

Endnote — *Authority* Part One of Two

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So *Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."* From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. (John 19:6–16 emphasis added)

1.

Roman authority, according to what Jesus said to Pilate in the Gospel of John, is subject to higher authority, or authority not of this world and the politics of human persons. Emperor Tiberius was subject to an agent of authority that he neither saw nor heard speak to him yet ruled over him in a means analogous to

how he ruled the earthly assets of Rome—and this is the message that the Apostle Paul conveyed to the holy ones at Rome in his treatise to these saints:

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. (Rom 6:16–19)

It is unlikely that Emperor Tiberius, or for that matter, Pilate would have considered themselves slaves: they were free Romans, well able to do what they wished to whomever they wished. But is this really true? Could Pilate have released Jesus? He said he had the authority to release Jesus; yet he feared the people enough that he didn't do what he knew ought to be done according to the gospel accounts of what happened on that Preparation Day for the Great Sabbath of the Sabbath in the year 31 CE; i.e., April 25th, 31 (Julian), a Wednesday. So if Pilate did not do what his wife urged him to do and what he knew was the right thing to do, was Pilate truly free to do what he knew was right? Or was Pilate a slave to his fears, a slave to his basic instinct to survive? And the answer has to be, yes! He was not free to do what he should do. He was a slave of sin, a person consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) as a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3).

Because of America's racial past history and present imbedded racism that disclosed itself in the 2008 presidential election in voters both supporting President Obama because of his racial characteristics and opposing the immature senator from Illinois for the same reason, it is difficult to have a discussion of slavery without stereotypical images of racially based slavery being imposed upon the conversation. So permit me to say at the beginning of this piece of writing, my focus is the same as Paul's, as Jesus', as John's—and that focus is the inner self, the dead inner self of a humanly born person and the living inner self of the person born of God as a son. The physical enslavement of a person or a people as Israel in Egypt conveys the image of a living person that is not free to do as he or she wishes, but must obey the dictates of another person. Thus, in human enslavement is seen the visible image of a dead inner self (dead through being consigned to disobedience before ever receiving a breath of life) in a physically living person who cannot keep the commandments, nor wants to keep the commandments. Also, in Israel's enslavement in Egypt is seen the image of a living inner self dwelling in a tent of flesh that still remains the property of the Adversary, with the inner self desiring to keep the commandments of God but being unable to do so; hence Paul writes,

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but

sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For *I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, *I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* (Rom 7:14–25 emphasis added)

The Gospel accounts of what Pilate did mostly agree with one another: Pilate wanted to do what was right, but feared the people so he delivered Jesus over to be crucified. But this may be a perception of Pilate that came about post-crucifixion when, for Christians, Romans were the good guys and Pharisee zealots were the bad guys. Mid 1st-Century, it wasn't really Romans that were imprisoning and flogging disciples, but Jews such as Paul himself before being called to know the mysteries of God. So from the perspective of a Jewish-persecuted community, the Gospels might well assign more charity to Pilate than the man had or deserved to be assigned; for who was in the room with Jesus and Pilate to record their conversation? Who could know what was really said except as the conversation was revealed to the Gospel writer by either the glorified Jesus, who wouldn't have had anything against Pilate who actually did Him a favor in having Him severely flogged and His body weakened so that He would not suffer for long on the cross but would die quickly, or by the *parakletos*, the spirit of truth and a holy spirit given to disciples by the Father so that He can communicate with His sons by means other than visions, the prerogative of the Son?

Permit me to back up for a moment: in the first edition of *A Philadelphia Apologetic* (the 2002 edition) I wrote that once the spirit was given, God allowed His sons to write their opinions into Holy Writ, which presents a very different view of Scripture than is usually held by Christians who have traditionally regarded Holy Writ as infallible, a nonsensical claim since meanings must be assigned to words and unless the person assigns the same meaning to a word that originated in another language in another culture at another time as well as in another dimension and in a manuscript that has been lost except for copies of copies that the Father in heaven assigned to the word, the person has not received infallible writ. So an inspired text, where the words are inspired by God, is very different from an infallible text. For in inspired inscription, God gives to a human person His linguistic signifiers to which a person He also inspires assigns His linguistic signifieds at some later period, thereby causing His words to be known in this world. And when this is the case, a son of God can write his or her opinion down as Holy Writ, that opinion being the fruit of the spirit of God that resides in this person, and the person's opinion can differ in some ways from the opinion of another son of God—but not differ in substantial ways. Hence, those

things that were important to a son of God in the 1st-Century are not necessary the identical things that were important to another son of God in the 1st-Century, with all sons of God forming a physically unconnected community that was only linked through possession of the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] in the breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] in each of its members.

Is there a model for this sort of community in the 21st-Century? Yes, there is: [*The Philadelphia Church*](#) that has worldwide members and small fellowships that are only linked in this world through a shared reading strategy, taking meaning from Holy Writ via typological exegesis.

Therefore, returning to the issue of authority, there is implied authority given to a text through its inclusion in the Bible, an authority that *says* that the text must be proved false beyond doubt before the text can be removed—and that is a burden of proof that cannot be attained. Hence texts such as the Pastoral Epistles [1 & 2 Timothy and Titus] for which there were doubts about authenticity in the 2nd-Century have, through inclusion into Holy Writ, an authority that must cause them to be read as inspired, but read with God inspiring the signifieds that are to be assigned to the printed signifiers published between book covers. They must be read realizing that learned men and women who are as Pilate was cannot assign to these signifiers the signifieds of God so knowledge and formal learning is not a basis for salvation: receiving a second breath of life, the breath of God in the breath of Christ, is the only base upon which divine understanding stands.

There is a discrepancy between Matthew's and John's account of the Passion of Christ as to the color of the robe Roman soldier put on Jesus, red (Matt 27:28) or purple (John 19:5), with purple the color of royalty being more probable considering that the issue at stake was where Jesus had identified Himself as a king. Luke's account has Herod's soldiers "arraying Him [Jesus] in splendid clothing" (Luke 23:11). Mark has the soldiers putting a purple cloak on Jesus (Mark 15:17) ... now, does it matter that Matthew was either color blind, or simply didn't remember the exact color of the cloak or robe that soldiers put on Jesus, or assigned red/scarlet as the color for narrative reasons apart from royalty, reasons such as the intensity of the suffering? Is the discrepancy between the accounts a small thing or a big thing as we again approach the Preparation Day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread; i.e., the First Unleavened that forms for the seven day long Feast of Unleavened Bread the mirror image of the Last Great Day of the seven day long Feast of Tabernacles.

When Matthew's account is read closely, and when Mark's account is read in light of Matthew's account and John's account, the nonsensical statements of historical criticism's scholars that Mark has Jesus crucified on a different day than John does evaporate into thin air. The spring holy days form the shadow and copy of the fall holy days, with the focus of the spring holy days being the harvest of firstfruits (represented by ancient Judea's barley harvest) whereas the focus of the fall holy days is the main crop wheat harvest that represents humankind in the great White Throne Judgment—

Holy Writ is an open canon, not a closed canon, but Holy Writ is not open to the writings of mad men or sons of disobedience. Hence a text that has immortal

souls suffering for eternity for a few moments of passion is a text written by a mad man. The inner self of a sinner will, indeed, be condemned to the lake of fire where it will perish in a period of time analogous to a fistful of straw being thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's blast furnace whereas the person born of God will walk through these flames as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked about in the furnace (Dan chap 3).

You look confused: yes, I wrote of a First Unleavened about which you have previously heard nothing ... it's right there in Matthew 26:17 if you remove the extra words translators have inserted and read the passage in Greek as we have received it from the handwritten copy of a copy of a copy an unknown number of times, with the Gospel of Matthew allegedly going back to approximately the time of the destruction of Herod's temple—but is that dating true? Is the scholarly dating of Matthew's Gospel not, perhaps, based upon what Jesus says in Matthew 24:1–4, a post-destruction dating like that falsely given to the Book of Daniel? Could Matthew's Gospel go back even farther, say to the decade following Calvary? Unfortunately that question cannot be answered through empirical evidence—no text exists that is from this early period—thus, the question enters the realm of faith, of belief, of what a person accepts as factual regardless of whether any evidence exists to support what the person believes, with historical critics being unbelievably poor readers of Holy Writ, a subject I will again address in an Endnote.

There is no dispute that John's Gospel was the last to be produced, and there is little scholarly controversy about dating John's Gospel to the last decade of the 1st-Century. There is considerable scholarly doubt about the Apostle John having written the Gospel: the Greek is too polished, the theology too sophisticated, both objections really being insulting to the Apostle who certainly did something with his life between 31 CE and the end of the century ... **if I can do what I have done, so could John or Peter or any of the other disciples or anyone else who was born from above through receiving a second breath of life, the breath of God in the breath of Jesus have done has much or much more**, for decades passed when I wasn't particularly diligent when it came to study. I had a business to run, fish to catch, deer to kill, moose to hunt. And I had little or no money to do what seemed important to get done. Whatever got done, I did it. If that *thing* was electrical, I did it; if mechanical, I did it; if construction, I did it.

There is something I didn't understand when I was initially drafted into the Body of Christ and heard sermons about tithing and being prospered in this world for doing so, with the speaker always going to Malachi 3:8 as the speaker's *proof-text*, but with the evidence of members' prosperity belying what Malachi declared ... the disciple who stores up treasure in this world stores up no treasure in heaven. The disciple who focuses on engaging in transactions in this world has an ungodly focus; for transactions and cultures organized around transactions are of the Adversary, something I didn't realize until I became a much better reader of Holy Writ. ... How many transactions did Jesus engage in during His ministry? The answer to this question should shed considerable light upon Revelation 13:17 if the person has understanding.

Because I was drafted into the Body of Christ—I didn't volunteer—I responded as a draftee, until all of this became personal through being called to *reread prophecy* in a matter similar to how Paul was called.

It is the above highlighted statement, *If I can do what I have done so could John or Peter*, that has interested me since a friend and former outdoor writer—as I too am a former outdoor writer, how we met almost thirty years ago—recently asked if I had read Bart D. Ehrman's book, *Jesus, Interrupted*. He had asked me this question when the book was initially released, and I had not answered him, for reading Ehrman causes me to want to strangle the author for his inability to closely read text. ... As a writer, the problem with teaching writing/Composition is having to read the truly awful writing of incoming college freshman who should not have been allowed to pass seventh-grade English. Reading student writing ends up stylistically affecting the instructor's writing regardless of how much the instructor doesn't want this to be the case. And I would argue that a similar thing has happened to Ehrman, who teaches *Bible* to incoming freshman: he has begun to think like a more mature version of the freshmen he teaches. He has stopped teaching himself as he has devoted more and more time to teaching Evangelical youth who really know less than nothing, not a kind assessment but a valid one.

Presently I write for more than a dozen websites so I cannot spend the time rethinking, rewriting a particular piece of work that should be spent. I write as a newspaper correspondent of a few decades ago would write: first drafts are placed before the public. And I rely upon my wife to correct typos as she serves as the IT person for the various websites. So the dashes and ellipses (misused according to conventional punctuation usage) that are characteristic of my writing serve conceptual purposes rather than phonetic purposes: an ellipsis that indicates omitted text functions for me to indicate omitted thought, text that I didn't write. And I can sort of understand Emily Dickinson's dashes.

But Ehrman's book has been useful in that he wrote,

When one reads through the ancient discussions of orthodoxy and heresy, it becomes clear that the proto-orthodox had three major weapons that it used to combat Christian views that it considered aberrant: the clergy, the creed, and the canon. (216)

He is correct ... the clergy has been a formidable weapon employed by Christian orthodoxy against my ancestors, who fled Europe in the 17th-Century to escape from the unholy union of Church and State.

In 1 Timothy, not an epistle Ehrman values highly, its author writes, "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money" (1 Tim 3:1–3), a criterion is established for possession of clerical authority that devalues the authority itself, not exactly how the passage has traditionally been read. For the person who is gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, able to teach is by the person's very nature anti-authoritarian and not likely to use the authority

entrusted to the person for any purpose that does not express love for another person.

Paul wrote,

This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right [the authority] to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For *it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain."* Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does He not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? **If others share this rightful claim on you**, do not we even more? Nevertheless, **we have not made use of this right**, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? *In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.* But *I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.* For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. For *if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* **For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward**, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. **What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.** For though I am free from all, *I have made myself a servant to all*, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. *I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.* I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:3–23 emphasis and double emphasis added)

Consider carefully what Paul says: he has the right, the authority to command those whom he teaches to pay him for this teaching, with this authority coming from Christ Jesus Himself. He has this authority directly from the Law and from Christ; he has the authority to demand tithes from those whom he teaches. Yet because he isn't teaching voluntarily—he has been supernaturally called into the position he holds: *woe to me if I do not preach the gospel*—he chooses not to

exercise his right, his authority to demand support from those whom he teaches. He would have no additional reward other than what came with his calling if he demanded support. However, because he chooses not to exercise his authority to demand support, but rather chooses to present the good news of Christ *free of charge*, he acquires for himself reward in heaven greater than that which came with his calling.

What Paul writes is an expression of love for the holy ones at Corinth ... because Paul doesn't demand support, the holy ones must voluntarily choose to support Paul, thereby securing for themselves the same reward that Paul will receive. If Paul had demanded support, the holy ones providing that support would have received no reward for doing what they were compelled to do—no one receives a reward for keeping the commandments: keeping the commandments is the reasonable expectation of every son of God. Likewise, providing support for Paul because he demanded this support would have been the reasonable expectation of the holy ones at Corinth. But because Paul didn't demand this support, both Paul's reward is greater because he works by faith, trusting the Father and the Son to provide his needs, and the holy ones at Corinth will receive greater rewards for choosing to support Paul when there was no demand to do so.

But as seen in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, the holy ones at Corinth were not very good about supporting Paul:

Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. 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. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.* As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 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 11:5–15 emphasis added)

Apparently the saints at Corinth never understood the opportunity Paul was extending to them by not demanding support: he had the right, the authority to demand tithes and offerings from those whom he taught. But as Christ Jesus chose to submit Himself to death as the selected Passover Lamb of God, Paul chose not to demand tithes from the saints, with both being outward expressions of love not of the touchy-feely sort, but love seen in a person laying down his or her life for another person.

The criteria for a bishop seen in 1 Timothy 3:1–3 would seem to support the concept that the person considered for the clergy would be someone who would

not exercise the person's authority except in the rarest of instances, and then only out of love. This would not be a person who has an interest in exercising his authority over others.

Years ago, I wrote an essay that here pertains: the essay has not before been presented to the public as far as I know (it is from when I was a graduate student at UAF so for me this is student writing):

Authority

Not many Christian congregations include a foot-washing ceremony with their taking of the Passover sacraments, but Christ said his disciples were to follow his example. As far as Christian orthodoxy is concerned, He apparently didn't really mean what He said. Either that or His words were deconstructed so long ago that no element of *Thirdness* connects icon and object. And I would never have been able to write this essay about authority in which a contractor, a local deacon, pulls a chair from under his employee if Christ's words were even naïvely believed—

Could this contractor have washed his employee's feet? He certainly would have washed his minister's.

In 1974, I arrived in Alaska broke or nearly so. I drove George Connor's Toyota Land Cruiser north to talk with Harold Fuller and to see a town named Homer. My intention wasn't to stay, but I spent a day with Fuller, who told me he turned down building a gun a week. That is all a gunmaker can build by hand; so enough market seemed to exist for me to relocate. When I left Fuller's shop, I knew I would move, and I turned the Land Cruiser's radio on to get the news of the Kenai Peninsula.

Alaska State Manpower was advertising for loggers, specifically for choker setters.

I had once set chokers for six days as fill-in for my neighbor when he injured his back. I drew pay for those six days, but I didn't work long enough as a chokersetter to consider myself one. I had fell a few hundred trees over a decade, mostly alders and maples, which didn't qualify me to call myself a faller. The few weeks I had operated a D-6 pushing Columbus Day storm toppled walnuts into piles to be burned didn't qualify me as a Catskinner. I had never operated a heelboom or a shovel or a jammer or a yarder. I had never really worked as a logger although I did have a pair of caulk boots. I built rifles for real loggers. All of my neighbors in Oregon were loggers. Some of the fellows I hunted with were loggers. And I wouldn't have wanted any of them to hear me identify myself as a logger.

But I needed a job, and logging was something I knew about. Setting chokers isn't rocket science, and I wore hickory shirts and a pair of red suspenders, with staged pants. I could talk the jargon. Oregon loggers *fall* timber, not *fell* it.

Manpower gave me a card to take to a certain address—wearing suspenders when I walked in, I gave the card to a woman at a front desk. A fellow behind the desk and across the room looked at me and hollered, "Can you fall?"

I glanced out the window and didn't see any spruce larger in diameter or taller than an alder: "Sure."

"Go to work in the morning."

"I didn't bring a saw up with me."

"You can use one of mine until payday."

I haven't applied for many jobs in my life, and I certainly hadn't expect to get hired so easily. I didn't even know what I would be paid. But I had a job, a foothold in Alaska, and I figured everything else would take care of itself in time.

The gyppo offered fifty cents a tree—fall, limb and top. No measuring. No worrying about scale. No measuring stumps. Every tree the same price. And there were a lot more six and eight inch trees than twenty inch in North Kenai.

Within a week, I was making a hundred dollars a day and getting out of the woods by two p.m.

Spruce on the Kenai Peninsula look like they have been stuck in a pencil sharpener. It's a rare tree that's more than one log tall. All have lots of taper. And even on short log scale, they don't fare well.

Concerning Kenai spruce, Denny Bell, a sawmill sawyer and owner, once told me that, "There's more scale in the first twelve feet than there is in the whole tree," when I asked how he wanted me to buck logs for him. He wasn't telling me what length of logs he wanted; he was telling me how to make the most money from the timber I was selling him.

For fellows unfamiliar with the terminology, scale is the theoretical number of footboard that can be sawn from the square of the small end of a log. Scale tables were established for full dimensioned lumber and for saw kerfs far wider than cut by modern bandsaw blades. So mills get to steal a little lumber. Nobody complains too much. It's a game everyone plays. It's only when a mill begins to cut, say, a hundred seventy percent of scale that questions are asked, and there were little mills on the Kenai that cut a hundred seventy percent.

What that mill owner was telling me I can best illustrate by the example of a typical Kenai white spruce: a 12 foot long log with a 12 inch top has 210 boardfeet in it, but if that tree wasn't bucked at 12 feet but bucked at 34 feet (what Louisiana-Pacific wanted for export logs), that 34 foot log would have an 8 inch top and would have 130 boardfeet in it, with another 10 boardfeet in the eight foot long top log. In other words, there is 70 more boardfeet in the first 12 feet than there is in the whole tree. When a fellow contracts to fall and deck for thirty-five dollars a thousand, where he makes his cuts can either cost or make him a lot of money.

Would I wash the feet of Louisiana-Pacific's buyer who stole scale from us, or the feet of mill scalers who eyeballed rather than measured our loads of logs delivered to Seward? Do I have a choice?

In early September, Louisiana-Pacific quit buying from the gyppo for whom I initially started falling, but the corporation didn't bother telling the gyppo they weren't buying until the end of October. Why L-P quit buying they never said. But they quit for long enough to break the contractor, who paid me wages till the end. Then after the fellow's equipment was repossessed, L-P opened a company show up Anchor River, next to the Russian Village.

My sentiments towards L-P bordered on being unChristian, but I didn't have much choice: I needed to keep working so I started falling for L-P, \$12. an hour. They actually recruited me. But right after Thanksgiving, not even a month later, L-P shutdown their company show, because, they said, they couldn't keep it supervised. They wanted to contract out the logging of the two sections of timber they controlled up the Anchor River, but their reputation preceded them. By this time, their practices had managed to break seven little outfits; so they didn't have a lot of success finding anyone to log for them.

I still needed a job. So did a commercial fisherman who had a skidder he used to push rocks around on his beach site. We teamed up, and because he owned his skidder and because there were just the two of us, we figured we were immune to the games L-P played with their gypos. We were optimistic—overly optimistic—about avoiding the pitfalls that had trapped the other outfits.

But what we couldn't know is that L-P really didn't want the logs for which they contracted with us. Mill officials at Seward signed their contract with us in hopes that the U.S. dollar would weaken, that already overpriced export-grade white spruce logs would come down in price, thereby making Alaskan timber more affordable for Japanese customers who were considering importing additional Philippine mahogany.

Backing up in the narrative flow, I returned to Oregon to move my family North in August. We rented a trailer in a trailer court, and we settled into life on the Peninsula. We attended church with the same denomination we had in Oregon, and I became known as that logger from Oregon, an identifying tag I would not have assigned myself. My wife received lots of sympathy, and my daughters received more used clothing than they could possibly wear out.

That deacon who jerked the chair out from under his employee and who understood authority differently than I did only knew me as that Oregon logger. I don't think he ever saw me as a businessman, and he certainly never realized I didn't read Scripture the way he did. He would have counseled against me, a mere logger, opening a shop if I would have asked his opinion, but I never found the need to ask his opinion about anything.

Too many people judge Christianity by those who attended the church of their youth. I know Dad did. But that's akin to making decisions about human hair based upon looking at someone's armpit.

What that deacon couldn't know is that one June morning I had a little car trouble not far from his house that left me afoot. I needed to borrow a few tools. It was bright daylight even though it was only five a.m. when I arrived at his house. Not knowing if he was up and not wanting to awaken anyone if he wasn't, I went around to his backdoor and looked in his kitchen window. There he was, bent over a chair, praying. I backed away, waited a half hour, then knocked on his front door. ... I hadn't prayed that morning.

Because of what I saw that morning, I didn't say anything to him when he jerked that chair. I should have, maybe. But I figured he was trying to practice righteousness, and if Christ was extending him additional time, so would I.

But I'm getting ahead of myself: Bob, the commercial fisherman, and I logged together until May. Then I worked alone, both falling and skidding, until July. The last time L-P paid us was in March.

Certain character traits are culturally elevated and labeled desirable: persistence, patience, forbearance, determination. The question I hadn't then asked myself was, Can a person be too persistent, too patient, too forbearing, too determined?

Louisiana-Pacific, according to our contract, was supposed to send someone around to estimate the scale in our log decks at least once a month, and then to advance us pay for eighty percent of that estimate. We were to be paid the full amount when our logs were delivered to their Seward sawmill. But what civil authority could Bob and I call upon to force L-P to send someone around to estimate our decks? Attorneys want money in advance, and we were buying fuel for both the skidder and chainsaws in cannery POs. And even if we filed suit, the length of time before the case could be heard would have left both of us broke. All we could do was what we did. He returned to fishing, and I kept going for as long as possible while camping on the job site in a couple of tents, camping

between two muskegs between which mosquitoes ebbed and flowed as if they were a swarming sea. My daughters had fun. My wife never forgave me for being so persistent. Pig-headed was her word.

For more than a year after I went to work for a chainsaw dealership, our logs weren't hauled. Bob and I didn't have any means to haul them. We had no choice but to mentally chalk up our spring of work to being a learning experience, not necessarily one either of us was happy about. At least we were in better shape than other gyppos who had logged for L-P. We didn't lose any equipment, and weren't in bankruptcy.

But those logs were eventually hauled by L-P. However, they were delivered directly to Homer where they were loaded onto Japanese freighters without ever being scaled. I believe they were sold by the cubic metre for pulpwood. Regardless, Bob and I didn't get paid for them. We just weren't big enough to speak with authority when we talked to the corporation's managers.

My daughter once asked if a minister holds you under too long when you're baptized, will you turn into a fish? If I would have had the chance to baptize the manager for L-P's Seward operation, my daughter might have found out.

My intention was still to build muzzleloading rifles, but I had a family and no shop so I worked for Ron's Rental, the Homelite-Stihl chainsaw dealer in Kenai. I bought an acre of raw ground, and I built, initially, a twelve by sixteen foot shed that I sold a year later for six hundred dollars. The fisherman who bought that building picked it up with the forks of a frontend loader after wrapping a chain around it. He then lifted it and drove down the highway as fast as the loader would go without damage to the building, so overbuilt was it.

Once I opened shop in that little shed, an unexpected development occurred: as I repaired saws for Ron's, I had been unintentionally building a clientele. Within a week of leaving Ron's, I had fellows coming by, wanting me not Ron's, to fix their chainsaws. My need for income warred with the ethics of stealing customers, and with my desire to build rifles. Perhaps this is why that deacon never saw me as a businessman.

Everyone who has signed a non-competition agreement (I hadn't signed one, but I felt I should adhere to the principles of such agreements as the right thing to do) will understand the moral dilemma, especially when opportunity knocks. I knew what I had to do to feed a wife and kids, and there weren't many employment opportunities on the Kenai that didn't require working on the Sabbath. Oil platform jobs were some form of seven-days-on, seven-days-off. Most construction jobs were seven-twelves (seven days a week, twelve hours a day) during the summer. But a test of character, of belief in right or wrong cannot occur unless a compelling reason exists for not doing what the person knows is right. Then there are those nagging questions about what is really the right thing to do. These questions always end, though, in a person finding a legalist way of ignoring the spirit of the principle. For me, he who doesn't work was pitted against a vague concept of breaking a trust by going into direct competition with Ron's.

I hung a sign along Poppy Lane that identified my shop as Woodcutters' Supply, and I was in competition with my previous week's employer. I had, a few years earlier, built a rifle for a sales representative of a chainsaw distributor. I contacted this rep and became a house account. Within a year of hanging that sign, I was a dealer for five lines of saws and a line of outboards, but I wasn't building any rifles.

Day by day during those first weeks after hanging that sign, I repaired off-brand saws and many McCulloughs, a brand Ron's wouldn't service. That seemed ethically proper. But first a friend, then that fellow who had bought a Stihl because he previously hadn't been able to get his McCullough tuned up now brought me their Stihls. It wasn't long

before I was too busy to consider the ethics of competing with my former employer. And within a couple of months, I began to routinely have a front-person buy out his stock of Homelite XL-12 crankcase gaskets: they were ten cents apiece. Most of the saws that Ron's, a Homelite-Stihl dealership serviced were XL-12s, and the dealership wouldn't, for economic reasons, make a gasket. An XL-12 that needed servicing just had to wait until Ron's received another order of crankcase gaskets. Deliveries to Alaska in the 1970s weren't overnight, or for that matter, even within a week. So by knowing Ron's service practices, his ordering and delivery schedules, I hamstrung the dealership's service program. And all of those unhappy customers who couldn't get their XL-12s serviced at Ron's Rental came to me. My business grew rapidly, but my character wasn't growing. If that deacon had known what I was doing, he would have thought I was, indeed, a businessman.

Would I have washed Ron's feet that spring of 1976? Yes, I would have; I take the sacraments because I need what they represent. Ron's feet weren't dirty.

When Pipeline construction ended, Kenai's economy dived into the bust half of its boom-bust cycle. In addition, by November 1978, the U.S. dollar was so weak against European currencies that I was receiving a five percent a month adjustment of chainsaw retail prices. So with saw prices rising rapidly and with three of every four of my customers drawing unemployment, I began to feel that it was time to go trapping, figuratively of course.

I endured December, January, February. But about the first of March, 1979, I looked around the shop and there wasn't a gun in the building, except for the loaded pistol I kept stuck in the insulation above the door. I remembered why I moved to Alaska, remembered how easy life had been not having to worry about a hundred thousand dollars of inventory, which I then had. I also didn't like myself. Lying had started to become easy: "That piston is on order," "They shipped those two outboards last Friday."

The lies were what all of us expect to hear from service oriented businesses. There were the type of lies told when lying is easier than admitting a person is in the wrong. But there is either a moral authority against lying, or lying is just another form of truth-telling, something presidents do with apparent immunity.

An inner authority, a small quiet voice that would not have let me pull a chair out from under anyone also would not remain silent about the practices that had subtly crept into how I conducted my business affairs. By cultural norms, I was operating my business with high moral principles. But nearly a decade earlier I chose to accept as the moral authority for my life the deity of my Dissident and Separatist ancestors. In just three years I either ignored or found ways around the prescribed practices for how I should conduct my business affairs.

We choose what authority we will answer to, but once we have chosen, we really aren't free to change our minds. We can change, but we have to pay for that change.

I was unwilling to pay the price attached to becoming a businessman like that deacon. I put my business on the market: it sold nine days later. It sold before I had the chance to change my mind.

Perhaps I should tell what precipitated this piece of writing: when first getting started after leaving Ron's, I needed an outboard test tank. A church member offered to weld one for me if I secured the steel and the use of a cutting torch. That deacon offered me the use of his oxygen-acetylene torch—and when I went by his jobsite about noon one weekday to pickup his tanks and torch, his crew was just coming into the camp trailer he used as his construction shack to eat. He got up from where he was sitting, went with me to help me load the tanks into my pickup. Then returning to the camp trailer and seeing

one of his crew sitting where he had been, he jerked the chair out from under the fellow, who fell hard on the floor, got up and wanted to hit our deacon, thought better of the idea, and stomped out, his sandwich in hand. The deacon turned to me and said, “He just doesn’t understand authority in the same way we do” ... I didn’t understand authority in the same way the deacon did.

* * *

As I have written many times and said in many ways, signs take their meaning from their context: a word takes its meaning from its context. So too does a narrative like the preceding essay. And the context of the above essay is the community that was the Sabbatarian Kenai Church of God, an assembly of Herbert W. Armstrong’s *Worldwide Church of God* in 1976. And that community of disciples fell apart in the mid 1990s.

The context for the preceding essay changed when Armstrong’s version of the *Worldwide Church of God* officially ceased to exist in late 1994, about four years after I wrote the above essay. The Sabbatarian fellowship at Kenai shrank from 160 members (in 1976) to just eight members as of a decade ago; the community ceased to exist as a community. And the preceding essay within an essay, *The Mousetrap* (from *Hamlet*), was written after I left the community as I mention in the essay included in the Endnote for March 30th.

The stories of a community are not really of interest when they occur: they are told orally although I don’t remember telling anyone about either the deacon bent over his chair at 5:00 a.m. praying, or about this same deacon jerking the chair out from under his employee who was not a church member—about half of his six or seven man crew were members. I did, however, tell the story of seeing the deacon praying to the deacon in a letter written after I learned that he had lost his faith and had quit keeping the Sabbath. I suppose I was hoping that I could motivate him to step beyond the destruction of the ministry he had supported for three or more decades, but as is usually the case, his bitterness had already poisoned him.

Can we—you and I—step beyond the destruction of Holy Writ being the infallible word of God? I did decades ago ... the commercial fisherman I reference in my *mousetrap* was sitting at his kitchen table on a snowy evening in November 1974 when he said for seemingly no apparent reason, *I can tell when a minister quits preaching Scripture and starts preaching opinion*, and truly, I was shocked although I tend not to reveal emotions on my face because of the level at which I played chess as a youth. I was still new in the faith (two years) and I hadn’t even considered the possibility that what was being delivered from the pulpit wasn’t of God, but then, as I digested the fisherman’s words, I realized that I, too, could tell when a minister ceased preaching Scripture and began preaching opinion. And the fisherman’s statement no longer troubled me; for opinion can be both good or bad, and sometimes both at the same time.

While plunking for Chinook salmon in the coastal streams of Oregon, I had spent years in the company of older men, most having lived through the Depression as young men, I heard from these older fellows similar stories that I

knew couldn't have happened to all of them, stories that had a root of truth but were not the *truth*, with the most common story being one about killing a sleeping bear in the stump of a hollow cedar by poking the bear with a long stick until it woke up and poked its head out its den's entrance where the fellow was waiting with a .22 rifle to shoot it in the head from above. Some of the tellings had more details than other tellings, but the tellings were so similar that it was evident that they had a common root: someone had taken a long vine maple limb, had sharpened a branch fork at one end, and had probed around inside a hollow stump until the fellow encountered flesh and had then quickly withdrawn the stick and had stood frightened next to the opening in the cedar stump to see what happened. Whether a bear was ever killed might not be known for certain, but what seems to have happened is that eventually the bear poked out its head. And depending upon the storyteller, the bear either quickly pulled its head back in so that the fellow missed the bear, or the bear charged from the hole before the fellow could shoot, or the bear was shot through its brain. I heard the same story with all three endings.

For the historical critic of the Bible, the Passion of Christ is such a story, with each gospel writer presenting a similar but non-eyewitness account of what happened ... have I made their case for them: the Passion Accounts are fictions based in some fact? If someone believes I have, the person hasn't read what I have written closely enough.

When Bob told me that he could tell when a minister went to preaching opinion from the pulpit, and when I realized that I, too, could tell when opinion was being preached, the question that must now be asked: was this opinion coming from the *parakletos* giving to the speaker knowledge not contained in Scripture, or was the opinion that was being given being delivered for purposes of disambiguation, or was the opinion not of God at all but was strictly of human origin? And to make that assessment, the auditor must assign to the words of the speaker meaning that either comes from the auditor having the indwelling *parakletos* or the auditor being a meathead, a son of disobedience still consigned to disobedience as an unborn son of God. Hence, ultimately, it isn't what the speaker says that matters, but what meaning is given by the auditor to what the speaker says—and when this speaker is Holy Writ, the same conditions apply.

The weakness of Professor Ehrman's movement into agnosticism came from the professor not being able to answer the question of why God permits suffering to occur in this world, when it was the professor who assigned meaning to the words of Holy Writ, words that adequately explain to me why there is suffering: for the sake of angelic sons of God for whom the Father has great love, a demonstration project was established in which the *demonstratees* are offered/given life outside of the creation in exchange for their willing participation once they become aware of what is occurring. But this is a subject for another Endnote.

So returning to some paragraphs earlier, the context for inclusion of the above narrative, my *mousetrap*, has me knowing that the deacon quit on God when world events didn't turn out as Armstrong had prophesied, a context very much

like that in which the Gospel of John was produced: Christ Jesus hadn't returned in the first disciples' natural lifetimes. By the last decade of the 1st-Century, the *Jesus Movement* needed to be rethought and reshaped—and this is what the Gospel of John is all about, a retelling of the *Jesus narrative* from the perspective that Jesus hadn't returned before Jerusalem was destroyed and the fledgling Christian Church was scattered throughout the Near and Middle East. The Gospel of John is about setting right what had gone wrong and about the disciple who loved Jesus reaching across nineteen centuries to be the brother and partner of disciples doing an endtime work.

Is the above story I tell in my *mousetrap* truthful? Yes, it is. Is the story useful to clerics and would-be clerics? Yes, it is. But did I have to publicly tell this story two decades ago when I wrote it? No. What was to be gained in potentially embarrassing the deacon, a former insurance agent who was when he jerked that chair out from under his employee a building contractor and who would become a hardware store owner before returning to being an insurance agent in Homer, Alaska? I wrote the essay as an experiment in how information could be presented to pique interest in a rather mundane happening that lasted all of a few seconds. But I have included the narrative in this piece of writing to trap the present king of this world because the Kenai Sabbatarian community has changed, has died and will be no more forever. The story is history that has a bearing on why the community died.

The Gospel of John was written when it was because the Body of Christ was gasping its last breaths of life. The religion of Jesus the Nazarene was quickly becoming a religion about a mythical *Jesus* that never lived. And the Gospel of John was/is, again, a setting of things in order, a setting of affairs straight when a body knows death is near.

And consider what it is that is written in 1 Timothy 3:1–3. The person who seeks the office of a bishop seeks an office that will condemn the person to death if this person exercises authority as *authority* is exercised in this world for as Jesus said, the one who will be great among His disciples is the one who will make him or herself the slave of His disciples. It isn't every disciple who is able to receive authority and not use that authority except in manifested love for the other.

*

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Ehrman, Bart D., *Jesus Interrupted*. First edition. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

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