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Statement by Creation Ministries International (Australia) - formerly Answers in Genesis (Australia), before that Creation Science Foundation.

The following pages are the complete text, including covers, of the booklet *Salem Revisited*. The events it describes are nearly 20 years old, but the serious sins therein, perhaps best described as crimes against a person, have never been ‘put right’ in any sense, particularly in a biblical sense. I.e. there has been no repentance, no approach to the victim seeking forgiveness, etc.

This book was sent out by our ministry (in those early years following the two-decades-old attack while the perpetrator continued a campaign of rumour and innuendo which sought to undermine the ministry’s integrity and effectiveness) as part of a pack of information, also made into a pdf.

That defensive pack explained why it was being sent out, beginning with a letter from a church that had been influenced by the perpetrator into withdrawing support for the ministry. It contained detailed documentation, including letters co-signed by Ken Ham and other eyewitnesses with a heavy heart, of not only the events but the intensive attempts which the ministry undertook to sort the matter out biblically—and the total rejection of these attempts.

Unrepentant

This situation, this failure to face these matters and put them right, has continued to this date. If anything, the stain of these crimes is made worse by the fact that a reconciliation is being trumpeted between the perpetrator and a former director of this ministry, without the perpetrator having changed his stance on these matters, let alone sought forgiveness from the victim. In fact, indications are that once again, the net effect of this is aimed at having the Australian ministry’s effectiveness undermined via rumour and innuendo once more, based on this set of vicious falsehoods.

Margaret Buchanan, now 62, was a widow at the time. The claims made by the perpetrator to bolster his initial claim of ‘spiritual discernment’ included several made in one meeting in Adelaide to three eyewitnesses, including the Creation Bus’s Peter Sparrow, and Creation magazine writer Russell Grigg – all agreed immediately to collate their diary notes of what they had been told into a single computer file on Peter’s computer. Peter signed the file at the time of its preparation; the other two have now in 2010 resighted that file, and verified in writing (on file with CMI in Brisbane) that even though some of the details have faded, they recall the meeting, the fact that there were sensational, bizarre claims by John against Margaret that were ‘beyond reasonable belief’, and Russell wrote that the copy signed by Peter is consistent with it being a record of that conversation, to the best of his knowledge and belief.¹

About ten years ago, Margaret married our ministry’s Managing Director, Carl Wieland, after he had been single for some time. This remarriage, too, was the subject of much innuendo, despite its sanctity and biblical propriety having been affirmed by the ministry’s Board (including Ken Ham, who knew the situation intimately, and whose brother the late Pastor Robert Ham performed the ceremony). Pastor Rob Furlong, formerly of Cairns Baptist Church, is also able to testify to the background circumstances.

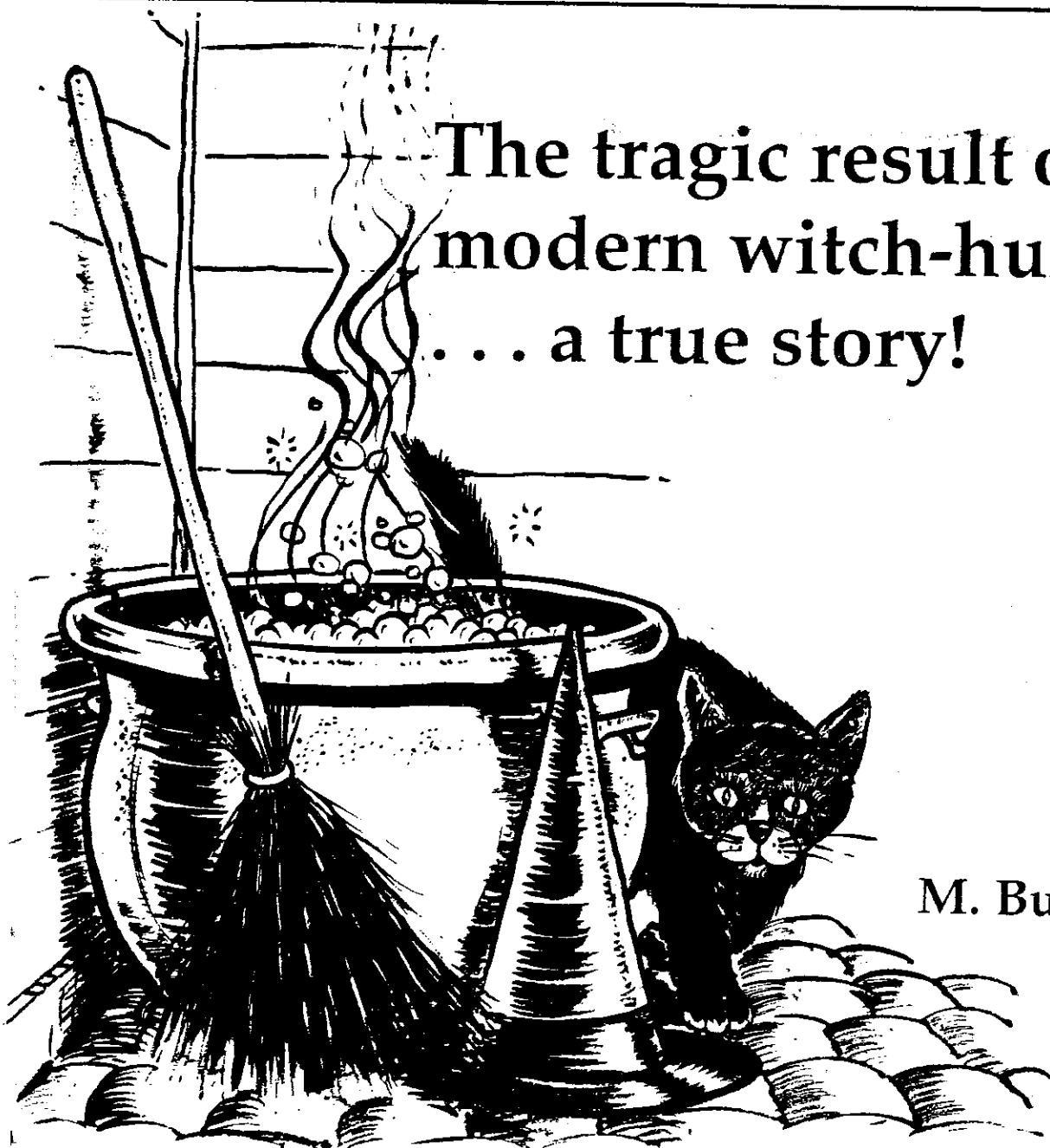
The pack referred to earlier also includes a sombre letter written by an entire Baptist church in SE Queensland excommunicating the perpetrator of these crimes, involving additional issues the church had with the perpetrator. These matters have never been put right, either, to this date. The reality is that Margaret, and those others still in the Australian ministry damaged in this matter, long for true reconciliation. Which can only happen along biblical, not ‘political’ lines.

¹This paragraph was modified in late May 2010 for the reasons set out in the footnote at creation.com/mackay, in order to be absolutely accurate. Though the thrust of the information is unchanged, the resurfaced diary notes showed it was incorrect to state that ‘all three had signed it on the spot’; it had only Peter’s signature, because only Peter had a computer, and the meeting with John took place in Russell’s computerless office). The report, when it resurfaced in 2010, did describe the horrific claim about post-mortem sex, but did not mention the word ‘corpse’, it said that she was supposed to have confessed that her late husband had “returned after his death on several occasions and made love to her”—still much the same, but not quite, hence the adjustment.

Salem

REVISITED

The tragic result of
modern witch-hunting
... a true story!



M. Buchanan

Salem Revisited

*The tragedy of modern
witch-hunting — a true story*

Margaret Buchanan

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Preface

Salem, a Puritan village in Massachusetts (USA), was the seventeenth century setting for an infamous witch-hunt which saw the death by hanging of 19 innocent persons. Their convictions were wrought at the hands of unjust judges (only one publicly confessed and repented of his involvement) and a community driven by fear that Satanic influences were intent on destroying their 'city set upon a hill for God'.*

For a people so steeped in biblical and English common law practices, they quickly forgot the need of two or three eyewitnesses to every allegation. This vital compromise by those in charge of the proceedings resulted in the death sentence being passed on innocent victims. Unsubstantiated allegations (albeit theatrically presented and undoubtedly satanically inspired) replaced the required eyewitness testimony — and 19 Christians died.

This *was* a devout, Christian community. Sadly, they planned a 'city of God' while paying scant attention to the Laws of God.

* For a concise account of the Salem witch-hunts, please refer to an article in *Moody Monthly*, January, 1987 by Jack H. Simons, pp. 57–59.

Salem Revisited

On Wednesday, February 18, 1987, a modern-day witch-hunt occurred. In this instance, there was only one victim but, in the words of one who was present at the mock trial, 'If this had been the seventeenth century, she would have been burnt at the stake!'

In the total absence of eyewitness testimony, scurrilous accusations were theatrically presented. Fear ruled the day and some devout Christians were again swayed by the belief that their very future depended on the removal/destruction of one individual.

This booklet is a factual account of that experience, analysed biblically. It is neither embellished nor sensationalised. The truth needed no embellishments.

It is written *by* the victim. It is written *for* the Church.

A word from the author

While I hope that no Christian reader will ever be confronted with such a bizarre circumstance in his or her own life, it is a fact of life that quasi 'demon-hunting' activists are with us, and probably to stay.

Unfortunately, there will always be those in Christian circles who will endeavour to set themselves up (claiming special 'knowledge', 'insight' or 'discernment') as authorities over and above the sound teaching of the Scriptures, as if the Scriptures were not in themselves sufficient for the Church. Even more sadly, there appears to be a degree of *naïveté*, even gullibility, among many Christians who are prepared to follow their dubious lead, as my own experience shows.

I would gently suggest that, if these followers' minds had been sufficiently fed with correct biblical teaching, there would not have been room for this fabricated nonsense that has no sound basis in the Bible. Such 'charges' and teachings need to be brought to the clear light of day and the searching glare of the Word of God.

What follows is a factual (and verifiably accurate) account of an event that occurred in the life of the writer more than three years ago — an experience that had, and is continuing to have, an enormous impact on every aspect of my life. In order to make the task

manageable, it has been reduced to essentials only.

My story, while it may shock you in some respects, is not unique. Extra-biblical 'movements' such as this quasi 'demon-hunting' (sometimes adhered to with the best of intentions) have wreaked havoc in churches before — and will do so again, so this is no academic exercise. This particular saga has so far been disruptive to the lives of many people and caused much bitterness and pain, as well as bringing harm to an important, evangelical outreach ministry.

The point is not so much to publicise the aberrations of any particular individual — there will always be such cases. Rather, it is to highlight the response needed from the Body of Christ in all such matters. This could not be done without allowing the reader to be truthfully exposed to at least a proportion of the calculated horror unleashed on myself.

It is very difficult to write honestly as a victim without laying oneself open to the charge of seeking sympathy in some form. My only answer to this, apart from the importance of trying to prevent harm to others, is that I am now in a position where a sudden surge of sympathy can do me little good. The consequences of this attack have meant moving far away from home, losing job, health and friendships in the process.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks go to the many supportive Christian friends who have stood with me against this horror and who have continued to support the ministry regardless of various attempts to have a number of them do otherwise. I am very, very grateful to those, including not only people with theological expertise, editing and artistic skills, but also mature Christian eyewitnesses to the events recorded herein, who have reviewed the manuscript. I thank them all for the many helpful suggestions and additions. I apologise for not including everything they may have thought necessary. It was important this booklet was written from the vantage point of a victim and not that of an onlooker, no matter how much close involvement they may have had. It is their prayer, and mine, that what is written will cause Christian minds to be exercised in this direction with a little more clarity than has been demonstrated throughout much of what transpired.

Chapter One

Then he [Jesus] said to the disciples, It is impossible that no offences should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones (Luke 17:1-2).

RETRACING OF EVENTS

It was the morning of Wednesday, February 18, 1987, at 7.00 a.m. My daughter and I were preparing to leave home for work with a well-known evangelical ministry. The phone rang and I answered it. The person on the other end was one member of the governing body of the ministry. His voice was terse, diction precise and clipped, 'For some time now I have been disturbed by your presence at work. You are dismissed. Do not come into work. Do not collect your things. We will send them to you. The husband you have been asking for you now have. His name is Lucifer.' I said, 'John!' — and he hung up.

Kangaroo court

Thirty minutes before this phone call, John and two of his associates had met with two senior staff members, before whom he had paraded some of his 'perceptions' of me and what he alleged was my witch-cum-demon involvement. The two senior staff were then told he was going to make the call to dismiss me. No one tried to stop this. Neither of the senior staff members in that room at that early hour had any inkling of what John was planning. Neither had any reason to believe I was in any way guilty of what I was being accused. They were partly swayed by the intensity of John's delivery and partly powerless because of John's seniority and the two associates he had with him. They were also in a state of shock.

After the call, John and others rang the various other members of the ministry's governing body, informing them I was 'dismissed'. (This body of men was my legal employer and had, of course, not authorised any of this.) Further calls were then made to a number of key people associated with the ministry. When the remainder of the staff arrived at 8.30 a.m., John gathered them together and proceeded to list (in gruesome detail) my supposed 'witch' activities. He had help in this.

One of John's associates, an acting pastor at the time (we shall call him Allen), claimed some background in his missionary activities of dealing with 'witches'. He was John's *pièce de résistance* and the main teller of witch-tales, although he scarcely knew me. Following is the picture he and John painted during that meeting, and afterwards in private conversations:

Fear and smear

I was a closet witch; demon-possessed; an 'angel of the Devil' masquerading as an 'angel of light' (every good thing, every Chris-

tian act I had ever done, was just a cover-up for my real motivation); an evil infiltrator in a number of churches beforehand, now practising my nastiness in the Christian ministry for which I then worked; the literal incarnation of the Jezebel of the Old and New Testaments; a broomstick-riding, cauldron-stirring witch (yes — he definitely made such statements); a frequent attender of seances and satanic orgies; a witch with the ability to invade both inanimate objects (wall pictures, office space, gifts of any sort) and animate objects (at least one dog and one cat — and even John himself) with my own personal demons. Those present at this gathering were encouraged to bring any gifts I had given them so they could be burned. One girl actually went home for hers for just that purpose. John had already followed this procedure with gifts that I had given to him and his family.

Counterfeit Christian

Any ill (no matter how terrible) that had befallen my workmates, family, friends, and previous churches I had attended, was all graphically presented and sheeted home directly to me. I was depicted as a liar, cheat, fraud of the very worst kind — a counterfeit Christian in every respect. John's list of 'charges' was as long as it was preposterous!

He seemed totally sure of the correctness of his slanderous allegations — and had already managed to convince a number of others to the degree that they were also prepared to join him in what amounted to attempted spiritual murder. (Strong words — yes. But also true words as you will see.)

Grape juice and 'sanctified theft'

In order to 'exorcise' the ministry of my awful presence, Allen

(encouraged by John) sprinkled grape juice all over the office space I used, filing cabinets, desk, carpets — anywhere and everywhere — muttering incantations as he went.

It was not until I later returned to work that it was discovered various personal items had been removed from my office. As no one in the office witnessed this act, I assumed that the items were taken from the office the previous evening when John and others (upon their own admission) had accessed the building in order to (a) remove certain items from John's office (some of which were, and still remain, the property of the ministry), and (b) to have all locks on the ministry's business premises changed. This latter act meant that the only person who held keys would be John himself, and anyone else he deemed fit to hold a set. The ministry's ruling authorities called in locksmiths to counter this attempted lockout.

No — I was not present. What I have recounted here is eyewitness testimony of the event. John called a 'kangaroo court' and I was not even allowed to attend to speak in my own defence. One person present later commented, 'If this had been the seventeenth century, she would have been burnt at the stake.' He was right. Such was the fear that was being generated and the monster that was being created.

The remaining members of the ministry's ruling board (who had been phoned about the events) and one past member (who is a lawyer) arrived about 11.00 a.m. I was told to remain at home.

The wife of one of these members called me throughout the day to let me know what was happening as far as she understood it. I was grateful for that but I knew and feared the horror the staff were facing that day. I KNEW I was innocent of ANY charge and felt secure that that would surely be the outcome before the day was very old. John had 'flipped', for want of a better word, and it would all be sorted out — somehow — properly. I was told the ministry authorities were interviewing John and staff members, and that when they had finished they would want to interview me. So I waited.

Wanted — eyewitnesses

I have little complaint with my employers' actions during that day (or since, for that matter). They sought to interview everyone, including John, urging him to produce eyewitness observations of his detailed charges. I was finally summoned to a neutral home near the offices, many hours later. There were two board members, and the lawyer, and the lady of the house in attendance. The men presented me with John's major charges, all of which I answered truthfully and to the satisfaction of those present. After this interview, they consulted in private.

Exonerated

The final outcome was that these men in authority unanimously exonerated me completely of ALL of John's slanderous allegations, because there had been not one shred of evidence provided to satisfy the biblical guidelines. (One of the present directors, some weeks later, phoned John to ask him what, finally, was his evidence? John's answer: 'Spiritual discernment', which he defined a few sentences later as 'divine insight'. To this day, John has failed to produce a single eyewitness to my alleged activities. Even when subsequently invited to do so at a special meeting called for that purpose, he failed to appear.)

Following their deliberations, my employers asked me to take four weeks' leave while they sorted out the situation. The reader may think that the matter should have died fairly quickly after that. But my accuser's campaign rapidly gathered momentum.

Leave mis-taken

Against my better judgment, I accepted the decision to take four

weeks' leave. In fact, I was somewhat relieved. I have always worked hard and spent long hours at my job, and there was never enough time to do everything. I had not taken 'normal' holiday times, preferring to take a week here and a week there when things were under control, so the prospect of four weeks off was quite welcome. I was, of course, still in a state of shock over the slanderous attack that John had made against me.

The next morning, I had to fight the intense desire to return to work. I could not believe that my workmates, on looking me in the face, could truly believe that the hideous stories they had been fed were true.

In hindsight, how I wish I could have that second day over again! I would have, should have, gone to work. John should have been made to repeat his accusations in front of me before the staff. I should have been given the opportunity to answer his allegations to everyone — and well I could have.

To this day, I have never heard (apart from that first telephone call) any of the accusations made by John (and Allen and others), from their very own lips and face to face. And yet, those slanderous allegations have been actively and purposefully paraded around this country, and to countries overseas, to hundreds of people. They have been believed, and often repeated, by others who have never met me, do not know me, and yet who claim to be God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians!

Meanwhile, the staff met together on that second day and, although still badly shocked, agreed that they couldn't believe John without proper evidence. When told of the previous investigation and decision, they accepted this and returned to their tasks. In spite of the fact that John had earlier arranged for a number of the staff to be phoned, to imply that they could leave the ministry to join him in a new organisation, the vast majority remained loyal. There was very

strong feeling among the staff that they were not working for John anyway, but for the ministry, the Lord and His people. But John still kept up the pressure of persuasion on some staff members behind the scenes.

Ultimatum

Following the decision that I was not to be dismissed, John gave the ultimatum, 'She goes or I go'. This did not change my employers' resolve (though the ultimatum saddened them greatly). They were not about to sacrifice an innocent person (no matter who she was) in the face of such blatant and unproven slander — irrespective of who brought the charges.

They came under a great deal of pressure to rescind that decision, by well-meaning but entirely misled defenders of John's actions. In some instances, these men were pastors of congregations and Christians who should have known better, given their background of years of study of the Word of God and their pastoral calling.

One of them (whom I had met previously on a number of occasions) admitted that he did not believe I was a witch, and that John had acted in a less biblical manner than he himself would have — but John was so important to the ministry that I should either go of my own free will or be sacked!

This same pastor was, I regret to say, so influenced by my accuser that he later widely circulated a letter defending John's actions. The reason John had not gone to the ministry's board (my legal employer) before my unauthorised 'sacking' was, according to this man, because he was acting in hasty concern. The example used was that of a sales manager hearing a bomb ticking, and defusing it before asking his employer's permission. The fact was that John had been meeting with several people (but not with his fellow directors) regarding this matter, some weeks before taking this unilateral

action.

Friendships poisoned

So John left, taking with him, over a period of some weeks, a handful of people he had been able to attract to his cause.

In every instance, those who went with John held a personal grievance against me — grievances which came to light **only after** the event. Petty jealousies, perceived hurts, anger, bitterness, misunderstandings — all surfaced in people who were my workmates in some instances. I would have considered **all** of these people my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (I had prayed with many of them for years) and, therefore, my friends.

In at least one instance, one was my closest friend at work. Both of us had enjoyed many a long discussion on a huge variety of subjects. I had no problems relating to any of them before the events of that sad day. The contrived 'witch' story had allowed minor matters to be manipulated and blown out of all proportion in some minds.

In each of these instances, to this day, we remain totally alienated — all because one man at a point in time decided to drive a wedge between them and me for his own unworthy purposes. How I have striven to meet with them, to talk with them — to let them experience the forgiveness I have long been prepared to give to them.

No, I do not hate them — just what they have done, to me, to my daughter, to the ministry for whom I worked, and to the Christ they profess also to serve. Indeed, in our Lord's words, if I am a Christian, and there is ample evidence that I am — 'A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit' (Matthew 7:18) — it is very dangerous territory indeed to be ascribing the work of God's Holy Spirit to the work of the Devil.

Slander spreads

And so John (in particular), along with his group members to varying degrees, continued actively and purposefully spreading this ugly slander. More people associated with the ministry were contacted, both in Australia and overseas. Wherever John went on a 'ministry trip', testimony would soon come to hand that he had purposefully contacted or summoned key supporters to denounce the ministry and myself as being under demonic control.

One specific case

Some of his lengthy journeys to tell certain people about this slander were not even associated with any specific ministry. In one instance, John called a meeting of three key representatives of the ministry in a particular State.

To the original list of bizarre allegations was added a further one which was too shocking and repulsive to repeat fully here, and included suggestions of necrophilia. John asserted he had just been given this information by a certain person who claimed to know me well. Needless to say, his alleged 'witness' has given me a written denial that he ever made such statements.

The three key representatives, sensing something was amiss, recorded detailed diary notes of John's bizarre allegations (of which the ministry and I both hold copies), immediately after the meeting concluded. Whilst it was personally very difficult learning of this further slander, I am very grateful for their preparedness to record details of the meeting immediately and accurately and to stand by this testimony.

Effect on the ministry

As you can imagine, the ministry suffered enormously under this

onslaught. Some, in the midst of the situation who knew the truth of the matter, defended the actions of my employer, and myself, staunchly. Information was disseminated (in response to angry demands by supporters to know why John had been 'dismissed'), by those intimately acquainted with the facts. Some 'outside onlookers' were prepared to accept this 'eyewitness' appraisal of the situation and, while they were only obeying the biblical injunction, are to be applauded in that they were, initially, in the minority.

Reconciliation and 'neutrality'

The vast majority 'sat on the fence', remained 'neutral' — even when it was in everyone's best interest to determine the true facts and act biblically in the face of them. This group (also very well informed) holds much of the responsibility for the event's becoming so drawn out. It is now highly unlikely that the matter will ever be satisfactorily resolved — that all parties concerned will sit down and, in a loving and conciliatory manner, work through the whole sad affair, as adult, mature, God-fearing Christians should.

This matter of reconciliation has been my desire from the outset — and the desire of all who have stood for the cause of God and truth. That has never once been shown to be the intention of those who created this sad state of affairs in the first place. Every single move towards reconciliation has come from those slandered and not the slanderers. It has been my own personal plea for some years now. Yet, in not ONE situation has any one of these people ever agreed to meet to talk the matter through — and I have pleaded regularly and intensely (and so have many others), mostly by letters, sometimes by phone, sometimes personally face to face.

Threatened police action

On one occasion, just a few weeks after the initial attack, I went

to John's home with the biblically required two witnesses. He met us in the driveway, refused to discuss the matter with us and left the three of us standing there with the threat to 'call the police' if we did not leave his property immediately. We had no choice but to leave, with my attacker firmly closeted behind closed doors.

'Silence encourages the tormentor'

Rumanian-born writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, accepting his 1986 Nobel Peace Prize, made this comment: 'Take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.'

I, and many others deeply concerned with this aspect, concur completely. Those who needed to make a decision in this matter (and that includes EVERYONE in the Christian community who had first-hand information or had these events drawn to their attention) very definitely should have taken the biblical position of requiring two or three eyewitness testimonies to support and verify the charges. Without such testimony, there could be no charges, and the one so 'charged' must be considered innocent of ALL related charges. Hence, ongoing accusations were, by definition, false witness! A most serious matter.

Church discipline flouted

Surprisingly, when the church which John and his family were attending took disciplinary action against him in an effort to have him face, in the first instance, grievances that they, his acknowledged spiritual home, had against him and his dealings with them, they felt the anger and bitterness of many Christians towards their 'outrageous' act. That they had followed, demonstrably, the biblical pattern

for church discipline (Matthew 18:15–20), did not stop some fellow Christians denouncing their actions and springing to the defence of the one under discipline. Again, personalities overruled principles. With the blessing and encouragement of many, John simply went to fellowship elsewhere and would not meet with his former church.

Because John was (and still is) very much a public figure on the Christian stage here in Australia (and overseas), this discipline was made known more widely than usual in the Christian community. The Bible speaks sternly with regard to the responsibility of the bystander or witness to known sin, who sits idly by and allows that sin to go unchecked.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37) stridently makes this point. The priest and the Levite lacked moral desire to assist the victim while, at the same time, presenting impeccable credentials to their peers and those whose spiritual welfare was trusted to their care. What was being asked of them DID NOT require courage in any form, only that they should lend assistance and uphold the Law (Deuteronomy 22:1–4, 23–27; Proverbs 24:10–12) to a victim abandoned by villains.

In the instance to which this booklet refers, courage was not required. Only that God's laws and God's honour be upheld by His people acting as He (depicted by the actions of the Good Samaritan in the parable) would have acted.

It would have cost so many so little to have said simply, lovingly but reprovably, to John, 'This is not correct biblical practice. Repair the matter or I cannot continue in unbroken fellowship with you.'

Biblical principles not applied

Instead, in so many instances, biblical principles were not applied. The perpetrator was allowed to continue in his own assertions of being God's spokesman, God's anointed, a man whose actions were

said to be justified by his motives. Some were actually assisting in the establishment of his new organisation by also spreading the slander, actively producing items that would help the financial viability of John's own organisation (audio and video tapes, printed material, advertisements, etc.), and by continuing to refuse all pleas to assist in bringing the parties together. As the credibility of John's new ministry grew, so, in the eyes of some, did the distinct possibility that the initial charges were quite likely true.

'God will sort it out'

Over these past years, how many times have we heard some justifying their 'wait and see' approach by quoting Acts 5:38–39, '... if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God you cannot overthrow it ...'. The idea being that whichever ministry prospered would show 'which side was right'. But, people clinging to this approach forget that the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims (to name just a few) also thrive and prosper, yet these are not of God. Psalm 73 makes it clear that, in a fallen world, the wicked may indeed prosper.

Whether a ministry or organisation succeeds or fails cannot be attributed to that comment made by Gamaliel in a specific situation. Every case must be judged by its own merits. Gamaliel certainly did not mean that the flouting of biblical principles has the blessing of God, who *does not* and *will not* work outside of the principles laid down in His Word. He expects us, His hands, feet, eyes, mouth — His Church — to work within the same guidelines. By 'letting God sort it out', when we should also be doing something about the matter, does not our disobedience allow the wicked to prosper?

So — after three long years of numbing abuse at the hands of people who profess to be Christians, after pursuing every avenue open to me to find justice done and reconciliation achieved, God has

said: 'Time to go'. Humanly speaking, there is nothing left to do. I am leaving the ministry I have served for the past six years, with a clear conscience in that there has been no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored, no slightly ajar door ignored, no prayers left unsaid.

The possibility of reconciliation is now much less likely in that, when I shortly begin building a new life, I will not be continuing to seek that actively and in person. Oh, the effort to clear my name will continue. This booklet is one evidence of that. No, I am not washing my hands (as some have done) of the matter. I will continue to struggle against this sort of evil wherever and however it surfaces, as God gives me strength.

Chapter Two

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses to even hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector (Matthew 18:15–17).

RECOMMENDATIONS

If you ever find yourself confronted by similar circumstances, please:

1. Do not be party to the convening of a 'kangaroo court' (my *Macquarie Dictionary* defines that as 'an unauthorised or irregular court conducted with disregard for, or perversion of,

legal procedure, as a mock court of prisoners in a gaol, or by trade unionists in judging workers who do not follow union decisions'), and do not idly sit by and allow that to happen.

2. Do not allow someone to make damaging comments and accusations about a fellow human being (in this case a fellow Christian), with that person's being denied the right of presenting his or her own defence of the charges raised.

Feelings not enough

3. Do not accept any so-called judgment on an individual's supposed behaviour in the absence of eyewitness testimony — not 'hearsay' or subjective 'feelings' — but first-hand, eyewitness testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6,7; 19:16–20; Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Timothy 5:19).

Understand fully what the Bible means when God speaks of 'eyewitness' testimony; if there is no eyewitness to the alleged practices, regardless of attempts to plant suspicious ideas in our minds, we are to accept that, by biblical definition, the accused is innocent. Thus the accuser is bearing false witness and the Ninth Commandment is being broken (Exodus 20:16).

4. Do not fail to bring into the situation as many as possible who have authority over the accused and the one accusing; delay the proceedings so that those with the authority to judge may be present. In the case of Christian ministries or para-church groups — the members of the governing body. When a church member is attacked in similar fashion by a fellow member, obviously the pastoral leadership should be summoned. In the case of the accuser being a pastor, the titular head of his denomination, parish, session, etc.

Suing for slander

Please remember that a Christian victim does *not* have a biblical mandate to take the (Christian) slanderer to court. Paul is adamant on that score in 1 Corinthians 6:1–6.

[In my case, my accusers relied on immunity from civil prosecution for damages because of my Christianity. In effect, I could have sued John (and others) for many thousands of dollars for defamation of character and also for specific damages covering the enormous costs of telephone calls and other expenses directly related to this matter, the many hours spent in defending the charges and my consequent loss of health and livelihood, but I did not do so, in obedience to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 6:1–6).

In short, it is possible for accusers to hide behind the skirts of their victim's Christianity — while accusing him or her of not being a Christian! Be mindful of this fact when someone is being unjustly accused, especially if he or she has a history of godly living — it is a particularly hideous facet of such outrageous violations. This makes it even more important for the church to act in righteous defence of the biblically innocent and not emulate the 'hand-washing' attitude of Pontius Pilate (as occurred many times in relation to my own case).]

Act quickly

5. Do not fail to do everything possible to bring the accused and the accusers together at the first opportunity, preferably before the accuser has had time to make his grievances more public. The writer of Ecclesiastes states this point succinctly, 'Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore

the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil' (8:11).

[In my own case, this was literally fulfilled. When John saw his public 'predictions' fail (e.g. that the ministry would collapse as I continued to work within it), we heard that he had fabricated further stories. For example, that the ministry's directors had abandoned aspects of the evangelical faith, that there had been mass staff resignations (for which I was supposedly responsible), and other similar blatant falsehoods.

Please remember that a campaign such as this, after the initial impact, carries a momentum of its own. The slower the correct response, the worse the scenario. It is doubtful if even John would recognise some of the rumours that abounded, they had been passed on by so many by the time we finally came to hear of them. They were all (without exception) incredibly hurtful. Made all the more so because it was obvious that those responsible for the rumours thought little either about the total nonsense they were spreading or the damage they were doing — in absolutely every instance — to a fellow Christian.]

The abomination of false witness

6. Understand clearly what the Scriptures mean by the term 'false witness'. Like so many other scriptural terms, 'false witness' is a judicial term. It relates to the administration of the law and thus, ultimately, the dispensing of justice. Sadly, as man has fallen, honest and trustworthy testimony (essential to the correct dispensation of justice) cannot be easily come by. Therefore, checks and balances to *any* testimony are totally necessary. God's Law provides for this need and our Westminster system of justice makes similar demands in relation to eyewitness testimony.

Our British system of justice did not arrive at that point by

itself. It is a reiteration of the biblical expectations on anyone who seeks to give testimony for or against another.

God's Law demands that *every* matter of dispute between people *must* be established by the eyewitness testimony of two or three witnesses. References abound in both Testaments (Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; Numbers 35:30; Matthew 18:15–16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28).

An eyewitness is *not* someone who parrots the words of another. They are guilty of bearing false witness if they do so, and have no eyewitness testimony (biblically two or three persons) to substantiate any claim.

The Scriptures are very clear with regard to the serious view God places on the bearing of false witness. Perhaps the most scathing is found in Deuteronomy 19:16–20:

If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. And the judges shall make diligent inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil person from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

The writer/s of Proverbs 19:5, 9; 25:18, again echo these thoughts, with various New Testament passages adding further substantiation. Matthew (19:18) has Jesus himself re-affirming

the Ninth Commandment, and Mark (10:19), Luke (18:20) and Paul (Romans 13:9), amongst others, do likewise.

[It may be said that this booklet could be seen as slander against the John of my story — and the others variously mentioned. This would only be so if what is written here cannot be substantiated by the testimony of many eyewitnesses or with written documentation. If I could not produce my evidence, I would not be writing this. Telling the verifiable truth is never depicted as slander in the Word of God — nor is it seen thus by our own judicial system. Slander, by definition, means 'the utterance of a falsehood damaging to a person's reputation' (Collins Australian Pocket English Dictionary, emphasis added). And this record is being documented only because of the failure to achieve restorative discipline in the event, and as a warning to others lest such circumstances should be replicated.]

Theft of character

7. Understand that bearing false witness is also stealing. It is the theft of the victim's character, reputation, peace of mind, health (mental, physical, social, spiritual), maybe even life *[yes, this thought crossed my mind seriously on more than one occasion]* — certainly the victim's way of life *[and in my case, eventually my livelihood]*.

Try to put yourself in the place of a Christian accused of such a vile crime as witchcraft — it means that finding other work in Christian ministry is virtually impossible (a) because one could not apply for such a position without explaining what had happened, and that means (b) continuing to live and work conscious of the fact that, again, one is being measured against a benchmark of 'possible witchcraft'.

Bearing false witness also, invariably, makes enemies of

friends. It is usually prompted by jealousy, for whatever reason, and always for the purpose of the self-elevation of the accuser at the expense of his victim.

Church membership made difficult

One outcome given scant thought in this area of false witness is the fact that a Christian victim finds himself or herself confronted with grave difficulty in the important matter of obtaining and/or transferring church membership, in two major areas:

- (a) Through no fault of the innocent victim, in the matter of seeking church membership, this person must again suffer the indignity of having their Christian testimony sifted to a degree that is seldom applied to any other applicants. This is humiliating and difficult to suffer, particularly as often very private aspects of their life are laid bare before relative strangers — albeit the spiritual leadership of the fellowship.
- (b) Transferring church membership is a matter for the entire church membership [*this is certainly the situation for the denomination of which my daughter and I are members*]. This means that the victim is unable to move anonymously to another fellowship and has to face the reality that the false witness may well follow to any new situation and again make normal church life almost impossible.

The time to stop someone from doing this kind of damage to

a fellow human being is before the smoke settles — not weeks, months, years afterwards. The very worst of sins can become commonplace — our consciences seared as ‘with a hot iron’ (1 Timothy 4:2). If the Christian community is not going to look out for its own — both offender and offended against — who else will?

Wanted — strong leaders

8. Pastors — recognise your responsibility as leaders. James, writing to his fellow Jewish Christians, had this admonishment for those who would lead: ‘My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment’ (3:1). Lead, by all means, but lead with full knowledge of the responsibility and spiritual authority vested in you. If you fail to judge *any* matter biblically, you may set in motion a chain reaction that could have repercussions for decades.

[I say this with the utmost sadness. There has been exhibited to me personally an appalling lack of ability and/or willingness in the wider Christian community, particularly among pastors (with some notable exceptions of course), to follow the biblical guidelines and to take a biblical stance — no matter if that has meant cancelling a week’s ministry, or some program or the other, or wasting the cost of promotional material.]

There is nothing of more value than a human soul — whether you are defending or disciplining. Even the latter, if it is done in deep love and total cognisance of the fact that ‘there but for the grace of God, go I’, is a charitable Christian act, having the very best interests of the other person at heart.

Innocent until proven guilty

9. Treat the victim as entirely innocent until proven guilty — not by your own intuition, but by God's standards only. Do not hold a position of neutrality, 'maybe guilty, maybe not' — but entirely innocent.

The victim finds himself or herself in the invidious catch-22 position: 'If I do this, will that confirm their suspicions?' 'If I do that, will this help to convince them otherwise?' 'If I cry will they know I am hurting, or believe it is just a smoke screen?' 'If I laugh, will they think I am OK and not bother to care?' 'If I survive, will they think it doesn't matter?' 'If my slanderer prospers, will they believe he has told the truth?'

Proving innocence made impossible

A witch-hunt victim loses her personhood. In the minds of many, she becomes 'the woman' or 'that lady' or 'the witch' or whatever ugly term anyone wants to apply. The victim has to deliberately find ways to make people face her, in the hope they will come to terms with the 'real' person who exists and has feelings, and her account of her life to give. How can anyone prove their innocence *if no one will try even to prove guilt?* Face to face — person to person — openly and honestly? And how does one prove their innocence of such accusations anyway when the bias is already set in the direction of 'guilty'?

True love

10. Demonstrate true love at all times — towards both the victim and the accuser. True love does **not** mean failing to take a

biblical stand where necessary. Some profess to love but choose those matters that are simple as opposed to those that are difficult. Jesus' castigation of the Pharisees is a timely reminder here, 'Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel' (Matthew 23:24 KJV). Discipline is often seen as 'difficult' —it is (mistakenly) seen as more loving to ignore than to correct.

Most Christians would recoil in horror if it were suggested that they should raise their children by ignoring wrong and failing to correct. Most would definitely suggest they would be *unloving* and poor disciplinarians and definitely *not* raising their children as God commands. They do not 'correct' in fear of 'losing' their children, but in the hope of keeping them. Unfortunately, we have a somewhat different picture when it comes to church discipline. Why?

Real demonology

11. Be aware of the correct biblical procedure for exorcising demons. The Bible nowhere states that sprinkling grape juice around the absent victim's office while mumbling incantations will rid any room of resident 'demons'. Nor does it suggest that fire will expunge demonic activity. No, not even Acts 19:19, though Luke speaks of '... those who had practised magic brought their books together and burned them . . .'. It was the change in their hearts that brought about the change in their reading habits. They had no further use for, and were publicly dissociating themselves from, these evil and idolatrous practices.

[I know how they felt. I gave away a library of trashy novels many years ago for the very same reason — Christ worked His change in my heart too.]

For examples of how to exorcise demons, I prefer to look to our Lord's activity in that area:

In my first example, Jesus is confronted by a man who had been bound by demonic influences for a very long time (Luke 8:26-39). Gently, gently, our Saviour dispatched the unclean spirit that inhabited the man into a herd of swine, which ran down a steep place and were drowned in the water below. Where was the sprinkled grape juice and the mumbled incantations? The darkness and the secrecy? The ostracism of the victim? There was none of that — just a poor man who, for whatever reason, found himself caught in this awful mess. And his Saviour lovingly and compassionately reached out and rescued a suffering human being.

My next illustration introduces another dimension. Peter, James and John had just witnessed the transfiguration of our Lord (Mark 9:14-29). Some of the disciples were waiting down the mountain — and no doubt wished that Jesus would return soon. They were confronted by a boy and his father, both in deep distress. They understood well enough what the problem was — the boy was in the grip of the demonic — and they were powerless to help. So Jesus removed the demon for them and the lad regained sound mind. His disciples, obviously subdued by their own lack of success, asked the inevitable question (in private), 'Why could we not cast him out?' Jesus' reply? 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'

In this second illustration, as with the first, the overriding sentiment that is expressed is the calm, gentle, careful way our Lord rid the hapless victims of their resident demons. Never, ever once did He leave one such person (or indeed did any of His disciples in the accounts given of their later exploits in this area) in a worse state than when He or they found them. It was always an improvement — a vital, life-changing, improvement.

The elimination of the demon did not destroy the vessel —

ever. It was love all the way — love in its truest, purest form — having the very best interests of the other person at heart — *agápe* love — God's love.

Scripture, not hocus pocus

12. Understand clearly what the Scriptures refer to as 'testing the spirit'. In 1 John 4:1–3, we are told to '... not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God ...'.

[For the record, then, let me state here, unequivocally: I believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, and is God the Creator become man. I further believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for my sins, which do not include witchcraft, and I am greatly looking forward to meeting my Saviour and Lord face to face. With reference to this particular issue, because I have scrupulously obeyed the Word of God in the course that I have followed, I believe that I shall one day hear my Saviour say where this matter is concerned, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant ...']

Please understand, the biblical requirement for testing the spirit is as outlined above. It is not some weird hocus pocus understood by an elect few, as a number of exponents of that particular line of thinking (including protagonists of John) would have us believe.

[In my case, having offered myself on more than one occasion to the potential humiliation of that kind of testing, I have been

amazed to discover the offer either totally ignored or declined, primarily on the grounds that these self-confessed 'experts' of deliverance ministries might, themselves, be deceived — such was the magnitude of the demonic power alleged to be vested in me.]

Be very, very careful of such deceptions.

13. Learn to apply biblical discernment. The writer to the Hebrews (5:14) sternly suggests, ' . . . solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' From that comment, it is clear that God expects His people (particularly those who profess NOT to be babes in Christ) to be able to rise to any occasion that confronts them in which they are expected to 'discern' good from evil.

Christians are not meant to function in isolation. We are exhorted to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep' (Romans 12:15). God expects us to become involved. No — He does not hold us responsible for every injustice that befalls everyone. Nor does He expect us to personally feed every one of the earth's starving millions. But, and of this I am totally certain, He most definitely expects us to become involved in those situations which He has allowed to cross our path — whatever the need.

And, He has not left us ignorant — not even in this supposedly difficult area of discerning right from wrong. We have His consistent, everlasting, immutable Word — His principles, His Law, His promises, and, above all, His own example.

Any situation that presents the dichotomy of two parties each proclaiming innocence must see the actions of both parties measured against the benchmark of the Word of God. And those doing the measuring must demonstrate the courage of their

calling and insist on the correct biblical action. If either party refuses to accede to just such a test by their own peers, then fellowship is broken and cannot be resumed until reconciliation is effected.

[In my case, the choice should have been made easy — one side begging for a meeting, while the other consistently refused, proffering all sorts of excuses.]

No — we must never cease striving for the correct thing to be done in ANY situation — no matter how long, or painful, or potentially damaging that conflict may be.

The spirit of fear

14. Be aware that *fear* will be the main tool employed by anyone seeking to, non-biblically, denounce anyone as demon-possessed. We are promised not 'a spirit of fear' but 'of power and of love and of a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7). This is not said lightly. The fear that is generated by people who push this particular barrow is tangible, crippling and paralysing.

[Fear is the main reason why my former friends will not meet with me, and the reason why so many have continued to destroy items that were either originally mine or related to the ministry for which I worked.]

Perhaps, by being warned of this aspect, the reader, too, will be armed against it and react in sound mind, power — and love.

The responsibility of the bystander

15. Recognise the responsibility of the bystander. Deuteronomy 22:1–4, 23–27, lists a few cases to illustrate the general prin-

ciple. A man or woman must not be robbed of their property or integrity by the neglect of their contemporaries. A fellow Christian ought not to be robbed of his good name, reputation, position or livelihood by the neglect of his peers.

James, in his epistle, further illustrates this point, '... to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin' (James 4:17). The writer of Proverbs 24:10–12 also has some sobering thoughts to add:

If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Deliver those who are drawn towards death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not he who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does he not know it? And will he not render to each man according to his deeds?

Derek Kidner, writing in *The Proverbs, an Introduction and Commentary*, Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964, p. 154, has this to say about Proverbs 24:10–12;

Exceptional strain [verse 10] and avoidable responsibility [verses 11,12] are fair tests, not unfair, of a man's mettle. It is the hireling, not the true shepherd, who will plead bad conditions [verse 10], hopeless tasks [verse 11] and pardonable ignorance [verse 12]; love is not so lightly quieted — nor is the God of love.

Biblical law clearly enunciates the liability of the bystander, and allows no escape for anyone to claim innocence of involve-

ment in any injustice of which they are aware. Given we have biblical principles to fit any human condition that may befall us, those claiming to be privy to those principles cannot be excused for not researching and ultimately reaching a biblically based decision on any situation presented.

Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are all, under our Lord's command, exhorted to be our brother's keeper.

The pursuit of justice

16. Clearly understand the biblical issues relating to fighting for justice for oneself. If one cannot understand that a Christian who is contending for justice in just such a situation as I am recording here, is also deeply concerned for the good name of the Christ who dwells within, then at least understand that it is NOT unbiblical to fight evil with persistence, determination, and perseverance in the hope that justice may come.

Think very carefully before you use the argument, 'Look at Christ. He didn't defend Himself when He was unjustly accused. We should be like Him. You should accept it and let it be'. Why did this same Lord Jesus instruct the Church to judge matters of dispute between Christians (1 Corinthians 6:1-6 and Matthew 18:15-17)? If we were not meant to take an *active* role in our defence, why did Jesus give us the mandate to do so? In what circumstance does this teaching apply?

Would these same people crying 'be passive' deny themselves a proper defence if they found themselves facing serious charges (of which they were entirely innocent) in any court of law? Of course not. And would/should they not do everything to clear their good name? Of course. It is hard to appreciate just how oppressive the 'shut up and lie down' approach can be for such a victim, especially when those same brethren are refusing to help.

Forgive and forget?

17. Have a clear understanding of biblical 'forgiveness'. No — it is not handing out blanket forgiveness for anything and everything that happens to us. It is **definitely** having the *God-given potential* to forgive **anything and everything** no matter how hideous the crime against us. But, forgiveness is 'for giving'. How can we give forgiveness when there is no one physically standing before us TO forgive? The pre-requisite is confession and repentance and the result is restoration of relationship, therefore forgiveness *cannot* occur in isolation.

Christ is often cited as our example here. But, even He (Luke 23:34) was pleading for forgiveness for people who stood before Him. Some in the crowd were not looking for His forgiveness (of that we may be sure). Some may have been. He pleaded for forgiveness because the act was final and only God (and His Christ) knew just what fate awaited those who actively and unrepentantly participated in His crucifixion.

That was a unique situation, and it was God the Father who was being asked to forgive and not the Christ on the Cross who was offering that forgiveness. He was acting in His role as Priest and Mediator *and* God's own, chosen, sacrificial Lamb.

The same applies to the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:60). He acted as intercessor for his murderers. He did not offer blanket forgiveness, but we may be sure he would have forgiven any of his slayers who dared ask for it with confession and repentance.

Why do well-meaning Christians expect of an injured fellow-Christian that he/she forgive without any evidence of confession and repentance? Does not God Himself require 'confession and repentance' to be a feature of our approach to Him for forgiveness? 1 John 1:9 indicates that clearly enough. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us

from all unrighteousness.' Matthew 3:8 speaks of demonstrating 'fruits worthy of repentance'.

Jesus states in Luke 17:3-4, 'Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent," you shall forgive him.'

Before closing off this subject, I would like to make one point very clear. I do believe the basic criterion for rendering biblical forgiveness concerns always and only those who ask for same. However, there has to be a distinction made between those who need to ask for forgiveness and those who don't know (for the most part) that they have done anything requiring forgiveness or that they even understand the term 'forgiveness'.

For example, in the case of missionaries murdered by pagan Indians, or Christians held in concentration camps under the most inhumane conditions, I believe the biblical injunction is as Jesus himself enunciates, '... I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Matthew 5:44-45).

I am definitely *not* saying that one should not treat those who have acted in enmity against us in anything other than a loving manner. I would definitely agree with Paul's referral to Proverbs 25:21-22, 'Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head' (Romans 12:20).

[Yes, I am still prepared (as I have always been) to meet whatever need may present itself to me where John (and any other) is concerned. If I found him starving on my doorstep, I

would offer him food. If injured, I would try to help. But — it still would not be an act of forgiveness. The performance of kindnesses such as these is supposed to evoke a response of remorse in the recipient and thus, perhaps, provide the seed-bed in which confession, repentance and ultimately forgiveness and restoration flourish.]

The fruits of true repentance

18. It ought not be necessary to make special mention of the need for restitution once one has recognised his guilt. True repentance has not occurred unless there is a definite attempt to make restitution. The Old Testament is full of examples where restitution is concerned (Exodus 22:1–17; Leviticus 6:4; Proverbs 6:31; Ezekiel 33:15). And, who is not aware of the beautiful story of the restitution made by Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10), when Jesus touched his life?

It is wrong not to see two aspects of forgiveness — on one hand there is sin against God, and on the other, sin against man. It is wrong to deal lightly with the aspect of restitution, and any who would involve themselves in bringing about final justice in a matter such as I am describing here (or in any other recognised sin requiring repentance and restitution), **must** be settled in their own mind as to what restitution God would require at the hand of the violator.

[In my own case, restoration of fellowship with John could not be considered outside of a genuine attempt on his part to restore my reputation as a Christian (because the slander was public — this would also need to be done publicly); friendships that have been broken would need to be restored (as much as that

lay in the hands of the perpetrator); ideally, some compensation should be made (or most certainly offered) for the material cost incurred by this evil act (although I am prepared to waive that). In short, as much should be done as humanly could be done to undo this harm — recognising that complete restitution is entirely impossible.]

Please don't try to separate forgiveness from repentance/restitution. Please do not try to reduce forgiveness to a matter of mere feeling. That is sentimentalism, and unbiblical.

Escape-from-responsibility clause

19. When a church demonstrates tangibly that it has followed the biblical steps of disciplining one of its number (Matthew 18:15–20) accept that it has acted in the manner God approves. If He approves — who are we to judge the matter?

If you find yourself on a diaconate, and a member of your fellowship is pursuing the Matthew 18 'discipline principle', or if your leadership itself is trying to work through the principle with one of your number, be sure you use the correct interpretation of that passage.

[I can provide two illustrations here — one where our Lord's teachings were followed to the letter, another (no matter how good their intentions) where they were not.

In the first instance, the church fellowship with which my accuser and his family worshipped (though they were not strictly 'in membership'), had cause to bring discipline against him on a related matter. This they did over a period of 12 months. There was much soul-searching, much prayer, much diligence, until

the entire membership was certain every avenue had been explored. Added to their initial charge against John was the ongoing matter between John and myself. That issue also became a part of their final discipline.

Because my accuser pursued a public ministry, their obligation was not discharged until the wider Christian community was made cognisant of the facts. They have suffered much and been much maligned for taking this action on at least two points: (a) John was not a member and therefore thought to be exempt from any discipline (the escape-from-responsibility clause) and (b) the discipline allegedly ought not to have been made public. But, to this day, the action stands securely on the Word of God and before Him the matter now rests.

However, when confession, repentance and restitution occur, this fact will also need to be made known publicly. The church leadership is well aware of their responsibility in this. Their biblical action has brought an awareness of the problem to many people, and has almost certainly prevented others being dragged into this witch-hunt movement.

In the second instance, we have an example of Matthew 18 not being correctly pursued and a wrong interpretation being given of that passage. This second example concerned one of the people directly involved with John in the initial witch-hunt. He and his family began attending my church (both my daughter and myself hold membership with this fellowship) some months after the initial attack. As in the first example, this person was not actually a member of the church. Again, this became the basis for the escape-from-responsibility clause.]

Think about that for a minute. Did the New Testament church have membership rolls that were duly signed? In the early days, did they have time for that in between persecution and dispersion? Was not a person seen to be a Christian by his mere

association with Christians? That factor alone was quite sufficient to have them fed to the lions!

If we allow people to go on fellowshiping in churches, regardless of their sins against fellow believers *just because they are not 'signed on the dotted line' members*, does this not encourage those who wish to disregard biblical standards to never become members anyway?

'Don't rock the boat'

[So, in this second instance, please consider the outcome. The Matthew 18 steps were taken. I was led to believe there was total diaconate agreement that the steps were followed precisely. It was also determined by the diaconate that the offending brother had a case to answer. But, that's as far as they would go and they strongly advised the matter should rest there. Apparently various aspects of discipline were discussed but it was ultimately decided that nothing could be done for fear of 'splitting the church'.

So, the diaconate decided that the one offended against, myself (and consequently also my daughter), should continue worshipping with that fellowship, while at the same time also I was expected to be the only one of the membership to implement the Matthew principle by treating the offender as '... a heathen and a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17). Yet every one of the two dozen or so reputable commentaries and church constitutions consulted said that this final step was an action which the entire church body should take and not the offended person alone. Just four examples are listed below:

The first rebuke is to be completely private and the second semi-private, but the third is to be public and before the church. . . . The

whole church is responsible to call that person back to holiness. The MacArthur N.T. Commentary, Matthew 16–23, John MacArthur Jr, Moody Press, 1988, p.133.

He was to be treated as was the custom in regard to a heathen or a publican—not persecuted, despised, or avoided, but not received in Church-fellowship (a heathen), nor admitted to close familiar intercourse (a publican). The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, W.B. Eerdmans, 1971, p.124.

... if this does not have the desired effect, he must admonish him again in the presence of one or two witnesses; and even if this fails, then he must notify the church, and it becomes the duty of the officers to deal with the matter. Systematic Theology, Louis Berkhof, reprinted 1976, Banner of Truth Trust, p.600.

Unrepentant offenders who refuse to accept discipline should be excommunicated from the fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:3–5, 13), not simply as a penalty, but to bring them to repentance. Harper Study Bible (RSV), Zondervan, p.1468.

Two things need to be said in defence of the diaconate position. The first point is that they did try to work through the matter sensitively and protect my daughter and myself as much

as was possible. Initially, after thorough investigation of my accuser's charges (at my request), we were extended the right hand of fellowship. The (then) pastor wrote a letter attesting to my position as a member in good standing and this has proved useful in stemming some of the damage. The second point is that they were understandably afraid that I would be labelled a 'troublemaker' and thereby give my accusers further grounds for abuse. This was a decision for me to make, initially, and I took the steps outlined in Matthew 18, knowing full well they were the correct steps — regardless of the consequences.

The final outcome? Because the matter was not biblically pursued with the ultimate goal in mind of confession, repentance, restitution and restoration, it is now impossible for me to continue in worship with that person. The net effect was the further oppression of the innocent and protection of the guilty. Whether because of church politics or personalities, the declared principles of the Word of God were overruled. Sadly, as soon as strong action was required and a definite stand made that would be unsettling and uncompromising, nerves failed and evil was allowed to rule the day.

I must add that I too was also at fault here by not insisting (regardless of any diaconate discouragements) that the whole matter be finally placed before the entire church body for their judgment. Sadly, on this count, my resolve also failed and I took the line of least resistance.]

A quote attributed to June Callwood in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto (reprinted in *Reader's Digest*, May 1990, p.119), is sobering and challenging counsel for us all to heed:

Principles are a grand sight when hung out in fine weather but they have to be made of stern cloth to fly in a wind most foul.

Righteous judgment

20. Learn to judge every matter with 'righteous judgment', and 'not according to appearances' (John 7:24). Thinking you 'know' someone is not sufficient grounds to judge them innocent or guilty of any charge. Having a firm friendship with, or being related to, someone is no excuse for not trying to get to the truth of the matter. Do any of us want friends who will not try to challenge, correct or care for us when we are found to be wrong in any matter? As Christians, are not they the friends to be treasured above rubies?

Check facts

Never pass on damaging statements about another person because someone who 'seems like a fine Christian' has told you or is the original source of the story. There are many carnal Christians masquerading behind a mask of superspirituality.

[You would be amazed by the number of Christians who passed on many of John's distorted and manipulative versions of events as if they 'knew' them to be true, while never once bothering to check the veracity of the story with the ministry and myself.]

21. Recognise that the church has a distinct responsibility to defend and protect her 'orphans and widows' (James 1:27). Most of the victims of this cruel abuse (i.e. being labelled as witches) will be women, usually single (for whatever reason). Women with husbands to plead their case for them or defend their cause are in a much better position and most unlikely to be so victimised. It is so easy to caricature a single woman or a widow. She is in

the hapless position of being open to scandalous personal abuse.

[I was left feeling 'ravaged and violated' to a most hideous degree by some of the cruellest suggestions — too personal and too horrible to include mention here. But, they too are documented.]

The unjust judge

I am a widow, and well aware of the fact that Jesus told a parable about another widow who could not obtain justice from the authority whose task it was to deal with her case. The judge simply did not want to get involved (Luke 18:1–8). Three things stand out for me in this parable:

- (a) Persistence in the pursuit of justice (yes — even for oneself) is an admirable quality;*
- (b) God promises '... shall God not avenge his own elect who cry out day and night to him, though he bears long with them?' (cf Romans 12:19); and*
- (c) God labels the authority who could not be bothered with the administration of justice 'the unjust judge' .]*

Principles versus personalities

22. Never, never, never forsake the principles of the Word of God for the sake of personalities. Personalities can be deceived and can use so-called 'evidence' and even the Word of God deceptively, even to themselves. We are given the principles in the Word of God so that subjective feelings can be brought to them and discerned for what they truly are — subjective feelings which may be shallow and deceptive. 'The heart of man is

deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jeremiah 17:9). We are lost if we trust in what we 'feel', above what God says!

No respecter of persons

23. Do not condone or promote the sacrifice of the victim because of the perceived 'importance' of the person bringing the charges.

[In my case, it was frequently suggested that the accuser is more of an asset to Christendom than the one accused and, therefore, even though it was perceived his victim was probably innocent of the charges, he must stay and she must go 'for the sake of the ministry'.

There have been many pastors deceived by blindly following a personality and NOT the Word of God. These men bear triple guilt in that, not only were they happy to continue in Christian fellowship with the unrepentant perpetrator of this abomination, and allow him to 'minister' to their people, but also (in four instances at least) they wrote references in his defence. These references did, and continue to, gain entrance for him into churches, both in this country and in countries overseas — even though many attempts have been made to have these same ministers face the truth of the matter.]

The victim's personality should also be irrelevant.

[For example, I have dealt with thousands of people in my job, often under extreme pressure. Not surprisingly, in a small handful of instances, personalities may have grated on each other. To some of these Christians, this was sufficient, when later

learning of the 'charges', to 'take sides' against the ministry and myself. When asked whether they considered whatever personality flaws I might have were a sufficient reason to condone this monstrous false witness, they would side-step the issue.

'She must have done something!'

Perhaps even more staggering, some said they didn't think I was necessarily a witch but that I must have done something terribly bad to upset my slanderer in this way!

The simple fact is that, if an 'unimportant' Christian had attacked me in similar fashion, the outcome would have been very different! In that circumstance, I would not have found myself turned away from a Christian conference (this actually happened, on the basis of rumour alone) or gossiped about in the unkindest fashion. Neither would the ministry for which I worked have been labelled as being in the hands of a witch.

'Neither male nor female'

Also, sadly, another point, often rudely made, was the perceived importance of man over woman. Male chauvinism reared its ugly head in places it ought never to.

Sex does not give anyone seniority in that sense. Women are not meant to be sacrificial lambs on the altar of any man's grab for power, prestige and glory. They are flesh and blood and of equal usefulness in the Kingdom of God — called to different roles, but not to lower status. As Paul the Apostle writes to the churches of Galatia, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28).]

In Conclusion

Where to from here? At the time of writing this — I do not know. Only that God has said it is time to leave my present job (which, incidentally, I did love), my home, my church and my friends and to put this matter far behind both myself and my handicapped daughter Debbie, who has also suffered greatly from this attack.

Reconciliation has been attempted and attempted — all endeavours to date have been rebuffed. My accuser has established his organisation and, with every day he remains in apparent ministry, his 'charges' against me grow in strength in the eyes of many. That is a totally untenable position. It is time for me to build a new life.

But, please consider what I am leaving behind — no hope of reconciliation and a public clearing of my name, no hope of working again in Christian ministry (the only work for which I have ever been trained), no hope of re-establishing friendships destroyed in this wicked campaign, and very real difficulty trusting Christians as a whole.

Some have said on occasions, 'This experience will make you a stronger Christian.' Will it? Has it? I suppose only time will really tell. That is one reason I have written this. If it is accepted by the wider Christian community as a document that is useful and that presents

theological truths, then, perhaps, I still do have a ministry. If not, then that will be abundantly clear also. Either way, even if the Lord uses certain instances of suffering to strengthen His children, this fact can never be used as justification for either causing, or adding to, such suffering — or failing to prevent it wherever possible.

If you have found yourself caught in such a web as I describe in these pages, please contact me. I hear, from time to time, of other 'victims', but as yet have not had the opportunity to meet any. It may not be possible for us to meet personally, but I would certainly like to write to you.

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Appendix I

The real motive

Throughout, you may have been wondering — what was the attacker's real motive? Why didn't the writer mention it?

The point is that the next person to select a victim in this way, using this 'witch-hunting' framework, may have very different motives. The godly principles of dealing with the matter, however, remain the same.

In my case, the board of the ministry involved believe they know the deep reasons why I was the victim 'selected'. I think I agree with them. But who can claim to know fully the inner recesses of another's being? To write about such things would be neither edifying, nor helpful to the purposes of this booklet.

Appendix II

Supposed confessions of 'real closet witches'

Whether or not it is true that there are or are not such things as closet 'infiltrators' does not in the slightest change the Christian's approach in such matters regarding:

- (a) the need for eyewitnesses.
- (b) the victory through the power of prayer and love, not hate, fear and persecution.

However, it is highly likely that the main 'testimonies' on which such things have become widely believed are a fraudulent hoax. A U.S. evangelical cult-busting ministry has published two articles exposing these supposed 'closet witch' testimonies which have occurred in print and on tape. Further details are available on request.

Appendix III

Never-ending darkness and secrecy

Immediately prior to this booklet going to press, news came to hand of a further twist in this insidious campaign.

It was brought to my attention that a former interstate supporter of the Christian ministry for which I worked, has been offering interested, carefully screened parties who doubt John's story, the opportunity to listen to a highly confidential tape made by a pastor prominent in one denomination who sees himself as an authority on demonism/witchcraft.

I have little doubt I am aware of the identity of this pastor. I am also in no doubt I will never be allowed to listen to the contents of the tape or be given any opportunity to respond to what is presented as fact on the tape.

If my assumption is correct, this same pastor has already:

- (a) acted as a referee to bolster John's credibility, yet has
- (b) refused to attend any meeting called by the ministry or any others concerned with discerning the truth of the matter, and
- (c) refused two written invitations/pleas to meet with me (before

witnesses) to exercise his alleged spiritual discernment.

Once again, we are shown what an amazing situation will develop once the Church fails to act decisively. We see totally unbiblical cloak-and-dagger actions, shrouded in darkness and secrecy, carried out by Christians. The one passing on the tape's message no doubt justifies her actions with the highest of spiritual motives, but the end result of allowing fear to overrule Scripture is always ugly.

It is alarming to contemplate how many innocent people over the centuries have been driven to brokenness and despair by such 'Christian' campaigns against their person. Please pray for this booklet to soften hard hearts, in this and other similar issues.

*Who steals my purse steals trash;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.*

(Othello III. iii. 155. William Shakespeare)

*These six things the LORD hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness who speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren.*

(Proverbs 6:16–19)