

Rittenhouse & Sweetland

Letters of Concern

By Dr. Walter Rittenhouse and William H. Sweetland

Revised May 27, 2019

April 15, 1954 to Dear Jack, Willie and Brethren

July 16, 1954 to Dear Jack, Willie and Brethren

No Date Given to Dear Friends

December 2, 1957 to Chris & Ellen

April 15, 1954

My Dear Jack,* Willie* and Brethren,

It is with a sense of regret we find it necessary to write this letter, but to refrain from so doing would be acting contrary to the dictates of our conscience. It is not in bitterness toward any that we write, but in sorrow that these things are so.

It was in 1922 we heard the Gospel, believed the message delivered, and accepted same without reservation. Since that time, we have endeavored to live up to the light revealed to us through Christ.

A few years ago we began to see inconsistencies between what was being preached and that which was being practiced by our older brethren in particular. We realize now, part of these practices can be attributed to **a semi-secret agreement made by a minority of the older responsible brethren, about 1928**. Much could be said concerning this pact and its results, past and present, but suffice to say, power was delegated unto themselves which has enabled them to place geographical boundaries and human limitations on their co-laborers. This step has wrought an incalculable amount of trouble and distress amongst God's professing people and servants throughout the world. Moreover, it has been a hindrance in the extension of the Kingdom.

Another thing that has brought distress to us and others, is the step that brought official recognition in Washington, D.C., which means that people of this fellowship are no longer without recognition and a denominational name. Documentary evidence will prove the name "**Christian Conventions**" is now a recognized religious organization registered in Washington, D.C. As such, certain concessions were solicited and granted by the Government. For the past eight years all such organizations by Federal Law have been required to disclose certain information regarding purposes and practices. You men, as administrators of **Christian Conventions**, are familiar with this law, but refuse to conform to same; with the result you are now in default, and in due course of time, subject to investigation and penalties. As loyal citizens of the U.S., we cannot be a party to this policy. It is in conflict with the Scriptures, the Government, and our own convictions.

You have also recently made a ruling relative to workers who marry and desire to continue in the ministry. You state that to marry is proof of a diminished sacrifice and a limited service, and is what you consider to be a change of status, not acceptable to "**Christian Conventions**" administration. Such reasoning is obviously neither scriptural nor reasonable. God alone can measure degrees of sacrifice and will determine rewards accordingly. Compulsory celibacy is commonly recognized as the soil upon which immoral conduct and behavior thrives. To make such a ruling is clearly in conflict with God's laws and human rights, to say nothing of our constitutional liberties. This sort of dictatorial regimentation has resulted in the shipwreck of many lives which your records will prove. It is exactly the opposite to what the scripture teaches and what we heard and believed from your lips thirty years ago.

Further, substantiating evidence indicates that "**Christian Conventions**" **administrators**, self-appointed and without membership representation, have assumed and exercised the authority to accuse, convict, and penalize brethren without a hearing; ignoring the rights of all people to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Jesus neither delegated nor authorized any such practices.

The above are serious charges, but are made NOT without positive evidence. To silently agree to and support these administration policies would place us where we were thirty odd years ago, in traditional bondage to men and systems; therefore, in view of the facts herein stated and the present indifferences of the administration to the principles involved, we cannot with good conscience cooperate further, until these vital issues are seriously considered and corrected.

Sincerely your Brethren in Christ,

RITTENHOUSE & SWEETLAND

July 16, 1954

Dear Jack, Willie and Brethren,

Yours of May 17th, in reply to ours of April 15th duly received and appreciated. We believe your blanket denial of all the important issues we mentioned in our letter is perhaps due to the fact we did not disclose our evidence. However, the statements made are based upon authentic information, some of which we will now disclose in order to refresh your memory, and we sincerely hope it will create a desire to seriously consider these vital issues and correct same while time and opportunity permits.

The meeting we referred to in paragraph 3 took place in Ireland, Oct. 12, 1928, in the home of Andy Knox, among those present were **James Jardine, John T. Carroll, Willie Gill, Joe Twomley, Andrew Robb, Wilson Reid and a half dozen others**. The main purpose of this meeting was to promulgate a rule of conduct among older workers. This rule is sometimes referred to as **"The Workers Basis of Fellowship"** or **"The decrees"** or **"Conditions of Fellowship."** No matter by what title it is known, the purpose was to place geographic boundaries and human limitations by older Workers upon their Brethren, as stated by us in Paragraph 3 of our letter to you. **Jack** will recall that when these decrees were being discussed, and some of the brethren refused to accept them (since they tend to limit the leading power of God), **Jack** exclaimed and we quote: *"I will have no fellowship with you!"* and walked out of the room followed by the Workers who were in favor of the rule. This was another milestone on the road to regimentation contrary to the teachings of Jesus and in conflict with **Jack's** oft repeated phrase: *"In this family of God, all serve and none rule."* See Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:25-27. We trust this record of events will serve to refresh your memory and confirm our statement in letter of April 15.

As to your elaborations, **Jack**, concerning the **"Sinister Meeting"** at Truckee in 1949. It is unfortunate that you were either misinformed concerning the subject matter of those talks, or have chosen to misconstrue their purpose. The few who met there will continue to look forward to the day when the true purpose of those who were preserved is revealed by the *"One who sees and knows the hearts of all men, and changes not."*

You state that paragraph 4 is absolutely without foundation, and that no concessions were solicited or granted to us by the Government. In that connection we wish to call your attention to the following quotation from a form letter written by you, **Jack**, to the Government requesting recognition and consideration by us—

"In the light of the above definition by Colonel C. Dargusch and the fact there are in the United States approximately:

- *3000 assemblies of Christians meeting for worship and breaking of bread in homes of members.*
- *900 ministers—men and women devoting all their time to evangelistic and other church work.*
- *100 Christian Conventions of four days duration each year with an average attendance of from 350-500.*
- *I submit to you that as a body of Christians we are entitled to recognition."*

Another letter you wrote bears the following statement:

"And I sincerely hope the foregoing information will sustain the claim of ministers of Assemblies of Christians in Canada to exception from military training as such."

The purpose of these declaration was obviously to become recognized as a Religious Organization, which in turn would give us the same concessions and consideration granted to all other religious organization in the United States and Canada, and we were so recognized.

The latter part of our paragraph 4, refers to another law enacted in 1945. This law operates in conjunction with the U.S. Revenue Dept. which requires all Religious Organizations to register for the purpose of classification and identification. Among other things, this law was planned to disclose all subversive organizations hiding under the cloak of Religion. We have called to your attention a number of times, this vital matter, but so far the records of the Revenue Dept. fail to disclose any registration has been made by you. The indifference to this vital issue compelled us to declare our conviction publicly, so now we are free from further responsibility, either to you, or the U.S. Government.

We would suggest you get the best legal counsel possible to assist in this serious matter. We offered to furnish legal counsel two or three years ago, but it was not accepted. The responsibility now rests upon the **Christian Convention Administration or their successors**. To pass this responsibility on to the latter seems most unfair.

Paragraph 5. Comments on this paragraph and your references attached are in conflict with I Cor. 9:5; Prov. 18:22; Heb. 13:4; also Mark 10:42-45 and Luke 22:25-27. We find it impossible to justify your latest ruling for workers who marry, with your statement to Dr. Gabeline May 27, 1929: *"It is not true we discourage marriage, and in a subtle way forbid the marriage of preachers, or that husbands and wives are separated. These statements with the wicked suggestion re: the marriage bond on another page are as slanderous as they are untrue. Marriage is taught to be honorable in all, an institution God given and God ordained, the most sacred of all human relationships. Preachers are not forbidden to marry, many preachers were married before going forth to preach, other preachers have married since going forth and labor and travel in the Gospel, I Cor. 9:5."*

We also recall your comments at Milltown in 1923 relative to **Dave and Emily Christie's marriage**. *"There is a difference between I Cor. 3 & 4, and Chapter 9. If Chapters 3-4 deal with the marks of true ministers, then Chapter 9 deals with the rights and liberties of true ministers."* Further, in your sermon at Milltown you said, *"We must be true to what God has revealed, and recognize the rights and liberties which are the heritage of all God's servants. We cannot and will not therefore, refuse them a place in this ministry or the right to speak from this platform."* In the light of these and other statements made by yourself and older brethren, we cannot conceive how you, **Jack**, dare to distort I Cor. 9:5 now, to fit a new man-made rule. This ruling has no parallel except to that of the priests and nuns of the Catholic Church.

Paragraph 6 recites what is common knowledge among the friends, and requires little further comment. The pattern often takes this form, and we quote a letter:

*"I will never forget the night the worker came to our home to excommunicate us. I always feel he was acting against his own conscience, pushed by what he called 'Loyalty to His Fellow Workers and the pact made in 1928.' He put before us two choices: (1) either be led by him or (2) be excommunicated. There were three of us and we said, 'We choose to be led by the Spirit.'" The three were excommunicated. In the light of this incident and many others, we cannot accept your statement, **Jack**—quote:*

"No person has ever been excluded from the Fellowship of God's People without just cause."

We wish to dispel all sorrow or concern among workers and friends as expressed in paragraph 7, because of our recent action. Had there been a change of heart on our part, alarm would certainly have been in order. The reports circulated in the Hayden Lake area were based upon presumption and supposition, and are untrue. If we have been adversely influenced, it is because of what we have seen and heard within this fellowship rather than outside. We find much comfort these days in knowing God still rules, and He will lead any or all who in purpose and practice seek to serve and worship Him. In John 4:21, Jesus made clear that it is not here or there that matters, but how and why, verse 23-24.

This indwelling of God's spirit rules out all dogmas, and opens the door of Fellowship for all possessors of His spirit wherever found. Our only concern at the present time is that we find nothing in your letter, **Jack**, which suggest you understand or appreciate our true position, or the seriousness of your responsibility to your friends, the law, and your God. So we pray that these vital issues to which we have called your attention, and for which you are largely responsible, will soon be considered and corrected before it is too late.

With best wishes for your health and welfare, we remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

RITTENHOUSE & SWEETLAND

TTT Editor's Notes:

***Walter Rittenhouse (March 3, 1879-February 21, 1963)** married ***Ina May Griffin** on Sept. 5, 1895. (1883-1973); buried in **Glen Abbey Memorial Park**, Bonita, San Diego County, California

His son Orville, who never professed, moved into Dr. Rittenhouse's mansion on a hill in Lemon Grove, California (Kay Arvig-Downs, Sept. 2, 1992, to Kathleen Lewis*)

William Henry Sweetland. Born about 1887; married **Adina May/Mae Faull** on March 1907 (1881-1968 in La Mesa, California). While alone with Kay Arvig-Downs on his deathbed, Sweetland told her, "If anyone of them ever tells you I've changed my mind in their favor, don't you believe it." Reportedly, the Workers did tell others that Sweetland went back to the Sect and many believed it. Buried in **Glen Abbey Memorial Park**, Bonita, San Diego County, California. Sweetlands had two sons:

***Chester Faull Sweetland** (1914 – 1985) married **Clara DenHerder** on September 3, 1952 in Alpine, San Diego County, California. (Clara 1920—) Buried in Glen Abbey Memorial Park, Bonita, San Diego County, California. Chester and Clara continued in the Two by Two Sect for all their lives.

***Orwyn William Sweetland** (Nov 27, 1910 – Aug. 5, 1995) married ***Althea M. Carlson** in February, 1934 (1913-1998). Buried in **Glen Abbey Memorial Park**, Bonita, San Diego County, California

***Photos of graves in Find-a-Grave**

Jack = John T. Carroll, Overseer of Western USA & Canada

Willie = William Jamieson, who took Jack's place as Overseer after Jack's death in 1957

Dave & Emily Christie – brother and sister workers who married (without securing prior permission) and pioneered the work in Hawaii. Dave Christie was a first cousin to Jack Carroll

See: **Married Worker List**.

Walter Rittenhouse
4575 58th Street
San Diego, 15, California

W. H. Sweetland
4047 Vista Grande Dr.
San Diego 15, California

(no date given)

Dear Friends:

During the past months, many conflicting reports have been circulated about us among our friends. We therefore take this opportunity to state the facts, in order that all may know the truth and exactly what took place.

Several years ago, we felt moved to write the older workers regarding certain doctrines being preached and practiced among us, which were in conflict with the principles of truth taught by Jesus and the Scriptures.

Our appeal that those errors be seriously considered by those responsible, was met with denials and much opposition, and within a few weeks, word was spread around the world among our friends, by workers, that we had **“given up the truth”** and **“left the Testimony”**.

It was quite apparent from the method used that a deliberate attempt was being made to undermine our relationship with others, and to defend the wrongs instead of correcting them.

It is indeed sad this attitude was taken, because God has permitted during recent months, the drawing aside of a veil and exposing to view, conditions about which we were deeply concerned. Little did we think that in our day we would see some claiming to be ministers, compromising to distort the scriptures, in order to substitute doctrines unscriptural in form, and deceptive in practice, for the simple principles of self-discipline that Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount, and throughout the gospels.

Strange as it may seem, since we declared our position and stated certain facts, no one claiming authority has come to us seeking to discuss our contentions. If our position is questioned by any one, it is his privilege to meet with us and discuss these vital issues. A persistent refusal to do this only serves to prove that those claiming authority must feel insecure, to say the least.

We wish to dispel all concern about our purpose and relationship with God. During the past few years, we have enjoyed true worship and fellowship with God as never before, and He has enriched our lives and experience far beyond our expectation, for which we are most grateful.

This new experience has disclosed to us the difference between organized fellowship, and the family form of fellowship, and we now have a sympathetic understanding of human weaknesses through coercion and fear of men.

We continue to pray for those who have confused the implications of true ministry, disregarding the injunction of Jesus in Matt. 20:25-27. Quote:

25. *“But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

26. *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;*

27. *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:”*

(The first 2-3 words of this paragraph are unreadable).....with the courage of our convictions stand firm for truth, justice and liberty, the basic principles lived and taught by the Lord Jesus nineteen hundred years ago.

With Christian Love to All,

Signed: Will Sweetland

Wm. H. Sweetland
4047 Vista Grande Dr.
San Diego, California
December 2, 1957

Dear Chris & Ellen,

Just a little note this P.M. so that you will know we are still in circulation. The past several weeks have been busy ones, and we hope a little has been accomplished, or at least a start made in the right direction. Doc and I have been just coasting along trying to arrive at some constructive and helpful decisions. We have serious doubts that the present campaign approach will be successful from God's viewpoint, because some will lose confidence in both God and Men, which is just what the devil is trying hard to accomplish.

Our visits with **Jim Jardine, Ed Cornock and Hugh Mathews** accomplished what we started out to do, but some feel we should have gone further in an attempt to solve all the problems. The big issue with us was defamation of character with a law suit in the offering (sic), unless given priority at once, period. A week ago we spent several hours with **Jim Jardine and Ed Cornock** following their meeting with **Willie J., Therald S., Malcolm G., E. Tenniswood, Ernest Nelson, Howard Mooney**. Just what was discussed outside of our case at that meeting we don't know. (**Jack** admitted to **Jim** some time before his death, he had made a mistake in attempting to interfere with our business affairs, so this gave Jim a strong argument to neutralize the Smear Campaign, which had been in motion for a number of years, all of which was intended to elevate the workers, and humble us to the dust, which failed utterly.)

Since Jim wrote, and I quote, *“In answer to your comments on the possibility of a peaceful settlement, I want all to know that my acceptance of an invitation to consult with you two was conditioned (in my mind) by the fact I knew you men, and felt encouraged to believe that an understanding regarding difficulties could be reached, but I have not accepted any responsibility for having other cases confounded (sic) with yours. I see possibilities of making progress, one step at a time, but I am not prepared to start clearing up the troubles of many people who lost fellowship for different reasons. I would not feel it wise for me to come West, and continue what we discussed in Denver unless it be understood to be one case at a time, as I believe is the course followed even in worldly cases”.*
end of quote

In the light of the above, there was no use trying to force an issue which we, or any we knew, was ready to undertake. Doc and I have been talking over the overall picture as we now see it, and it would seem to us that if anyone feels like there should be further discussions with the powers that be, it should be in the form of an open forum, rather than a jury hearing. With such a meeting the

problems of doctrine, policies, and practices, could be freely discussed with a view to locate common ground for “peaceful co-existence”, and if possible eliminate the present unsavoury personal campaign. The panel could consist of a half doz. older workers and the same number of disturbed friends, a Moderator, reader of questions, and recorder. It would seem wise to have all questions typed and unsigned, to eliminate the personal influence of bondage, etc.

Time only will tell what, if anything, was accomplished among the brethren at Long Beach; time may disclose changes for better or worse. We are for peaceful co-existence instead of forced consolidation as usually tried, recognizing only one head, “Christ Jesus,” and all who serve and love God as brethren. It seems clear that whenever the church fails, or becomes confused, it is when and as men begin to climb, and seek place by fair or foul means, rather than bend and serve, as Jesus so clearly taught.

Ernest Nelson was at Long Beach, but I did not see him. Doc is fine and sends greetings. May and I are fair, considering all the goings-on. These are only suggestions, so don't take them very serious. So nice to hear both on the phone; thanks a lot for your interest in our health, with much love to all there, as ever yours in His Care.

Doc, May & Will

P.S. I wanted to say both **Jim and Ed C.** were gentlemen to us in all our discussions; however the boys at the other meetings might not have fared so well.