

# A HISTORY OF “ANTI-ISM” FROM THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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## Introduction

One of the unmistakable lessons of history is the tendency of men to engage in extremes of thought and practice.<sup>i</sup> This fact is no more clearly demonstrated than in the field of religion. Roman Catholicism’s extreme of salvation by meritorious works, which it has advocated for centuries, and the sixteenth-century Reformers’ opposite extreme of salvation by faith only (generally perpetuated in the Protestant denominations), provide a classic illustration. Moreover, extremes sometimes (but not always) beget extremes. The “works only” system of the Roman Church certainly begat the “faith only” system of the Reformers.

The Lord’s church has likely never been immune to extremes. Every extreme position among God’s people, from the apostolic era to the present, revolves basically around the two opposite philosophies, commonly designated “liberalism” and “anti-ism.” Although these terms are likely generally understood, they are nonetheless worthy of brief definition in relation to the subsequent material in this study. *Liberalism* refers to a certain attitude and approach in religion that is unwilling to be as strict and definitive as God’s Word is. A theological “liberal” is “generous,” but he has a misplaced “generosity” through which he “gives away” things which he does not own or possess, but which belong to Another—namely, to God. “Liberals” refuse to bind certain things that God has bound; they treat some matters of Scriptural obligation as if they were matters of our human option or judgment. Brethren afflicted with this spiritual malady tend to rely on their emotions and subjective opinions (thereby making presumptions on the grace and mercy of God), rather than adhering strictly to the law of Christ. An example of “liberalism” is the teaching that the church may observe the Lord’s supper on days of the week besides the Lord’s day. This mentality in the church has already produced massive and devastating apostasy over the past four decades, and it continues to gain influence.

The opposite extreme to “liberalism” is “anti-ism,” the focal point of this manuscript. By *anti-ism* I refer to the disposition to be stricter than the law of God is. Brethren of this inclination often occupy a negative position, opposing or forbidding things which God allows (thus the “anti” part of *anti-ism*). The other side of the “anti-ism” coin is that such brethren also often seek to bind or enjoin things God has not bound or enjoined. In either case (whether forbidding or enjoining), these brethren assume the roles of lawmakers on God’s behalf.<sup>ii</sup> “Anti-ism” thus treats certain matters of option and human judgment as matters of Scriptural law and obligation. An illustration of “anti-ism” would be to forbid the observance of the Lord’s Supper before the

sermon on the Lord's day or to demand that it come afterward. Thus, the private scruples of the "anti," rather than the actual dictates of the law of Christ, become the standard of doctrine and behavior.

By a large majority, brethren of the "anti" persuasion believe strongly in the verbal inspiration of the Bible and its authority, for which we commend them. However, their mistake is in making their opinions as authoritative as the Scriptures themselves are. Just as the "liberals" are broader than God is, the "antis" are narrower than God is in their approach to the Bible and religion. Furthermore, just as "liberalism" is progressive, ever enlarging the content of what God authorizes, so "anti-ism" often draws ever narrower the boundaries of doctrine and those whom its advocates can fellowship (e.g., at first they opposed church support of orphan homes; next they forbade church support for any non-Christian; finally some of them decreed that a church—out of the church treasury—could not give one penny to provide milk for a starving baby).

While varied in their points of attack, all of the "anti" movements make the same basic arguments and the same basic mistakes in Biblical interpretation: (1) They allege that they have found an "exclusive pattern" for their way of doing things when there is none (note, this is not to deny that there are some matters for which the Scriptures do provide an "exclusive pattern"). (2) They elevate incidental matters to the level of essential matters.

In the course of this study, my use of the terms *anti-ism* and *anti* in reference to certain brethren is not with any unkind, disrespectful, or malevolent intent. Rather, since these are terms generally understood, I use them for the simple purpose of ease of identity (even as some "anti" brethren use the term *institutional* to identify some brethren with whom they disagree on these certain issues). As with "liberalism," we shall see that "anti-ism" has manifested itself in a wide variety of issues among brethren.

### **New Testament Roots and Illustrations of "Anti-ism"**

While this treatise deals specifically with the history of anti-ism in the past two centuries, this phenomenon in religion has been evident for much longer. Entire manuscripts have been devoted to examples of "anti-ism" in the New Testament. I will therefore not belabor this material, but still I deem it helpful to give brief attention to some of these cases as background material for more recent manifestations of the phenomenon.

The scribes and Pharisees are sometimes called "first century 'antis'" with good reason. They ever sought to bind upon others as law their own traditions and opinions, which God had not bound (Mat. 9:11–13; 12:10–12; 15:2; et al.). Clearly, the Judaizing teachers of the early years of the church were antis in their contentions. They taught: "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). However, God had not bound

circumcision as a religious act or a condition of covenant privilege under the new covenant (v. 24). Therefore, those who were binding it were troublesome and were attempting to subvert the brethren by binding a law that God had not bound. They were, in fact, adding another condition to the Lord's plan of salvation.

Even the apostle Peter was caught up in the spirit of "anti-ism," as demonstrated by his behavior in Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14). The Gospel was for Gentile and Jew without respect of persons by God (Acts 10:34–35), but Peter refused to eat with Gentile brethren and influenced others to do the same. He was refusing those whom God had accepted, thus binding where God had not bound. As Paul "resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11), so must we continue to do today in regard to those guilty of Peter's behavior on this occasion—and for the same reason.

Diotrephes was guilty of the same "anti" error by refusing to extend fellowship to those who were in fellowship with God and by forbidding others to fellowship faithful brethren (3 John 9–10). Paul warned of a coming apostasy in which men would forbid others to marry and to eat meat (1 Tim. 4:3), but these were things which God **allowed** (Heb. 13:4; 1 Tim. 4:3–4). The apostates Paul described were making laws which God had **not** made. Paul labeled those teachers as hypocritical liars and called their doctrines the "doctrines of demons" (vv. 1–2). They were "antis" in the truest sense.

### **"Ant-ism" in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Whatever elements of "anti-ism" there might have been among brethren in the first half of the nineteenth century were apparently so miniscule that they did not merit room in the history of those times, at least not in any that I could find. Those who were heralding the plea for restoration of primitive Christianity were so busy continuing to study themselves out of their respective Calvinistic heritages and helping others escape from sectarian error that whatever "anti" mentality there might have been stayed beneath the surface.

The latter half of the century was dominated by the great upheavals in the church over the introduction of mechanical instruments of music and the launching of the American Christian Missionary Society—and the other denominational trappings that inevitably followed in their aftermath. These two issues and their implications concerning Biblical authority for the worship and work of the church, respectively, served as the wedge that caused unavoidable division among the Lord's people, officially recognized by the federal census of 1906.

The thoroughgoing discussions resulting from the instrument and society issues produced a climate of scrutiny of numerous other practices which had previously gone unchallenged. Peripheral issues arose among brethren who were united in their opposition to

the innovations. In searching for Bible authority for various practices, some arrived at extreme positions. Earl West is likely correct in his assessment of the cause of the “anti-ism” that emerged in the final quarter of the century: <sup>iii</sup> In other words, the “anti” positions generally represented over-zealous reactions to various practices which were **perceived** to be unauthorized innovations, but which were not such at all when fully examined and understood. The principal controversies revolved around “located” preachers, the order of worship, “Bible colleges,” and Sunday schools.

### ***The “Anti-located Preacher” Issue***

As early as the 1860s, some congregations, especially in metropolitan areas, were hiring a preacher, placing him “in charge” of the congregation, and calling him “the pastor.”<sup>iv</sup> Brethren were justified in opposing this practice as unauthorized, but some did not perceive that it was the one-man “pastor” system that was unscriptural, rather than the practice of congregations employing a “located preacher” to serve under their respective elderships. From opposition to the “pastor system” arose an “anti-located-preacher” sentiment that long persisted among a large segment of brethren. David Lipscomb and *The Gospel Advocate* opposed the local preacher concept for several years, while also allowing brethren to defend the practice in its pages.

Opposition to “located preachers” was still strong in 1889, when brethren in Shelby County, Illinois, issued the “Sand Creek Address and Declaration.” After Daniel Sommer preached to a gathering of six thousand for an hour and forty minutes, decrying the innovations being recklessly foisted upon the church, one of the Sand Creek elders read the document. It shamed those who were introducing the “innovations and corruptions,” and stated that if they did not repent, faithful saints could no longer regard them as brethren. Along with church-sponsored festivals, instrumental music and choirs in worship, and the missionary society, the statement denounced “the one-man, imported preacher pastor to feed and watch over the flock.”<sup>v</sup>

In the sincere zeal of some to defend the Truth, objectors nonetheless sought to forbid a practice that God allows, for His Word nowhere specifies the length of time a preacher and a congregation may work together. In spite of considerable teaching and reasoning to this effect, many brethren maintained their “anti” stance on this issue as the sun set on the nineteenth century.

### ***The “Anti-Variety-of-Order-of-Worship” Issue***

Controversy arose over the order of the acts of worship partly in connection with the “located preacher” issue and partly as a reaction to the introduction of instruments of music. As

instruments became increasingly widely advocated and used, faithful brethren raised the argument against them that they were human additions to a Divine pattern for worship. Instrument advocates countered that there is no such Divine worship pattern. In response, a brother by the name of Alfred Ellmore vociferously advocated that Acts 2:42 contains the exclusive pattern. To him, this was the “Divine model” which obviously does not include instrumental music (never mind that it does not include singing, either). Ellmore also thought adoption of the “Divine model” for worship would take care of the “located preacher” problem. In urging his Acts 2:42 dictum, he once inquired of brethren, “Why continue in that hireling-pastor-every-Sunday system?” He was right to oppose instrumental music, but wrong in his argumentation against it. His position was one of “anti-ism,” in which he sought to bind where God has not bound. This “anti” doctrine did not spread far beyond the sphere of Ellmore’s influence in Indiana, and I have not run across in later times.

### ***The “Anti-Bible College” Issue***

The “anti” position in the nineteenth century that opposed Bible colleges is also related to the “located preacher” issue. Just as some brethren failed to separate the idea of a “pastor” who was “in charge” of a congregation from the idea of a “located preacher,” for the same reason, many failed to separate schools that existed for the purpose of educating preachers from the production of a “pastor” class and clergy system. Daniel Sommer was one of the strongest voices against colleges. He attended Bethany from 1870–1872 as a young man and a new convert and left without graduating, thoroughly disillusioned. President W.K. Pendleton’s philosophy of “love God and do as you please” and “sincerity is all-sufficient” disgusted him.

Sommer made his opposition to “Bible colleges” known publicly as early as 1878 by writing a series of articles on “Educating Preachers” in *The American Christian Review*.<sup>vi</sup> Ten years later he stated his views in no uncertain terms in an article in *Octographic Review*:

Colleges for educating preachers have proved to be perverting schools among disciples of Christ. When the cornerstone of Bethany College was laid, the foundation for another clergy was begun, and thus it was that a revolutionist [i.e., A. Campbell, DM] established the institution which tends to destroy his revolutionary work....<sup>vii</sup>

While faithful saints today find much to agree with in the foregoing observation concerning what we now call “Christian education,” he unfortunately could not separate in his mind the **abuse** of an authorized practice from the authorized practice itself. He thus objected to the very **concept** of a Bible college, not merely the abuse of its purpose. He (and many others) thus made a crucial mistake regarding the schools.

Ironically, brethren had generally taken for granted the Scriptural authority for such schools until the heated controversies over the missionary society forced a critical look at all human religious institutions. When the society advocates paralleled their society with colleges

operated by those who opposed the society, brethren began to study seriously the question of authority for Bible colleges.

Sommer's long-held convictions that such schools were unauthorized were rekindled with the beginning of David Lipscomb's Nashville Bible School in 1891. He was not by himself. The losses of Bethany College and The College of the Bible at Lexington, Kentucky, to liberal elements had combined to arouse strong opposition to colleges in other stalwarts, including Jacob Creath, Jr., and Ben Franklin, Sommer's mentor. As we shall see, Sommer's strong opposition to such colleges carried over well into the twentieth century, both through his personal activities (he lived until 1940 and was still writing for publication in 1936 at the age of eighty-six) and through those he influenced.

Very many saints of our time are strong opponents of most of the "Bible colleges" (i.e., "Christian universities") that exist today, but not because we oppose the Scriptural authority for such schools to exist. Our opposition lies in their egregious abuse of the Scriptural aim and purpose of their founders and the resulting deleterious effect these institutions have had on the church over the past four decades. They have a Biblical right to exist as an extension of our Christian homes (Eph. 6:4), but Sommer and others denied their right to exist per se, and in thus forbidding what God allows, they occupied the role of "antis."

### ***The "Anti-Sunday School" and "Anti-Literature" Issues***

"Sunday schools" or Sunday "Bible classes" in churches of Christ can be traced back as far as 1834.<sup>viii</sup> Until the inroads of liberalism in the 1860s and 1870s, they were apparently accepted without question as Scriptural expedients for teaching the Word of God. One major factor causing Sunday schools to come under critical review was the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society (and its smaller regional siblings). The other was the denominational model of Sunday schools in the "Sunday School Movement," which some congregations had begun to adopt. Some objected on the assertion that they were unauthorized by Scripture.

Missionary society devotees sought to justify their societies by arguing that they were parallel in principle to the Sunday schools found in many of the congregations that opposed the societies.<sup>ix</sup> Some who opposed the societies failed to examine critically this assertion of equivalency, assumed it had substance, and therefore decided that consistency demanded that they oppose every arrangement called "Sunday school." From these factors emerged the "anti-Sunday school" movement among our brethren. Their general alarm over the introduction of innovations was commendable and understandable, but their zeal in opposing them was at times misdirected, as in this case.

Brethren based their opposition on various logical and/or hermeneutical flaws, such as failing to define and identify correctly what “Sunday schools” in faithful congregations actually were, in contrast to the denominational models. The former were (and still are) merely class arrangements for teaching the Bible according to student age and/or other categories and were (are) conducted by individual, autonomous congregations under their own respective elderships. In contrast, the denominational “Sunday school” model involved an organization separate from local churches that was controlled by a hierarchy. Only the denominational model was in any sense parallel to the missionary societies. Brethren correctly counteracted this “anti” position by declaring that Bible classes conducted by local churches on the Lord’s day were merely an expedient means of edifying the saints (Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:12–16).

Hand in hand with opposition to “Sunday schools” came the opposition to using uninspired literature in Bible classes. As early as 1866 David Lipscomb urged the use of “lesson leaves” (printed Bible lessons) that were adapted to respective age groups, and in 1878 he encouraged the forerunner of a “teacher’s workshop” in Nashville.<sup>x</sup> William Woodson reports: “By the 1880s the Gospel Advocate Company was publishing literature for all age groups.”<sup>xi</sup> Some brethren went so far as to compare such printed lesson materials to denominational creeds, which comparison only served to accentuate their extremism. An additional facet of the anti-Sunday school issue was the objection of some to women teachers in the children’s classes. Many brethren linked lesson sheets and women teachers with Sunday schools as instances of departures from the Sacred pattern.

In response, Lipscomb and others pointed out that printed materials were merely a written means of teaching, just as preaching was an oral means. Both were merely innocent and allowable expedients in carrying out Scriptural responsibilities. The ultimate inconsistency of the anti-literature position is seen in the fact that its adherents relied upon printed materials (“lessons”) to advance their cause. Although it had begun to decline, the “anti-Sunday school,” “anti-literature,” “anti-women teachers” element still had numerous adherents at the turn of the century.

### **“Ant-ism” in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The dawning of the twentieth century found the church in severe turmoil that was rapidly coming to a head. For half a century the heated controversy had raged over instruments of music and the missionary society. The “progressives” were insistent on the employment of both. They had captured the hearts of a large majority of the church, in spite of fierce resistance and opposition from men who were determined not to compromise the Truth of God’s Word.

Although division had already occurred in a multitude of locations,<sup>xii</sup> it took the U.S. Census of 1906 to reveal the finality of the inevitable church-wide sundering of fellowship.

As the new century dawned, it also found the Lord's church struggling not only to weather the storm involving its fight with the liberals. It also was beset with the major issues of nineteenth-century "anti-ism" that bled over the invisible century time-line. By the middle of the new century, new and more destructive than ever "anti" positions arose.

## **The First Half of the Century**

### ***The "Anti-Located Preacher" and "Anti-College" Issues***

As Daniel Sommer had been the champion of those opposed to Bible colleges and located preachers in the nineteenth century, he continued in this role into the twentieth.<sup>xiii</sup> These issues had become largely inseparable by the beginning of the new century. Those who held one usually held the other (although *The Gospel Advocate*, at the turn of the century, generally opposed located preachers, while staunchly defending the Scriptural right of colleges to exist). Sommer was so notorious for promoting these positions that they came to be called "Sommerism" and those who advocated them, "Sommerites."

However, as able and influential men, such as J.D. Tant and M.C. Kurfees, set forth the logical and Scriptural case for a congregation's employing a full-time preacher and distinguished this practice from the denominational "pastor" system, opposing voices were heard less and less. Brethren could also see the effectiveness of such men in various congregations that had a "regular" preacher who worked with them. Even Lipscomb, with *The Gospel Advocate*, eventually gave up his long-standing opposition to what had come to be known as the "mutual ministry" contention. Those agitating these positions gradually became increasingly marginalized so that by mid-century the vast majority of brethren perceived them as extremists

Sommer's "spiritual heirs," W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, were the last loud voices to keep pushing these two hobbies past the mid-century point, principally by debating and writing.<sup>xiv</sup> Ketcherside debated such men of repute as Rue Porter, G.C. Brewer, and G.K. Wallace,<sup>xv</sup> and Garrett's opponents were Bill J. Humble and George W. Dehoff.<sup>xvi</sup> The greatest influence of this strain of "anti-ism" was in the states of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, and it is largely dead even in those areas.<sup>xvii</sup> Ironically, Ketcherside (in 1957) and Garrett (in 1959) reversed themselves completely, leaving the extreme narrow view of fellowship demanded by their hobbies, and began championing the most liberal kind of open fellowship and ecumenism.

### ***The “Anti-Sunday School” and “Anti-Literature” Issues***

By late nineteenth century, the Sunday school and literature issue had picked up an additional ingredient—opposition to women teachers. (Some even threw in their opposition to the use of song books for good measure.) E.G. Sewell was one of the strong voices defending Sunday schools and the use of printed Bible lessons as the new century began. In a *Gospel Advocate* article in 1902, he argued that the classes, conducted under the elders, were distinct from the worship, and that women could therefore teach children without violating the Scriptural limitations on them in church assemblies. He correctly observed that there was “...no legitimate ground for such opposition and felt that those who opposed the work were making laws God had not made”—a good statement of the definition of an “anti.”<sup>xviii</sup> West states: “The Sunday School question is by far the most volatile the brotherhood faced at the beginning of the century,” and that by then it was centered mainly in Texas.<sup>xix</sup>

Besides the discussions of the issue that continued in *The Gospel Advocate*, the subject flared up in the fledgling *Firm Foundation* as well. Austin McGary, founder-editor, defended the Sunday schools, but the two editors who succeeded him, N.L. Clark and G.A. Trott, were strong in their opposition.<sup>xx</sup> R.L. Whiteside, Joe Warlick, C.R. Nichol, and others answered them. In spite of such responses, many brethren succumbed to the “anti-Sunday-school” position in the early part of the century. According to one source, several hundred non-Bible-class churches had separated from “mainstream” congregations by the 1920s.<sup>xxi</sup>

The first oral and written debates on the issue occurred in 1924, followed by the call for more of them to clarify the issue and perhaps prevent division. The discussion continued with increasing heat through the 1920s and 1930s. The “anti-Sunday school” brethren advanced their cause by means of tracts and their own journals, including *The Old Paths Advocate* and *The Truth*. Guy. N. Woods wrote a series of articles on women teachers for *The Gospel Advocate* in 1944. In 1948, *The Gospel Advocate* carried a long series of articles by Roy H. Lanier, Sr., defending Sunday schools. The debates and articles gradually had their desired effect, as some of the leading preachers who had opposed Sunday schools and their appurtenances began to renounce their opposition. By mid-century the battle had been largely won, with most congregations having a Sunday school program and those still opposing them being left in an ever-dwindling condition of few numbers and little influence.

### ***Additional “Anti” Issues***

The great sweep of the plea for restoration had resulted in hundreds of thousands of converts during the nineteenth century. These had been baptized in creeks, rivers, cattle troughs, farm ponds, and even the oceans. Baptisms sometimes involved such things as

breaking ice on a pond, keeping watch for poisonous snakes, traveling several miles, and using lanterns or other means of artificial light to overcome the darkness of night. As brethren began to build more commodious and elaborate buildings, some congregations decided it made sense to include in their buildings a place to baptize ready subjects instantly and conveniently. In response, several brethren raised their voices in protest. An “**anti-baptistery**” **faction** arose, whose principal contention was that, since Jesus was baptized in running (i.e., “living”) water, so must others be. However, defenders correctly pointed out that non-running pools had to have been used to baptize the three thousand on Pentecost, and that the “kind” of water or its container is never specified in Scripture as long as the quantity is sufficient to immerse the candidate. Understandably, this “anti” position was so easily refuted and shown to be absurd that it caused very little division.

In observing the Lord’s supper, the general practice in restored congregations from the beginning of the nineteenth century was to use a single container for the fruit of the vine. Some surely did so because of the Lord’s precedent at the supper’s institution, but many likely did so because of necessity—they had no other practical option. (The use of only one cup certainly never had any hygienic appeal, in consideration of such matters as communicable diseases, snuff-dipping, and tobacco-chewing. Many sipping from a common container doubtless encouraged some worshipers to arrive early and sit near the front.)<sup>xxii</sup>

However, some larger congregations had begun using more than one (but not individual) containers in the last half of the 1800s as a practical means of serving the congregation more efficiently. The small, individual cups, so common among the congregations for decades now, were not even available a hundred years ago. As they became available in the 1920s<sup>xxiii</sup> and as a few congregations began to use them, vigorous opposition soon arose. The chief contention of the outcriers was that the Lord used only one cup to institute the Lord’s supper, and there was no Scriptural precedent for using more. Thus, the “**anti-multiple cup**” **faction** (its adherents commonly called, “one-cuppers”) was born. Largely, the same brethren who opposed Bible classes, printed literature, and women teachers, took up this position.

Defenders of individual cups pointed out that the objectors were inconsistent to begin opposing the multiple cups suddenly when they did not oppose their use by some congregations years earlier. Also, most brethren came to understand that Jesus’ emphasis in the second element of the Lord’s Supper was upon the cup’s contents and its signification, rather than upon the container itself, which was a mere expedient. Articles, sermons, and debates (G.C. Brewer led these efforts initially) exposed the fallacies of this “anti” doctrine, preventing its domination of the church. As with all “anti” positions, the “one-cup” contention sought to forbid that which God allowed and attempted to turn an option into an obligation. These brethren eventually divided

among themselves, with some of them opposing classes while allowing separate cups and others still opposing both classes and cups. A small element of “one-cup” brethren still exists, mainly in Texas, but their numbers are “few and far between.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **The Second Half of the Century**

By the middle point of the century, most of the “anti” hobbies previously reviewed had been exposed and largely defeated except for small, random pockets of influence. The vast majority of the church was marching onward and was poised to enter an unprecedented (at least in modern times) period of numerical growth. However, as the familiar platitude states, “The devil never sleeps.” The most devastating of all “anti” doctrines and offensives would soon be thrust upon an unsuspecting brotherhood.

#### ***The “Anti-Cooperation” and “Anti-Orphan-Home” Issues***

Since the apostolic era, congregations had worked together to preach the Gospel and help the helpless. However, a few brethren concluded that such cooperation was unauthorized. Likewise, for several generations, congregations had (with little objection, except an occasional extremist such as Sommer and his followers) established and/or supported out of their treasuries homes to supply the needs of otherwise homeless children. The brethren who advocated the new doctrine that opposed congregational cooperation also asserted that congregations were unauthorized to support such homes in this manner (thus reviving this aspect of Sommerism).

The prime movers in this campaign had formerly participated without qualms, much less opposition, in both of these arrangements, which they suddenly began to proscribe. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., commenting on the major tenets of the mid-century “antis,” made this very point:

Every one of these points that have been made an issue were previously preached and practiced by the leaders of the new party themselves and only lately have been seized in the frustration of grasping for *issues* where there were no issues, to form their party line.<sup>xxv</sup>

These newly-enlightened brethren decided they must bind their scruples upon the entire church. Their fierce and determined campaign against what they variously call “institutionalism,” “liberalism,” and “digression” has likely wrought more rack and ruin in the church than did all of the previous “anti” issues combined.

The “anti-cooperation” campaign’s beginning date is usually marked in 1950. Actually, Roy E. Cogdill, one of the leaders of the faction, fired the initial salvos somewhat earlier. On August 9, 1946, Cogdill, who lived in Houston, Texas, at the time, delivered a lecture on “Inter-Congregational Cooperation” in the East Oakland, California, church building. More than four hundred assembled brethren heard him advance the doctrine “that no two congregations could scripturally cooperate in **anything** without violating each other’s local autonomy.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Ira Y. Rice,

Jr., and Robert R. Price heard Cogdill deliver the sermon and tried to warn brethren of his doctrine, but brethren apparently thought the doctrine was so palpably ridiculous that, even if someone taught such, no one would believe it.

When the campaign's leaders got underway in earnest, they specifically targeted the Herald of Truth radio program, which was sponsored by the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas, and was overseen by its elders. This program was being aired on several radio stations, and other congregations were sending financial support to Highland to enable it to continue and to increase its coverage. With a four-year head start on the "anti-cooperation" theme, the April 20, 1950, issue of *Gospel Guardian* began open warfare against what it labeled "apostasy" and a "new digression."

The formative personalities and circumstances of *Gospel Guardian* are interesting. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., began the original *Gospel Guardian* in October 1935 as a medium through which to fight R.H. Boll's premillennial theories. The paper ceased publication the next June for lack of funding. Two years later Wallace began *The Bible Banner*, a monthly paper, which continued publication for twelve years and was widely read. Roy E Cogdill, quoted above, had become *The Banner's* publisher by 1948. In 1949 Wallace decided to discontinue the monthly *Banner* and revive the old *Gospel Guardian* as a weekly, which he did, installing Fanning Yater Tant, a friend of several years (and son of J.D. Tant, the legendary Texas preacher), as Editor, and Cogdill as publisher.

The revived *Guardian* made its appearance from Lufkin, Texas, May 5, 1949 and began beating its two-headed hobby drum soon thereafter.<sup>xxvii</sup> A few months after the first issue, Wallace distanced himself from the paper, leaving Tant and Cogdill in complete control. In its first anniversary issue (May 4, 1950), it carried the following editorial statement relating to its dearest dogmas and its editorial aim:

We are committed to battle and that without restraint, yes even to the point of division on exactly the same basis that those who opposed the instrumental music divided the church seventy-five years ago.

This warning from Cogdill and Tant could only be understood as a declaration of war. Thereafter these two men dedicated *The Gospel Guardian* (indeed, their lives) to opposing cooperation and children's homes. Through its pages, through preaching, and through publication of tracts they spread their hobbies widely.

As they began to gain influence among some preachers and as these preachers began to disturb, divide, and/or steal congregations, faithful brethren realized that they must respond to and refute these doctrines with the Truth. Numerous debates were conducted on these issues, some of the most crucial of which were those between W. L. Totty and Charles Holt (1954), E.

R. Harper and Yater Tant (1955, 1956), Guy N. Woods and W. Curtis Porter (1956), Guy N. Woods and Roy E. Cogdill (1957), and G. K. Wallace and Charles Holt (1959). Roy C. Deaver and Thomas B. Warren, both young men in the early 1950s, studied their way through these matters and by means of articles, lectures, and debates helped stop the advance of these “anti” forces that threatened to engulf the church for awhile.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### ***Analogous “Anti” Issues***

Predictably, the two foregoing “anti” contentions spawned additional “anti” hobbies (although not all who rode off on the “anti-cooperation” and “anti-orphan home” horses rode off on all of the sub-hobbies). These kindred doctrines included (1) declaring it sinful to eat a physical meal on church property and (2) declaring it sinful for the church to render physical/material aid to anyone who is not a Christian (i.e., the “saints only” doctrine).

The anti-Bible class, anti-literature, anti-women-teacher, anti-located- preacher, anti-variety-of-worship-order, anti-multiple-cups, and anti-Bible-college positions were generally recognized as extreme by most brethren through the efforts of stalwart men who exposed their fallacies. They therefore captured only a relatively small percentage of congregations and had largely run their respective courses by the 1940s.

Although, as earlier noted, all of the “anti” doctrines make the same basic arguments and the same basic mistakes in Biblical interpretation, for some reason(s) the more recent “anti” doctrines attracted far more adherents than previous ones had done. Many preachers succumbed to them and aligned themselves with them, and at least a few hundred congregations were captured by them. Florida Christian College in Tampa, Florida came under the influence of this faction and it continues in this alignment as Florida College. One writer estimates that, before resistance and refutation slowed their efforts, they had captured perhaps ten percent of the brotherhood.<sup>xxix</sup> While these “anti” brethren continue to propagate their doctrine, refusing to fellowship those who will not bow to their personal scruples, they have not made any major gains in the past four decades.

It is encouraging to note that with the passing of years (and of the influence of some of its long-time, hardline leaders) this latest incarnation of the “anti” hermeneutic is showing signs of moderating. One may observe an increasing number of brethren and congregations who hold these views that are counting their scruples as matters of option rather than of obligation. Such brethren thus grant fellowship to those of us whom their forefathers labeled “liberals.” We “liberals” have always been willing to grant our “anti” brethren the right to their scruples—as long as they did not seek to bind them on all others. We should all pray that these developments are

only the beginning stages of a trend that presages a grand scale of restored fellowship between brethren—one that should never have been severed in the first place.

Brethren who have sought to force such extremism upon the church have from the beginning sought to claim Foy E. Wallace, Jr., for their cause. One cannot read the numerous and strong disclaimers from him made over several years and still honestly believe that he ever supported their program of religious mayhem—either its doctrines or its tactics. He described these brethren as “a group of ‘aginnners’ who verily by that description have distinguished themselves as *antis*, a stigmatic title which their personal conduct has earned.”

Foy E. Wallace, Jr., in commenting upon the “anti-cooperation” and “anti-orphan home” element that erupted at the mid-twentieth-century mark, wrote the following incisive observations concerning it:

The rather sacred nomenclature of “a new restoration movement” has become a shibboleth in the party line of both public and private parlance. But the divisive activities of these insurgent extremists should neither be dignified nor distinguished by such designation. It is not a restoration at all, but a resuscitation of, a breathing again of life into, the lingering but languid form of the Sommer-Ketcherside *isms*, the body of which has become gradually impotent.... Neither should these disturbers of churches and would-be reformers be honored with the compliment of leading a *movement*—what they are leading is rather a *move*, moving away from and out of the church. As certain leftist, liberalists trumpet to the martial tune of “on the march,” the rightist radicals blow the bugle to the blare of “on the move”—both of them marching and moving in opposite directions out of the church as we have known it in all of our generations. And when these antipodal extremes have marched on and moved out, the church will be where and what it has been always.<sup>xxx</sup>

### Conclusion

May we all earnestly strive ever to discern just the things God has authorized his people to do, both for His congregations and His individual saints, and then may we earnestly do those very things and those alone. May we also all allow the lessons of history to prevent those who would bind upon us their own rules, laws, doctrines, restrictions, regulations, personal scruples, and other optional matters as if they were the law of God. Such is the essence of “anti-ism,” in whatever symptom it may manifest itself.

### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Some of the material in this manuscript (though in somewhat different form) is similar to material I originally wrote for previously published books: “Two Erroneous Extremes—‘Liberalism’ and ‘Anti-ism,’ *The Church Enters the Twenty-first Century*, ed. David P. Brown (Spring, TX: Bible Resource Pub., 1994),  
<sup>ii</sup> Brethren frequently employ “legalism” as an equivalent to “anti-ism,” but such is a misuse of the term, as any standard English dictionary demonstrates. *Legalism* means “strict adherence to law” (Random House College Dictionary), rather than the disposition to legislate or make law. Every lover of God should strive to be a “legalist” by definition. “Antis” are not “legalists,” but “legislators.” If they were “legalists” they would not be “antis.”

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<sup>iii</sup> Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1950), 2:457.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:453.

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:431.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:392.

<sup>vii</sup> As quoted by West, *ibid.*, 2:394.

<sup>viii</sup> Thomas Lee Campbell, *The Contribution of David Lipscomb and the Gospel Advocate to Religious Education in the Churches of Christ*, (Fort Worth, TX: DRE dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 102, as quoted by William Woodson, *Standing for Their Faith* (Henderson, TN: J & W Pub, 1979). P. 143.

<sup>ix</sup> West, *ibid.*, 2:390.

<sup>x</sup> Woodson, p. 143.

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xii</sup> The church began in Denton, Texas, my place of residence since 1981, shortly after the civil war. "Progressive" brethren forced the instrument upon the Denton congregation in 1893 (see West, *Ibid.*, 2:427). Those "progressives" are the spiritual ancestors of the First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, in Denton.

<sup>xiii</sup> In 1905, he clarified his position in saying he was not opposed to the Bible's being taught in a secular college, but rather to a church's establishment of such schools and support of them from its treasury. See: Hastings, *Ibid.*, p. 100. Since Sommer paralleled orphan homes to colleges as unauthorized institutions, he also opposed them. His opposition to the former was not nearly so loud as to the latter until the second and third decades of the new century, perhaps because there were so very few of them in the nineteenth century.

<sup>xiv</sup> During my freshman year at Freed-Hardeman College, Leroy Garrett attended the annual lectureship (February 1955), seeking to convince the preacher students that the college had no Scriptural right to exist. He caused such a disturbance that he was placed under a restraining order by the administration, and upon violating it, was arrested and spent a night in the Chester County, Tennessee, jail, a block from the campus. I still have a copy of his Bible Talk paper that he mailed to us "preacher boys," comparing his plight to that of Paul's imprisonments.

<sup>xv</sup> The propositions in the Wallace-Ketcherside debate included: "The employment of a preacher to preach for the congregation as now practiced by the church of Christ, at 2nd and Walnut Streets, in Paragould, Ark., is scriptural" and "The organization, by Christians, of schools such as Freed-Hardeman College is in harmony with the New Testament Scriptures." Wallace affirmed and Ketcherside denied both of these propositions. Ketcherside also affirmed an additional proposition, to which one night of the debate was devoted: "The New Testament authorizes an evangelist to exercise authority in a congregation which he has planted until men are qualified and appointed as bishops." See: G.K. Wallace and W. Carl Ketcherside, *Wallace-Ketcherside Debate* (Longview, WA: Telegram Book Co., 1952).

<sup>xvi</sup> *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony D. Dunnivant, D. Newell Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004), pp. 320, 446.

<sup>xvii</sup> Marvin W. Hastings, *Saga of a Movement* (Manchester, TN: Christian Schoolmaster Pub., 1981), p. 98.

<sup>xviii</sup> Woodson, *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>xix</sup> Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1979), 3:74.

<sup>xx</sup> Clark was founding president of Gunter Bible College (Gunter, TX), chartered in 1903, and a member of the school's board that passed a resolution labeling Sunday schools, uninspired literature, and women teachers as unscriptural. This resolution practically doomed the school by severely narrowing its support base. It died for lack of support in 1928. See: M. Norvel Young, *A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ* (Kansas City, MO: Old Paths Book Club, 1949), pp. 154–155.

<sup>xxi</sup> *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, p. 296.

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<sup>xxii</sup> I have many childhood memories from the late 1940s and early 1950s of rural Texas congregations in which my father preached in Gospel meetings and in which only one (at other times two—one for either side of the center aisle) glass tumbler (often a recycled Garrett’s Snuff glass) served as the container(s) for the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s supper. This practice was not so much because of scruples, but because of long-standing habit and tradition. These brethren considered sipping from a common glass to be of little consequence, likely because they were unaware of any alternative.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Hastings, p. 101.

<sup>xxiv</sup> In 1959 I preached in a Gospel meeting in the small East Texas town of Grapeland. A few miles before reaching the town I noticed a small building with a “Church of Christ” sign on it. I asked the brethren in Grapeland about it. I was told that it was a small “one-cup” congregation. The brother then quickly corrected himself, saying that it had for many years been a strict “one-cup” church, until one of its members contracted tuberculosis, whereupon it promptly became a “two-cup, one-cup” church.

<sup>xxv</sup> Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Gospel for Today* (Nashville, TN: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Pub., 1967), p. 549.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Ira Y. Rice, Jr., *Pressing Toward the Mark* (Memphis, TN: Ira Y. Rice, Jr., 1998), 1:250. Amazingly, Cogdill had taken a leading role in organizing and executing the first Music Hall Meeting in Houston, Texas, in January 1945, in which Foy E. Wallace, Jr., did the preaching. The Norhill congregation where Cogdill preached at the time sponsored the meeting, **with the financial cooperation of nineteen other area congregations**. Obviously, Cogdill had totally reversed his convictions about such innocent cooperation by the time of his Oakland sermon. See: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *Bulwarks of the Faith* (Oklahoma City, OK: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Pub., 1951), p. VIII.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *Soldier of the Cross*, ed. Noble Patterson, Terry J. Gardner (Fort Worth, TX: Wallace Memorial Fund, 1999), p. 95.

<sup>xxviii</sup> For a good example of such material, see Thomas B. Warren, *Lectures on Church Cooperation and Orphan Homes* (Moore, OK: National Christian Press, Inc., 1963).

<sup>xxix</sup> Rice, *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>xxx</sup> Wallace, Jr., *The Gospel for Today*, pp. 516–17.

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