

In Vain They Do Worship – Chapter 4

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Ch 4: The Signs of an Apostle · By Willis Young

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CHAPTER 4: The Signs of an Apostle

"Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you . . ."

As I have done so often throughout this thesis, I have turned again to the writing of the Apostle Paul. In fact, I will be quoting him extensively throughout this whole chapter as I try to give you a picture of what was expected of a New Testament Apostle and then to relate that picture to my experiences in the church. In order to do that, it may be necessary for me to reiterate or perhaps overlap some of the points that have already been made in another context, and for that I beg your indulgence.

I have chosen, rather arbitrarily and, perhaps randomly, ten qualities or attributes which, in my opinion, provide the litmus test for determining a true Apostle of Jesus Christ. ". . . believe not every spirit," we are told, "but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The first sign of an Apostle is **SEPARATION**.

What is separation? It is the condition of being withdrawn or set apart. It means going in different directions. It is the act of becoming distinct. . .

". . . **Separate** me Barnabas and Saul," it is written, "for the work whereunto I have called them."

And again we read: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, **separated** unto the gospel of God."

"But God forbid," Paul, himself, wrote, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by *whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*"

"For ye are dead, and your life is *hid with Christ* in God."

There is no question in my mind that the attitude of the Apostles—and, by now, you understand that I am referring to the workers—changed noticeably and in some cases even drastically, from the early days of my childhood until the time that I finally decided to leave the faith. In fact, it was primarily because of that attitudinal change that I made the final decision to "pack it in."

The early workers—and I cannot help but refer to them in that way—were definitely set apart. Except for some unusual or extenuating circumstance, they always came to our home in pairs just as we believed they should because, as they said, that was how Jesus had directed their predecessors to go. The quality of their separation at that time was not seen in aloofness or in arrogance or in unavailability, but they were "set apart" in the sense that they were equal to all, and that they had the same time to spend with everyone regardless of the size of the bedrooms or the beds, regardless of whether the plumbing were indoors or out, and regardless of the cleanliness of the home or the amount and type of food that was provided.

They were set apart from their human inclinations to show favouritism and to play the game of patronage, and they took the time to sit and talk and listen, to hear and help and advise because they were involved in only one gospel mission in the area, and they were not jumping into a car every hour on the hour to rush off in all the global directions to attend to five or ten such missions within a radius of ten to two hundred kilometres. They were set apart as our friends and mentors, and they made us feel useful, part of their lives, and part of their work. They made us feel that they needed us, and they did need us, too, because they went back and forth with us to their mission site each evening as long as they were staying in our home.

The modern way is to “latch onto” a car belonging to a family who have two or three vehicles and who “don’t need it anyway” and then breeze into and out of cities, towns, homes, and lives, always on the go, always exuding a flurry of busy activity, always able to avoid the home with the bad mattress or the bare floors, never quite making it to the places where a controversial question might be asked, and always arranging to be in the most luxurious surroundings each night when the sun sinks into the western sky.

Whom do they need? No one.

Where do they spend most of their time? With their favourite families, or on the road to everywhere.

Who are their favourites? Those who cater to them, fall all over them, those who make them feel terribly important, and those who give them the biggest cars to drive and the biggest cash donations to service them with.

It used to be when the workers *withdrew* themselves, it was to go to their room to read and study, to meditate, to write letters or, perhaps, to simply have a rest, but in my latter years in the church *withdrawing* meant exactly that—withdrawing. Certainly, it meant withdrawing from me.

I have already talked about how lonely I was and how deserted I felt and even though I let down all my defences, buried all my pride, and told some of them how I felt, there was never any attempt made to make me feel useful or wanted. They would breeze into the city, make numerous visits or telephone calls to numerous other church members, but there never seemed to be time to call me or to eat with me or to plan to spend the night with me or even to let me treat them by taking them out for a meal at a nice restaurant.

Let me be more explicit.

I lived for two years on Vancouver Island in a tiny, semi-isolated town about one hundred crooked, mountainous kilometres from the nearest home where I could go to meeting. During those two years there were fewer than five week-ends that I failed to make the trek across the island so that I could be in fellowship with others in the church. Not once in all that time did I ever have a visit or receive a phone call from any of the workers even though several times they passed through the place in order to go to see some people in a more isolated area another two hundred kilometres farther up the coast. However, about six weeks before I moved back east, the brother of Sandra Perry, a sister worker was transferred with his family to my little town, and, within one week, they received a visit from the two workers who were in that “field” and who had been bypassing me for two years.

I believe I was treated very shabbily indeed and that that type of separation or withdrawal from any church member is not one of the signs of a true Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Being separate also means being distinct, but I believe there is a grave danger of the true Apostle becoming **extinct**.

“. . . but in all things,” Paul, again, wrote, “approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience. . . by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness. . . [and] by love unfeigned. . .”

I believe the second sign of an Apostle is **KINDNESS**.

Over the years I met a lot of workers who certainly possessed this quality without measure, but I also came in contact with quite a number who had never even looked into the dictionary to find the meaning of the word. In a strange sort of way, I find so many situations and so much of my experience to be quite ambiguous or contradictory. In fact, as I try to let my mind scan the years, I find it very difficult to arrive at certain conclusions because there are a lot of grey areas and fuzzy edges. Let me try to explain what I mean.

In my early years, as I have explained, there seemed to be so many oppressive and foolish restrictions, and there is little doubt that if the workers didn’t make the rules, they were delighted that the friends had thought of them all by themselves, and they were more than happy to see that they were enforced and reinforced. And yet those were the days when, according to my memory and recollections, the workers were the kindest. They certainly were kind to me, and I have vivid memories of there being quite a good rapport—a camaraderie, really—between them and my parents. But as I grew up or, in any case, became older, and as the rules relaxed concerning clothing and entertainment and other things, there seemed, subtly, to creep in feelings of suspicion, questions of doubt, a lack of trust, and an atmosphere of accusation.

For me the kindness had disappeared.

These were the days of the axe men. Workers began spying and tattling on other workers, and they did it shamelessly and proudly. One man who had been one of my childhood heroes made quite a reputation for himself in the Maritimes by “exposing” some of his fellow “Apostles” for “drinking” and, as a result, he was transferred back to Ontario to continue his winnowing of the ministry there. He stooped so low on one occasion as to approach my parents to try to get them to say something derogatory about the two men who were preaching in their field at the time. Wisely, my parents saw what he was up to and refused to act as the spies he wanted them to become. And that was not an isolated case.

His new-found fame went straight to his head, and the last time I heard him preach in Prescott, Ontario in December, 1974, I could hardly keep from retching, so filled was he with himself, his own words, and his own message which contained nothing but the measure of honour that the friends had to bestow upon the workers. In my opinion he had lost his own dignity as well as his place as a messenger of Christ. Gone were every vestige of kindness, every trace of the hero I had admired, and every inclination that he could ever again edify me or sustain me in the faith.

The kindness that should have existed now was now replaced with arrogance and superficiality. Instead of a conversation, one had to get used to either a casual nod or a complete brush-off as the workers whisked past on their way to confer with the “in” group—the church’s very own version of the CIA. Under less spiritual circumstances, it would have been highly amusing to watch the chests swelling and the eyes searching the crowd to make sure they were being noticed as the workers singled them out and held long

confabs over who was doing what to (and with!) whom. But you cannot deny that such methods are not without their virtue since they are the church's way of getting rid of the dissonants and maintaining its self-proclaimed exclusivity. The fact that this system contradicts the scriptures that are preached and which are purported to be believed seems to hold little significance to the workers as long as their position in the hierarchy is preserved and, in some cases, even enhanced.

The dictionary tells us that **kindness** is the state of being humane, the quality of being benevolent, the condition of being **gentle**, **tender**, and **considerate**. Where is the humanity—the humaneness, if you will—in the treatment received by my divorced friend? Where is the gentleness that leaves the ninety and nine and seeks until it finds that one which is lost? Where is the tenderness that refuses to break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax? And where is the consideration that sees another hungry and offers food, that, when another is thirsty, it offers drink, or, noticing another naked, brings a covering for the soul? Where is the kindness that pours in the oil and the wine?

Do you really want to know where it is?

It is “somewhere out there”. . . out among the heathens, among the pagans, and the Infidel. . . out there amongst those who, I was programmed to believe, are nothing more or less than worldly sinners. . . out there amongst people who really do love their neighbour as themselves. . . out there where folks take the time to turn aside and care.

I don't believe I need to remind you of where it mostly isn't!

PATIENCE and **LONG-SUFFERING** both have the same meaning, so I have chosen to combine them as the third sign of a true Apostle.

As I sit here and reflect on all the workers who've come and gone through my childhood, as well as all my adult years in the cult and out, I have to admit very candidly that, no matter how you “paint” it, both **patience** and **long-suffering** have always been a very rare commodity.

One year toward the end of my high school experience we were subjected—or, perhaps, treated—to quite a display of the lack of these combined qualities. In our area that year a rather elderly spinster—a sister worker named Effie Moore—had been teamed up with a young girl named Rose Cobb who was in her early twenties and was just “starting out” and who, for no other reason than that she was alive and very much a human being, enjoyed life, liked to laugh, and occasionally forgot to pander to her ancient companion. Not only did the “wrath of the gods” descend regularly and often upon the unfortunate young woman, but it also managed from time to time to spill over onto us friends who had likewise forgotten our humanness and had audaciously dared to laugh and to enjoy ourselves with her from time to time. Long before the appointed year was up, Effie, having decided she could no longer remain in the same home with her young “sister” both in the faith and in the ministry, left her to her own devices, usually at my parents' home, while she, herself, took up residence with two faithful old souls—spinsters as well, I might add—who resided a mile down the road. The two workers dutifully met up each night for their gospel services, and each one preached in turn all about loving kindness, forgiveness, purity, and patience, and, if one didn't know any better, one would never guess that there was ever a ruffled feather—or hair—between them.

As time went on, I realized more and more that these disagreeable episodes were far from being isolated. I learned that some of the older companions—the senior workers, as they're known—rule over their partners with a reign of terror, and that, in some cases, it is often a difficult task for the overseeing brothers who are in charge of producing the annual “Workers' List” to find someone to willingly accompany these ogres into the mission field for even a year. Because I knew what they were like, and because, as a result of that knowledge, I found it hard to sit and listen to their preaching about the Way-of-God-and-the-Love-of-Jesus, I would often think how much harder it must be for those unfortunate junior companions to put up with such gross deception night after week after month without being able to appeal to anyone or to escape the tyranny they were being subjected to. And, believe it or not, the situation goes on unabated even as I write.

Being disagreeable with a younger companion was not the only way that a lack of patience was shown. Being pompous, arrogant, self-righteous, mean-spirited, and downright nasty were all other ways to achieve the same end. To one extent or another, and at one time or another, one or another of these adjectives could have been applied to one or another of the workers, but all of them applied to a white-haired, more or less dignified-looking American named Andrew Abernathy who imagined himself not only something of an orator but also the epitome of Wisdom and Truth. He set himself up as the “Great Overseer” from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and from Key West, Florida, to the Arctic Circle, and he was vicious.

He is the one I mentioned in the preceding chapter in reference to the enactment of all the laws concerning the wedding ceremony.

He headquartered in the Philadelphia area, but I really don't know when he was ever there or when he ever engaged in a gospel mission for, as long as I can remember, he spent his time touring the continent and the world as a “distinguished visiting worker” at Special Meetings and conventions. Thus it was that in 1973 or so he was at the convention at Almonte, Ontario, where he behaved in the most despicably rude manner that I had ever witnessed or experienced on the part of any of the modern-day “Apostles.” He seemed to be obsessed with rage and hatred.

I suppose there were close to a thousand people in attendance, and every professing Christian on the premises fulfilled every outward requirement that had ever been ruled upon concerning uniform and behaviour. In particular, all the young men looked as if they had just arrived from the U.S. Marine Recruitment Center at Parris Island, S.C. The only individuals in the throng whose hair was not quite the right length or whose faces were not quite clean-shaven enough were either non-professing husbands of “believing”

wives or “non-believing” teen-agers of professing parents. In most cases it was a victory on someone’s part to have persuaded the “outsiders” to be there in the first place.

I do not remember his biblical text or how he managed during his verbal ramblings to arrive at the topic, but our “distinguished” American demagogue stood there on the platform and told the congregation that many of us resembled long-haired hyenas and porcupines. There was an inaudible gasp from many of us who found such an accusation erroneous, disgusting, and stupid, but, of course, the ripple of amused laughter that spread through the throng, combined with the number of “faithful” heads nodding their AMENs of agreement, gave him the encouragement that he needed, and he ravaged on for an hour, insulting, degrading, and generally humiliating everything and everyone that fell short of his imagined standards for “a true child of God.” To this day, I do not understand what kept me from getting up and removing myself, body, soul and spirit, from such an unwarranted, nefarious attack on so many of my fellow human beings.

I think that was the first time that I ever really understood what it meant to “wrestle. . . against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

I was terribly disturbed—yes, even angry—then, and, even though I have not been in fellowship with the church for over a decade, I still get upset when I think that such false judgments and accusations were allowed to stand unchallenged at that time and that they would still be permitted today if someone were to stand up and repeat the same repugnant performance.

Let me try to explain why that incident made such an impact on my spiritual experience. In the olden days when black stockings, long skirts, and no radios were so much a part of the package required to enter the Kingdom of God, the workers still went out and preached to tentfulls, hallfulls, and one-room-schoolfulls of ladies with short skirts, flesh-coloured stockings, and “bobbed” hair. The odd seed may have been sown on behalf of a prospective male Christian with long hair, a beard, and even a radio in his car. They all had eyes in their heads, and they all knew that “when [they] became a [Christian, they would have to] put away [worldly] things.” *But they were preached to in their unsaved state.*

Why, then, were those poor non-believing sons and daughters and spouses attending that memorable convention in 1973 or so badly maligned and insulted because they didn’t fit the mould? Even if all the marks of the Outward Jew were part of the ritual of salvation, why were they not appealed to in love; why were they not treated with patience and long suffering; and why were they not shown the tenderness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ? And, then, when they became convicted of their “sin,” and when the spirit of fellowship began to appeal to them, and when they decided to profess, they could then discard all their worldly trappings and adapt themselves to the requirements of the non-denominational Christian.

After the convention that year I found myself one Sunday afternoon in a small group of “the friends” who were discussing the marvellous spiritual help we had all just received “at Almonte” and particularly from the now infamous American emissary of “hatred and good-will”! I stated rather more bluntly than was healthy for my soul that “had he been a true man of God, he would never have said what he said or conducted himself in the hateful manner in which he had.” Not only was I taken to task for uttering such heretical remarks, but I was also misquoted, and, a few weeks later, I was hauled before a self-appointed, one-man tribunal and was accused of referring to the gentleman in question as a “false prophet.”

Well, now! What was I to do? Because I had not used that precise expression, I felt quite justified in denying the allegation, but I did feel moved to carry the conversation farther. I told my lone juror that I firmly believed that if the old American were justified in all he did and said, he would be allowed to continue in the work, and if he were wrong in his attitude and demeanour, something would happen to remove him from his eminent position.

As it turned out, that was his last appearance at a Canadian function. He suffered a severe stroke within six months of my prediction and died a few years later never having regained his ability to preach and rant in the venomous manner which had become his stock in trade. What a shame it was that he could not have gone “quietly into that good night” leaving behind affectionate memories of **patience and long suffering** which would have marked him as the true Apostle of Jesus Christ which he imagined himself to be!

I believe the fourth sign of a true Apostle is **MEEKNESS** or its synonym, **GENTLENESS**.

“I Paul,. . . beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ . . . am bold toward you. . .”

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: . . . because ye were dear unto us.”

On an uncharacteristically positive note, I must say that I have several very pleasant memories of some of the workers I knew through my childhood and into my early adulthood, as well as a few whom I knew in a rather more personal way in Europe, who, more than adequately, filled the requirement for this attribute.

These were people, both men and women, who had not forgotten that they were first of all human beings, then Christians in the home life, and lastly, by the grace of God, Apostles in the evangelistic field. Because they were secure in their minds and comfortable in their work, they were not afraid to laugh and laugh with me, to cry and cry with me, and, above all, to listen to me, to show concern for me, to confide in me and to let me confide in them. They were not afraid that their friendship with me would somehow mark them as being “on the way out” or as “going down the drain.” It’s true that they have done nothing to show concern for me or to extend any fellowship toward me since I left the church, but I appreciate what they meant to me at a time when I was feeling very burdened over the events and situations that I have already discussed in rather graphic detail.

The fifth sign of a true Apostle is the desire to **GLADLY SPEND AND BE SPENT FOR THE CHURCH**.

I believe this means that the true Apostle is at the disposal of the whole church and every member of it at all times and everywhere. Under no circumstances should partiality be shown, and in no way should a true Apostle decide who is to live and who is to die

depending on personalities or clashes of personalities or because of personal prejudices. I have already told you about my own experience of being treated with abject indifference when I felt I could no longer cope with what I believed was corruption in the church, but, unfortunately, I was not the only case to be handled in the same way.

About a year before I left the church, for example, a family moved to Ottawa from British Columbia. Even though they had not been professing a long time, they appeared to have a “good grasp of things,” and they seemed to fit in and get along well with everyone. One Sunday, upon realizing that they had not been to meeting for a week or two, I asked one of the workers about them.

“Oh,” he said in quite a detached manner, “I think they’re having some problems; I guess they’ll come back when they’re ready.”

They never did.

And, as far as I know, that worker did nothing about trying to encourage them to. Need I tell you that this was the same man who visited me under protest a few weeks later after learning of my decision to also withdraw from the group? He is hardly a man who could write, as did the Apostle Paul, and, in all sincerity, say, “. . . I will gladly spend and be spent for you; [because] I abundantly love you. . .”

To spend and to be spent. . .

To use up and to consume . . .

To **be** used up and to **be** consumed. . . that’s what it means to be a true Apostle—and that, gladly. That does not mean visiting someone because someone else told you that you should. It does not mean not visiting people you dislike personally. It does not mean spending all your time only with people you like, and it surely does not mean visiting people and using them when they are the only available ones in an area and then turning your back on them when other homes become available and when you feel your whims are being catered to a bit more solicitously by someone else.

I saw this happening to my parents. I watched as the workers drifted away to the newer homes with fancier bathrooms and larger bedrooms equipped with twin beds and posturepaedic mattresses.

I watched, and I remembered.

I remembered the sacrifices my mother made year after year when we had so very little to scrape by on but when there was always enough for an extra plate or two of food. I remembered that extra time that was always made to take them where they wanted to go. I remembered the sweat pouring off my mother’s chin and elbows as she stood ironing the brother workers’ white shirts and starched collars on a hot July afternoon long before the days of polyester and air-conditioners. I remembered driving with my parents, after a hard day’s work, four or five evenings a week to attend gospel meetings twenty or thirty or more miles away. I remembered the workers having missions in our own plain, unadorned home and my mother sitting at the telephone dutifully calling to invite our worldly neighbours and our unsaved relatives and friends.

I remembered, and I watched.

I watched the workers—many of them—the newer ones and, yes, some of the older ones who became too good for the old days—turn their backs on those sacrifices because my mother, like her eldest son who followed her, tended to speak her mind—more often in jest than not—and was grossly misunderstood because she did it.

I watched people preaching about spending and being spent for the church, and I listened to them as they told me that that was what they were doing, but when actions failed to support the spoken word, and when deed did not betoken the tongue, I can honestly say that I literally stopped believing. I tried for quite a few years to ignore the corruption and the hypocrisy and to overlook the injustices and the patronage, but eventually, when I could no longer live with myself because all I was doing was living a lie, I “came clean,” and you already know the rest.

“. . . wilt thou know, O vain man,” James asked in his General Epistle, “that faith without works is dead?”

When the act of spending or being spent becomes a mere superficiality, the Apostle becomes merely superficial, and when it becomes a mere formality, the Apostle becomes merely formal.

And, as I understand it, neither formality nor superficiality has any place in the Kingdom of God, either here on earth or in heaven above.

The sixth sign of a true Apostle is encapsulated in the phrase: [having] **care of all the churches**.

These words come at the end of a long list of “signs” that Paul delineated after saying, “Are they ministers of Christ?. . . I am more. . .” And even a casual scan of the list—beatings, stonings, and imprisonments, weariness, pain, thirst, starvation, and nakedness—will convey the true definition of the word **care** and maybe even give it a whole new meaning all its own.

Care. . .

It’s nice when someone says to you, “I care!” And it’s even nicer when they show you that they do.

To care: to look out for and to protect, to have affection and concern for, and, yes, even to worry about. . . What a feeling of comfort and what a sense of true friendship and fellowship that simple word implies!

–Don’t you worry now; I’m here, and I’ll do that for you.

–What needs to be done? Let me take care of that while you get well.

–I’m really sorry for you, and I love you, and I’ll do what I can to help.

That's **care** in its purest, its most unadulterated, and its most selfless form. It's the kind of care that I have experienced from my "worldly" friends, but, with very, very few exceptions, not from my associates in the church. It's the kind of care that is spelled "T-R-U-E C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N-I-T-Y" and the kind that can be called "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father. . ."

Let me tell you a couple of anecdotes to illustrate what kind of care it isn't.

In October, 1966 my mother underwent her first radical mastectomy. Not being the type of person who pitied herself or looked for a lot of sympathy from anyone else, she returned from the hospital and proceeded to get on with her life. By the time late November and early December rolled around and the group of workers converged on the area for the annual round of Special Meetings, she went ahead with her usual custom of entertaining all twelve or fourteen or however many there were of them for a special group meal as well as having one or two of them stay at the home for a good part of a week. Not a single one of them suggested that, perhaps, that year, it would be prudent to give her a break.

During the first eight or ten weeks of 1967 she had to travel each Monday to Montreal where she underwent several radium treatments before her return home on Thursday. Her week-ends were spent cleaning house, cooking for my father, sister, and aged grandfather, and preparing advance menus to leave for them for the following week when she would be away again. On almost every one of those week-ends she had to also cope with the two brother workers who were in that field that year for they planned their visits to coincide with the time that she was home.

That was not care. It was imposition and sheer thoughtlessness. But they were never made to feel anything less than welcome for, whether they deserved it or not, that's the way the workers were always treated in our home.

Then came June of 1967, and my parents headed off for one of the annual conventions about three hundred kilometres away near North Hatley, Quebec.

In order to make the long drive and be on time for the first meeting at 10:00 a.m., they had to get up and have breakfast very early. When the meeting ended about noon, the worker in charge of the proceedings asked if everyone would take his time in trying to get into the dining tent so that elderly folk and mothers with little children could be seated first. This the people seemed to do, and after some time had passed, my father, thinking that it was now everyone else's turn, started to walk toward a table. He had made only one or two steps when he felt a vise-like hand gripping his shoulder and heard a voice saying, "I thought I asked you to wait until the children and old folks were settled."

When he turned, he found himself face to face with Willie Bryant. But what is more significant is that that same worker was the one who, with Christian Steppat, had imposed himself on my parents almost every week-end all winter during my mother's recuperation from her radical mastectomy and her prolonged radium treatments for cancer.

The behaviour of that worker would indicate that he was hardly a true Apostle of Jesus Christ. He obviously did not remember that ". . . God hath tempered the body together. . . that the members should have *the same care one for another*."

My father did not respond or protest, but, instead, he turned away quietly, went to his car, and drove to the nearby village for his meal. And he and my mother went out for all their meals during their three remaining days at that convention.

The seventh sign of a true Apostle is **KNOWLEDGE**.

Not for a minute do I mean to imply that the workers should be graduates of a college or, for that matter, even of high school, but I firmly believe that they should possess an intimate knowledge of the scriptures that they are preaching and of the spirit of Jesus Christ whom they purport to represent. The Apostle Paul certainly must have felt this way when he wrote that he counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [his] lord: for whom [he] suffered the loss of all things. . ."

There is, as I'm sure you've already guessed, no provision in this church for workers attending any form of Bible school or seminary. Such a custom is contrary to their interpretation of the scripture, since in Acts 4: 13, it is written that ". . . when [the people] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were *unlearned and ignorant* men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." You will recall, as well, that when Jesus formed the first "ministry" consisting of the original twelve disciples, he beckoned them directly from their places of employment and told them that they were now "fishers of men." Thus the evangelical circle is comprised entirely of men and women who, "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost," have left their wheat fields and milking stools, their typewriters and their nurses' syringes, their barns, their offices, and their classrooms to "preach the word," to "be instant in season [and] out of season," to "reprove, rebuke, [and] exhort," but, as I have pointed out so often in my treatise, not always with "doctrine" and much less often with "long suffering."

So we have Paul and Barnabas or Barnabas and John Mark. We have Paul and Silas or Silas and Judas. We have Tryphena and Tryphosa and Andronicus and Junia just to list a few. I name these people here in order to show that the ministry works on the system of apprenticeship which pairs up someone recently "called" with someone else older but not necessarily wiser who has been out preaching a little longer. It is this same system that has led to the hierarchy that I have mentioned so often and which has resulted in such rampant corruption, patronage and intimidation that very few on the inside care—or dare—to admit to and discuss.

But let's go back to knowledge and the necessity to know what the scriptures teach for any given situation.

You will remember my telling you that on one occasion I was subjected to a trial by one biased juror—a worker—because I had publicly stated that I was in disagreement with others concerning their opinion of the “great American.” Let me now relate what led up to that Kangaroo Court.

On the night I got called to it, I was having dinner with a cousin at her apartment. She answered the phone and called me to it when she was asked if I was there. She went to the same “meeting” as I did and should not yet have been made privy to the knowledge that I was about to be “spoken to.” What is more, the worker who called me did so from the home of a friend who, as well as one of her daughters, was also a member of the same congregation. That evening, as it happened, she was entertaining.

One of her guests was a visiting worker from France who was residing temporarily with the elder of another church in town. Naturally, when she returned to that other house that night, she reported everything she knew or thought she knew, as well as a few things she didn’t know at all to that other elder.

And it was into that cozy little after-dinner group that I was called to present myself.

I learned later, too, that my antagonist, before arranging the tête-à-tête, had gone to the elder of my group to find out what kind of attitude I had been displaying and to ask him if he thought I was a threat to any of the others. I am purposely being very specific here in order to build my case for the need of an Apostle having intimate knowledge of the scriptures.

I arrived at my friend’s home while everyone was still seated around the dining room table enjoying their coffee and dessert. I was invited to join them, and I did, and then, in due course, the worker who called me there stood up and, in front of all present, asked me if he could talk to me privately in one of the bedrooms. Can you see how publicly I was being treated and how desperate he was to humble me, to humiliate me, to intimidate me, and, ultimately, to destroy me?

How would I have been treated if I had been dealt with according to the knowledge of Jesus Christ?

“. . . if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault *between thee and him alone*: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

“. . . if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

“. . . if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. . . .”

“. . . if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

(“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”)

If you will take the time to read again the situation I just related, you will note that the procedure followed was the exact reverse of the instructions attributed to Jesus Christ in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. The church was consulted first, and at least seven individuals were made aware before I was that I was “in contempt of court.” And then, last but not least, and far from *alone*, I was finally informed of my “fault.”

Somehow I find it hard to believe that my juror lacked knowledge as much as he lacked love. I had my own apartment, and, since I lived alone, he could have called me there privately at any time, and we could have talked—just the two of us—at great length and got to the bottom of any problems which he felt existed. But, since his tendencies for destruction were greater than his tendencies for preservation, he chose to hang me in public where everyone would have a chance to share the spoils of battle and take a piece of the carcass home for a souvenir.

I believe the eighth sign of a true Apostle to be **AUTHORITY**.

I am sure, to the casual reader, this statement will come as a real surprise as I have gone to no small length to outline my feelings and attitudes toward the apostle-centric aspect of the church’s philosophy and to point out the corruption that has been brought about by the dictator-like authority of many of the workers with whom I have come in contact over the years. My real sense is that the corruption is engendered entirely by the hierarchy set up through the system of apprenticeship which I mentioned in my previous point on knowledge, and that the contemptible type of authority that exists comes from self-indulgent, self-satisfied, self-satisfying, self-serving, self-appointed and purely-selfish individuals who see—and use—their position as senior partner as a means of wreaking fear and intimidation upon their junior companions as well as on the men and women in the communities where they are sent to “seek and to save” those who are lost.

That kind of evil authority is, indeed, a far cry from the sign of a true Apostle.

“Now I Paul beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. . . . Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think this again, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ. . . .”

“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us *for edification, and not for your destruction*, I should not be ashamed: . . .”

“. . . that I may not seem as if I would terrify you. . . .”

So there it is: *authority for edification and not for destruction*.

. . . authority for enlightenment.

. . . authority for moral improvement.

. . . but not the authority that destroys, that injures beyond repair and renewal, that kills, that slays, or that puts an end to.

The authority I saw and experienced so much of the time often did exactly that. It pitted and pits worker against worker, friend against friend, friend against worker, and worker against friend. It aroused and arouses feelings of suspicion and distrust, promoted and promotes the practice of patronage, and destroyed and destroys the love, the unity, and the fellowship that the church has always advertised as its main strength and calling card. To this day it creates and encourages the concept of ex-communication, and it does this so thoroughly and so effectively that even vestiges of most human friendships between active members and ex-members are discouraged to the point of really being disallowed. (I will leave further elaboration of this point for a later chapter.)

As I was growing up, however, I did see some evidence of the good authority among the workers, and, as I already mentioned, I had my heroes and my heroines. Years later, as well, I had a rather special relationship with several of them in Germany and Greece, and my brief encounters with some of them in places such as Hong Kong and Thailand, or Lebanon, or Italy and Denmark were, for the most part, very pleasant and quite spiritually rewarding, although, admittedly, in each case I had previously initiated the contact and, with one exception, always looked them up when I arrived.

The ninth sign of a true Apostle is, in my opinion, **FAIRNESS** or a **SENSE OF EQUITY**.

This quality is actually not spelled out in so many words in the New Testament in either the Gospels or the Epistles, but when we look back into the Old Testament, we find that it certainly applies to God himself. Since no true Apostle would dare to be seen as setting himself above his master or placing himself higher than the one who called him, I doubt if he would want to be seen straying far from the example set by the world's ultimate judge.

“. . . for [the Lord] cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”

“The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.”

“. . . but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: . . .”

“The law of truth was in his mouth, and inequity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did not turn many away from inequity.”

I have already pointed out many examples of what I consider to be inequitable and unjust behaviour on the part of the workers, and it would be redundant and boring for me to repeat those stories here again. However, I would like to point out that the facility for inequity and injustice is an integral and a visceral part of the very set-up of the church in general and of the ministry in particular.

Because the workers run the show, and since the older ones have predominance over the younger ones, there is really no one around to do the job of belling the cat. If the senior partners wish to spend time visiting people they like particularly well, it is pretty much beholden on the junior companions to go along with the plan. Rare it is, indeed, for these younger individuals to be consulted in any serious way whatsoever or to be asked to contribute to the plans for any given day, week, or year. On top of that, they have to be more than circumspect in what they say either to their older companions or to the friends in the home where they happen to be staying about what plans may have been made and “agreed” upon.

I spent a year in the ministry, back in 1962, and I can tell you in no uncertain terms that, for a long time, that year ranked as the worst twelve months of my life.

About three months after I went in, my companion received an invitation to go to the Maritimes for that season's round of special meetings. He was ten years my senior and had been preaching for ten years, and he was just coming into his own in the sense that he was now senior enough and well-enough known to be considered a commodity in the “visiting workers” market. I had previously travelled extensively in the Maritimes, but, despite the fact that I had numerous friends and several relatives throughout the area, there was no way that I could be included in his invitation or his plans to go there. I had to be “left home” in Ontario and “farmed out” to temporary companions and suffer from the inequity of being too young and too inexperienced to be considered an asset to any of the good Christian folk “down East.”

One of my temporary companions was a man who is still alive, born and bred not very far from Niagara Falls, and who has spent his entire apostleship in the Province of Ontario. If you need proof of the practice of inequity and injustice, you need only to look at his lifestyle and behaviour.

He is, as the saying goes, “over the work” in Ontario and Quebec, so that makes him “The Boss.” It has been years and years since he ever had a permanent companion and spent any time in the mission field. He goes wherever he wants to go and does pretty much whatever he wants to do most of the time. He has the best cars and the best homes at his disposal, and, believe me, he takes advantage of them. He is invited all over the world to “minister the Word,” and he has next to the final say in who is going to preach where and with whom throughout his administrative region.

Surely I need not point out that such inequity—such power, really—has been, can be, and is corrupt, and that it can and does breed corruption. Other stories have been told—some of them more believable than others—of the senior companion making dental and medical appointments in nearby cities and, while there, using the time to meet and carry on romantic interludes with another senior worker or, in some cases, with one of the Christian friends. Some stories were discounted as vicious and outright lies, some were proven to be true, and the parties were disciplined, and, in not a few instances, the church was purged of the alleged culprits, the execution of which action successfully added to the feelings of self-righteousness and exclusive holiness of which the church and its members were already far too full.

I have to say, though, that it didn't matter so much to me that one worker had a rich brother whose mansion and Cadillac were at his disposal. It didn't matter so much to me that one of the "sister" workers sneaked off before our very eyes, had an affair with the "worldly" son of the old established Christian couple to whose home we went for meeting every Sunday, and, after getting pregnant and carrying the child to full term, gave it up for adoption and went back out to preach and denied for months that she'd ever done such a thing. It didn't matter so much to me that one of the Canadian brothers I knew in Germany lied to me about a headache, sneaked out of my apartment and went off to meet somebody or other at a local bar and was picked up, soused to his eyeballs, the following morning by the town police who had been helping us carry out a search for him all night long. It didn't matter so much to me that the wife of the man who owned the farm where one of the conventions was held every year ran away with one of the workers who had been ex-communicated and was never heard from again; or that a very straight-laced, severe sort of older "sister" worker in one of the western provinces was accused—and the accusations were documented—of having an affair with one of the Christian men in her "field."

It didn't even matter that much to me when I found out that the overseeing worker in British Columbia was actually depositing money in the bank account of one of the older and more favoured of the professing friends and was systematically sending it out to workers in foreign fields so they could travel more extensively. (There is nothing wrong with this practice, you understand, as long as it is done openly and honestly, but when the church insists that the workers must go out by faith, that they must trust God implicitly for their next and every need, that they must not take "scrip for their journey," and that they must live entirely by freewill offerings, then it is wrong—wrong because it is kept hidden, wrong because it is, for all intents and purposes, denied, and wrong because it contravenes and contradicts the very dogma which has been held up as making this church exclusively Biblical.)

But what did matter to me, as I have said, was the treatment received.

I would love to have had a phone call or a visit to show that I was "counted in with the faithful, with Christ, and the few." I would love to have received honest answers when I asked about the validity of allegations of others and about others. I would love to have been respected for the fact that, over the years, I had made a conscious effort to learn the reason of the hope that was within me. I wanted to be given credit for the understanding and feelings of humanity that I had for the ministry and the vulnerability of its members, and I craved to be given a chance to prove my love and understanding by being used, by being asked to serve, and by being shown that I, too, was a necessary and an integral part of this "sect [which was] every where. . . spoken against."

In fact, all I wanted was to be treated with justice and equity, just like everyone else; but I think I felt exactly the way the prophet Isaiah must have felt when he wrote, "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth inequity. . . And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

The tenth attribute I have chosen as a sign of a true Apostle is **LOVE**.

"We then," wrote Paul, "as workers together. . . in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. . . by **love unfeigned**. . . ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged."

It sounds so straightforward, doesn't it?

—We love you.

—We have spoken very frankly to you.

—We have opened our heart wide to you all.

To me, the striking and significant thing here is that the frankness and openness which were shown by the apostles—or workers, as we are now comfortable in calling them—and the church members—or friends, so called—came without condition, without prerequisite, without partiality, and without prejudice.

They came about because, again, as Paul put it, (and I quote here from the New English Translation) ". . . the love of Christ leaves us no choice . . . His purpose in dying for all was that men. . . should live for him. . . With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man. . . This is not another attempt to recommend ourselves to you: we are rather giving you a chance to show yourselves proud of us; then you will have something to say to those whose pride is all in outward show and not in inward worth."

I love that simple, uncluttered philosophy, and, had I experienced it personally or even detected it in any way in the last ten years of my sojourn in the church, I am confident that I would never have left the church or turned away from what I had been programmed for a lifetime to believe was the Truth and the One-and-Only-Way-of-God.

I once read that Mahatma Gandhi, that great and famous pacifist who helped lead India to its independence in 1947, said that he would have become a Christian himself if it had not been for the indifference he saw on the part of those who professed to be Christians. Isn't it ironical that after spending over thirty years in one of the strictest and most fundamental of Christian sects, I left because of the same indifference, the same hypocrisy, and the same lack of love and understanding that kept one of the world's most famous Hindus out.

My dictionary states that there are four definitions for "frankness" or, more appropriately, the idea of being frank: *candid*, *open*, *outspoken*, and *straightforward*. It does not say, or, if it does, I can't find it, that this is synonymous with being rude. There is no way that anyone could ever read II Corinthians 6: 11 and interpret the words as saying, "[People] of Corinth, we have spoken very rudely

to you. . . ,” but somehow so many of my latter experiences in the church seemed to be with people who knew no other way of being open, frank, and forthright.

It was perfectly all right to be “frank” as long as it meant telling you that your hair was too long or too short.

“Straightforward” meant letting you know that you were not supposed to have a beard or a television or a stereo or a radio.

“Open” meant that you could be told you had no business having an opinion, or, if you had one, you certainly had no right to express it.

“Candid” meant being told to mind your own business and not to meddle in things that were either considered of no concern to you or were not thought to be spiritually edifying.

“Being frank” certainly did not mean being honest. It did not mean speaking to you or treating you with a spirit of love and care. It did not mean sitting down and talking with you and addressing your concerns over “the state of the Kingdom,” an— at least, in my case— it certainly did not mean being extended the right hand of fellowship.

Can you begin to imagine what being “outspoken” meant?

But there I go, or so I will be told, being negative again.

So let’s be positive then!

Considering once more that the tenth attribute of a true Apostle is **love**, let us examine what the “Good Word” says about that very quality. To do that, I feel I can do no better than to turn to the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians; and, here again, I am quoting from the New English Translation:

“Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one.

“Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence.

“Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men’s sins, but delights in the truth.

“There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.

“Love will never come to an end.”

Yes, I would love to be positive, but when I study this catalogue of definitions for what is perhaps the most important quality that a true Apostle of Jesus Christ should possess, I cannot help but become just ever so slightly cynical, just ever so noticeably negative, and just ever so perceptibly perturbed.

If love is kind, where was it hiding when Willie Bryant turned my father away from the door of the dining tent at the convention at North Hatley, Quebec?

What happened to that love that keeps no score of wrongs and does not gloat over other men’s sins when I was told by George Poole that everyone from Moncton, New Brunswick to North Bay, Ontario were talking about me but I could neither be told *what* I had done nor what they were accusing me of doing?

If love is never rude, what evidence of that love was in the allegations of Andrew Abernathy, that arrogant, old American, that we were all a bunch of long-haired hyenas and porcupines at the convention at Almonte, Ontario?

If there is nothing that love cannot face, why was it so noticeably absent from the heart of the worker—the same George Poole, I hasten to add—who had to be brought so much against his will to visit me two weeks after I announced that I would no longer be going back to the meetings on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings?

If love delights in the truth, why was I virtually—no, literally—excluded from direct and active fellowship for so many years because I disagreed with practices that had no scriptural foundation or because I simply asked for truthful explanations.

If love will never come to an end, why have I never in over fifteen years’ time been approached and invited back to a gospel meeting in order that I might see the error of my ways and turn again to the church’s all-inclusive plan of salvation?

If love is not quick to take offence, why did the whole church—one and all—from the mightiest apostle to the least apostle and from the most superior church member to the most insignificant church member decide to have nothing whatsoever to do with me and that my name and presence was “anathema” in their holy and sanctified circles?

Where is the love that would allow that good and spiritually inclined friend of mine to enter into full and satisfactory fellowship after all these years even though she has remarried after divorcing her first husband who deserted her and left her high and dry to raise their family all by herself?

I am sure that some of the workers have such love, and I’m also almost sure that they would believe the truth of the words I have written, but there is no question in my mind that they have to “vote according to party lines,” and failure to do so would see them ending up where I am: on the outside looking in, or at the end of their spiritual careers and spiritual experience looking back.

In that same passage in I Corinthians Paul told the world that “in a word, there are three things that last forever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love.” When that same man again wrote his letter to the Galatian church, he stated that “. . . the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.” And he went on to instruct his

fellow Apostles that “if a man should do something wrong. . . on a sudden impulse, you who are endowed with the Spirit must set him right again very gently.”

“Help one another,” he added, “to carry these heavy loads, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

When I look back over my lifetime of experiences before the church, in the church, and since the church, I realize more and more that I was held and attracted by what I thought existed, by what was preached that existed, and by what I wanted to believe existed. I even make no exception for my own part and efforts in helping to further this propaganda both in and out of the ministry.

Recent experiences have taught me as nothing previous could ever have done the truth in Paul’s words when he wrote: “I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophesy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I am none the better.”

Yes, dear Reader, beware!

This church of which I write is filled with self-righteousness, but you’ll be hard pressed to find a lot of the real stuff. It’s filled with promises, but you may have difficulty finding anyone with enough integrity to keep them. The people exude a spirit of piety, and they purport to have stepped directly out of the last page of the New Testament, but they, like their predecessors before them—the “Bleeding Pharisees” who used to put honey on the scroll—walk about, likewise, with their eyes closed lest they see a good deed that needs doing or, more to the point, in case they might run into an alleged heretic or two whose very presence could contaminate them and rob them of their spiritual virginity.

The church produces “labourers for the harvest” and goes through the motions of encouraging the poor souls to remain there, but they will do so only as long as they remain submissive and subservient to the hierarchical structure of power set up by the ministry to manipulate them and control their every move ... or until they fall in love and have to leave with “a nervous break-down or a bad heart condition”.

This church and all its members – almost without exception – will tell you that they are patterned after and grew out of the doctrine of Jesus Christ and, indeed, the very Bible itself, but unless you “sing the right tune,” “vote the right way,” and learn the language of Pharisaism and patronage, you will spend the rest of your life listening to sounding gongs and clanging cymbals telling you how much they love you because your hair is the right length, or because you shave every day, or because your skirt is not too short, or because you slip them a \$100-dollar bill to put gas in the Cadillac they have just borrowed from the wealthy deacon who has been granted the dubious honour of having the “church meet in [his] house.”

“To their zeal of God,” as Paul wrote in Romans 10, “I can testify; but it is an ill-informed zeal. For they ignore God’s way of righteousness, and try to set up their own, and therefore they have not submitted themselves to God’s righteousness.

“For Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith.”

Go to **Chapter 5**