggested the reader open his/her own Jesus Account as a first step in managing one's own financial giving: “Since Jesus is your Lord (He is your Lord, right?), why not ask Him about your very own JESUS ACCOUNT?”

In my tract I compared the Mosaic tithe to the awful evangelical tithe....

The Mosaic tithe was established by God and directed to the Israelites; the awful evangelical tithe was established by evangelicals and directed to evangelicals.

Regarding God's tithe, money was not accepted; regarding the evangelical tithe only money is accepted. In the first tithe, income was not tithed; in the second, all income is tithed.

> “The Mosaic tithe is well-documented; the awful evangelical tithe cannot be found in the bible.”

Typical evangelical assumes the ten percent they give is a biblical requirement. This is what the salaried imply. The evangelical tithe is nothing less than christianized embezzlement.

In this tract I shared the vision of William Booth (1829-1912):

> “I saw a dark and stormy ocean.... multitudes of human beings.... shrieking and cursing and struggling and drowning.” “did not seem to have any care, that is, any agonizing care about the poor perishing ones who were struggling and drowning right before their eyes.”

Of course, I included in the tract the gospel of Jesus Christ: “Perhaps you think life ceases at death. Heaven?.... just a myth. Hell? .... an invention of Christians to scare you into their faith. And yet.... and yet the Bible clearly attests to a wondrous eternal heaven and a horrifying eternal hell. Will you pit

your notions against the Bible? Good luck."

”

We are each called by our Lord Jesus to preach, both privately and publicly, to His church and to the world He died for. We preach to each other and we preach to strangers. We preach while slurping coffee at Starbucks and we preach over social media. If we are faithful the Lord Jesus just might set a microphone before us. We must not (must not!) be ashamed of our Jesus and His great salvation.

I am of the opinion the Lord will use us increasingly as we prove ourselves faithful. Assignments will be designated, one after the other after the other. Though there may be gaps, even lengthy gaps, between assignments, Jesus will not 'put the brakes on' until we have finished our course. Speaking of assignments....

The last assignment Jesus gave me is going to unfold throughout the remainder of my days on earth, or so I assume....

I never sought after a publisher for my books, videos and articles simply because the Holy Spirit did not so direct. (More accurately, Jesus did not so direct me through the Spirit He sent to guide me through my christianity.) A few years ago, I felt lead to pray about the matter. Is there a publisher out there that would dare publish my challenge to evangelicals and evangelicalism?

I felt the Lord tell me to take my huge website www.larryjones.ca - where I display my library of books and articles and videos - to the nations in all major languages. And that is what I am in the process of doing.

My first language is english, the second will be spanish and after that as the Holy Spirit so directs.

I am in the process of producing a cartoon video to point christians to my website. I pay (from my Jesus Account) for advertisement through social media. So far I reach about ten nations every day.

I am of the opinion that if I can remove Little Moses from just one evangelical's christianity.... and influence that evangelical to repent of man-worship.... and recommit his/her life to Jesus Christ.... and submit to the governance of the Holy Spirit.... and sign the last page of the bible as a declaration to always choose the bible over evangelical edicts, that person will bear “much fruit” to the glory of the Father, and that “much fruit” will include a huge net-full of people saved from an eternity of remorse and anguish, and ushered into an eternity of indescribable joy.

Chapter thirty-four

This chapter is the end of the longest letter I have ever written. (And the longest letter you have received?)

I think I have been faithful to the “head of the church”. I have prayed, I tried to be lead by the Holy Spirit, I think I was candid without being disrespectful. And I have been cautious to stay within the perimeters of New Testament teachings and examples, as one who must one day give an account.

Why this letter? As I previously said, that is not my business. I am fully convinced our Lord Jesus used this Ain't Much to relay a message, and what you do with it is between you and the one we both call, “Lord,Lord”.

Before closing, may I share a thought that has been rolling around in my quite modest upper chamber?....

About three or four years ago I remember you saying, on more than one occasion, that “the next move of God” was going to be so unusual most would reject it. Do you remember saying that? Has that transpired?

Could it possibly be that “the next move of God” will be Jesus spawning and releasing thousands of Jesus-and-me christians, each sensitive to the most Holy Spirit, to shoulder His mostly abandoned Great Commission?

Does our Lord Jesus want to set His people free from religious tyranny? Does Jesus want to eject every Little Moses from every congregation in every city in every nation, replacing them with the Holy Spirit? Perhaps Jesus will put an end to christianized embezzlement, the fleecing of His precious sheep.

Does Lord Jesus want to rule individually the people He died for individually and will soon judge individually at the judgement seat? No more calendar christianity. No more institutionalism. No subjugated tagalongs. But rather....

But rather an army of Jesus-and-me preachers, bold and diligent and obedient, taking the life-giving gospel to every nook and cranny of the globe. In this army, unlike every other, the Chief Executive deals with each enlisted soldier directly via His Spirit instead of through a hierarchy of subordinate officers, as evidenced by “signs and wonders and mighty deeds”.

In this army the banner “We can do more together” has been shredded and replaced by another banner, “Christ and I are an overwhelming majority”.

“Now may the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Larry Jones