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Commentary — From the Margins

Of God, or Not of God

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor 4:1-2)

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. ... And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (2 Cor 11:7-15)

This update is an honest effort to explain the situation as it is at the Port Austin Bible Campus. I will have to admit that both when I started Servants' News in 1995, and when I began the work for the Christian community at Port Austin in 2003, I wrote things that left the appearance that they were more than they were. No untruths were written, but there was often not clear distinction between what existed, what we reasonably hoped to obtain, and what we were mostly dreaming about. Some problems were minimized or left out.

I thought I had a good reasons [sic] for doing this: People want to be a part of something big and successful. People are scared away when you have trouble: lawsuits, fires, financial difficulty.

The question is: is this a work of God or a work of men?

(Norman Scott Edwards. "Port Austin Bible Campus Update." Servants' News. July/Aug 2008)

The Apostle Paul wrote that “we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways” ... where within the framework of Scripture is there a place for deceit, or for underhanded ways, or for half-truths such as Abram told Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20)? If only a portion of the truth is told for the purpose of intentionally misleading someone, is not this partial truth a lie? Certainly this partial truth functions as a lie, and if this partial truth functions as a lie, then a lie has been told even if the mouth uttered nothing untrue. The person has lied in the same way that anger is murder (Matt 5:21-22), and lust is adultery (vv. 27-28) under the new covenant when the law moves from regulating what the hand and body does to regulating the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind. Thus, the “Christian” who uses half-truths or partial-truths to avoid faithfully conveying information or knowledge to another discloses that his or her heart has not been circumcised, that the person is a spiritual Samaritan who needs to earnestly seek God as a repentant King David sought God in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you’” (1 Cor 5:11-13).

Paul places disciples under the obligation to judge those who call themselves “brothers,” with the further obligation to purge the evil person from the fellowship. Before God, greed or being greedy is as heinous of an offense as is sexual immorality, about which the Jerusalem Conference rendered its ruling. Thus, swindlers—those who have put greed into practice—are as the sexually immoral; they are to be purged. And we have returned to the one who wrote “things that left the appearance that they were more than they were,” with this one not making a “distinction between what existed, what we reasonably hoped to obtain, and what we were mostly dreaming about” (NSE).

Since 2004, [an on-going work of God](#) from Port Austin, Michigan, has taken the gospel of Christ as the Apostle Paul taught this gospel to the world, a work that is unquestioningly of God ... as Paul labored at Corinth without burdening those whom he taught the principles of Christ, this on-going Port Austin work has not burdened those whom it teaches the principles of Christ. It asks for no donations although it can lawfully receive donations. Those who labor in this ministry support themselves through the work of their hands. They work without ceasing, figuratively and somewhat literally, for the output of those doing this ministry from Port Austin equals or exceeds in volume the work output by many larger organizations. In originality, this ministry has no peers. Although some will argue against “originality,” a prophecy that has been sealed and kept secret until the time of the end will not be unsealed by repeating what earlier pundits [in the 19th or 20th Centuries] have taught, pundits who did not live in this last generation. Therefore, it isn’t to these earlier teachers of Israel that endtime disciples can go for spiritual understanding.

This Port Austin work has grown considerably in the past four years—and it has grown without slipping its hands into the pockets of others.

However, also at Port Austin is an individual marked as one to be shunned by the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community, an individual judged to be an unrepentant swindler. This individual is a flimflam man laboring under usurped business names. He regularly asks for moneys to be sent to him so that he can continue in his “boasted mission”; he even sends out reminders to donate to his boasted ministry. But he has misrepresented how he acquired control of the property that forms the basis for his boasted ministry; he has misrepresented the status of the property, the present worth of the property, and the lawful uses to which the property can be put. And finally, four years late, he seems to have acknowledged that he has fudged the facts, distorted the obvious, and concealed from his donors the truth ... yet to best all he has done before, he argues for his boasted mission being a work of God. If it were not stylistically inappropriate, I would here write, Come on, give me a break! Peddle your lies somewhere else.

Our flimflam man—Norman Scott Edwards—seems to believe that legal claims concerning his acquisition of real property on the former Air Force base have been adjudicated on their merits ... they have not been!! It is possible that they never will be adjudicated on their merits, unless Edwards is so foolish as to sue me for libel, a suit I would welcome and would relish defending in court.

Of course Edwards has not admitted any wrongdoing in court for there has not been an adjudication of the property acquisition case on its merits: a settlement agreement is never treated as an admission of guilt even if you are the one paying the settlement to the other—and a settlement agreement was reached by Edwards with Terry Williams, who was initially reluctant to take a brother to court. Only when Williams and others here at Port Austin were absolutely convinced that Edwards was not a brother did Williams proceed with his lawsuit.

If Edwards makes the payments to which he has agreed, he will settle Williams’ suit without the issues that caused the suit to be filed ever being adjudicated on their merits. But if Edwards defaults on the settlement agreement—judging from what he writes about his finances in this latest issue of *Servants’ News*, default seems likely—the case returns to open court and there might yet be an adjudication of the case based on its merits. But the entirety of the issue concerning Edwards’ control of the real property that he purchased with three other men is a red herring that leads disciples away from the central issue: are partial truths used to conceal and distort really godly behavior and the sort of behavior you would want a youthful Sabbatarian to learn?

Hopefully, your answer is, No! never! And that answer should be shouted loud enough that every other Sabbatarian in North America hears your rejection of telling partial truths to support appeals for donations.

For several years, Terry Williams has expected God to intervene by November of this year,

intervene by removing Edwards in some fashion from the real property he stole in 2004. The biblical principle Williams cites is that of digging and dunging a tree, with repentance being the fruit sought. And perhaps with Edwards' admission that he has used partial truths to obtain donations to keep himself afloat in this current issue of Servants' News, Edwards is inching closer to repentance, approaching repentance as he might a Hydra, a many headed monster that grows back two heads for every one cut off.

Sallying forward in the whole armor of God, with the shield of faith firmly held in his left hand and the sword of the spirit in his right, Edwards circles repentance, seeking an opening so he can slay this beast that so effectively prevents his ministry from succeeding. He doesn't look to embrace repentance, but to eliminate it as an adversary, to cut off its heads, cauterizing each neck as Hercules defeated his many headed monster. Edwards writes about an adversary, little realizing that it is repentance that stands before him and life. He writes as one fearful to name his adversary, for it is his failure to embrace repentance that keeps him outside of the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community as a marked man, shunned, cut off from the worldwide ministry that continues forth from Port Austin, growing daily as part of a greater work of faith that stands on the shoulders of typology to peer into the heavenly realm.

His sword drawn back ready to strike a head from repentance, Edwards dances closer to repentance in this current issue of Servants' News than he came in the previous issue when he admitted the same thing ... although the masthead states that Servants' News is published bi-monthly, six times a year, Edwards has put forth three issues in three and a half years; so even the masthead deceives. However, he would ask forgiveness of that little lie since he has been hiding from that adversary repentance, which will sooner or later devour what remains of his ministry.

Can you see him? A gladiator circling slowly on the balls of his feet, weight evenly distributed so he can quickly dart right or left, waiting for an opening, sword poised to strike—Edwards wants his readers to believe that he is finally telling the truth. Just look at how forthright he is in relaying his poverty ... it seems to me that he has forgotten to mention a couple of real estate transactions that benefited him. Maybe he isn't as forthright as he protests.

Methinks the lady does protest too much—my apologies to Shakespeare, but it would seem that Edwards protests too much, decrying his poverty, but not giving forth as honest of an accounting of finances as I would demand of him before doing business again with him. Yes, I have done business with him once, and about that occasion I wrote [“An Accusation of Deceit.”](#) I am one who found no virginity in his business practices, but found instead that his protestations of innocence masked fiscal harlotry.

It is a shame to all Sabbatarian Christians that a person such as Edwards can slither from one ministry to another, marked by two before coming to Port Austin, marked again here, but nevertheless, securing enough donations to keep himself fed and clothed. Apparently, though, he plans to leave the tip of the Thumb to those of us who work as the Apostle Paul

worked—his exit cannot come too soon for he steadfastly refuses to embrace repentance.

Meanwhile, the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community continues to hold fast to the principles and goals initially set forth in 2004 by the four trustees of the original community.

The prayers of all who read this should be that Edwards repent of his long history of telling partial truths that function as lies, a history he acknowledged to disciples here that goes back to his employment with the former Worldwide Church of God. He truly has not seen any wrong with deceiving through the telling of partial truths.

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