

CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST TEMPLE



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January, 2010

Emmanuel Church Of God In Christ
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Re: **Constitutional Rights Expose'**
September 15, 2009

Dear Members of The Church Of God In Christ:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the above referenced document and to thank you for including my name on your distribution list. It is good for the leadership of the Church to be made aware of the thoughts of those whom they are called to serve.

With your apparent knowledge, research, study and understanding of The Constitution of The Church Of God In Christ; in paragraph 1 of your Constitutional Rights Expose', you appear to conclude and declare that **"The Constitution of The Church Of God In Christ is perverse."** By your use of the term **"perverse,"** I conclude that you are suggesting that the said constitution is different and varies from what might be classified as the correct or normal way that constitutions are usually written. You further state that even though the Preamble to the Constitution states that **"We, the members of The Church Of God In Christ hold the Holy Scriptures as contained in our Bible as our rule of Faith and Practice, the pages are completely void of scripture."** As you suggest, "This statement creates within the reader an expectation that the holy scriptures, contained in the Bible, are the prerequisite foundation upon which the Constitution in its entirety is based. Yet, even after a thorough reading and search for a reference or mention of the holy scriptures, sadly the search reveals there is not one and that the statement is a mere illusion."

Please let me assure you that you are not alone in expressing concern about the structural design and content of the 1968 "perverse constitution" and its apparent incompatibility with the biblical doctrines that we proclaim and are called upon to follow. In my position, I receive inquiries or calls from members and leaders of the Church as to how certain practices in the Church appear to meet constitutional requirements but are contrary to what the biblical rules set for our Faith. Recently, I received a call from a person who became cognizant of certain

unholy conduct which had been perpetrated by one of the **“COGIC Bishops.”** An investigation of the Public Records revealed information about the **“COGIC BISHOP”** that caused a question to be raised as to how this person ever qualified to be selected and consecrated to the high position of Bishop in the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. There was information in the record that disqualified him from meeting the requirements of I Timothy 3:2 - 7 and Titus 1:6 - 9. It was also noted that while it is possible that one might have been able to qualify him by the general requirements set forth in Article IV, Sec. A, Par. 1 of the **“Perverse Constitution,”** the Scriptural disqualification should have taken preeminence over the constitutional qualifications. The Bible, and not the **“perverse constitution,”** is our **“rule of Faith and practice.”** The position expressed by the inquirer provides real food for thought. It also shows that there is a Spiritual Awareness in the Church that is beginning to surface: There is something in the Spirit of the saints which makes them know that the Bible is the inspired word of God. They desire to know what the Bible has to say and not what the **“perverse constitution”** says. They are not saved by believing what the **“perverse constitution”** has to say, but their salvation is made sure by believing and following what the Bible says.

In order that you may gain a better perspective of and insight into how our “Glorious Church,” the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., was led down the path that caused us to appear to give up the Bible Way and adopt a “Perverse Constitution,” void of Scriptural authority, let me review with you certain facts from the past. Prior to the death of our beloved Founder, Bishop C. H. Mason in 1961, who always referred to the Bible for his authority, the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., was known as the Church Of The Word. Bishops, pastors, Elders, missionaries and members carried their bibles, and were able to confound scholars, lawyers and doctors with the Word of God. We attended Holy Convocation to receive a spiritual blessing, and anointed men and women of God preached both day and night. Souls were saved, bodies were healed and people, black and white – in a segregated society – filled the Temple. They came for a blessing and they were not disappointed. People in the Church who had committed sins were not fearful about coming to the saints, because they had the assurance that there was help for them in the **WORD**. The Church did not seek to condemn or kill, but it offered salvation through the **WORD**, which is **Spirit and Life**.

The death of Bishop Mason, in 1961, was the event that ushered in the process that would result in the creation of conditions that polarized the Church to vote, under extreme pressure, to change its real IDENTITY. At Bishop Mason’s death, pursuant to the constitution, the Board of Bishops was in charge of the Church. The Board of Bishops granted the Commissioners, who had served with Bishop Mason, the authority to lead the Church for one year, during which time they were to set the Church in order for the election of a new Senior Bishop. At the end of the year 1962, the election of the new Senior Bishop was scheduled to take place during the General Assembly in April, 1963. On the closing night of Holy Convocation, 1962, Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. stood and told a dream which he had experienced relative to the leadership of the Church. Influenced by what they considered to be the significance of the dream, the General Assembly was moved to elect Bishop O. T. Jones, Sr. as the new Senior

Bishop of the Church in that session. The Associated Press and all of the other news media carried the news to all the world, and the saints were rejoicing everywhere. Having been without a leader for almost a year, the Church was delighted to have a leader who had walked with Bishop Mason and had been a great supporter of Bishop Mason and the doctrines and laws of the Church. He was the only living of the first five (5) bishops appointed by Bishop Mason. Since 1915, he had trained the youth of the Church and developed the Young Peoples Willing Workers (YPWW) topics which were distributed throughout the Church. Working with Bishop Mason, he helped to codify the doctrines and disciplines of the Church. He was one of the Church's recognized theologians, a great preacher and was often called upon to deliver the annual Official Message for Bishop Mason during Holy Convocation. He was the beloved Bishop of the Church and was chosen to deliver the eulogy for Bishop Mason's funeral. He was the Leader whom the people felt was qualified to help us remain true to the Faith; therefore, they received him gladly.

Bishop Jones received congratulatory messages from all over the Church. The following telegrams are just a few that express the sentiments of the people:

"Congratulations on your most significant decisive meaningful and Christian victory. My prayers have been gloriously answered. You are my choice at this crucial time. In spite of unethical illogical and dirty politics, see what God hath wrought. May you prosper in health etc. And as God was with Bishop Mason He will be with you. Include me somewhere on your precidium. You know you can count on me."

Bishop F. D. Washington, N.Y., December 8, 1962

"The ministers and workers of the Church Of God In Christ for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania wish to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your exaltation to the highest office of our great Church. We have prayed for this. We are very sure that with your past record and present outlook the Church Of God In Christ will move onward and upward."

Bishop B. H. Dabney, Chairman of the Board, December 8, 1962

"Dear Bishop Jones: Please allow me to congratulate you upon attaining one of the highest honors that our Church has to offer anyone. May God richly bless with the things that you need to lead this great people of God. It is my hope that I be able as well as others to draw from your vast knowledge of Christian experience of our Church in the time of need. Since the voice of the people has spoken, making you their choice, it is my Christian endeavor to cooperate and assist you in any manner that I can. I am sure we will be hearing from you in reference to your future plans. I shall be waiting. Every good wish for your unqualified success. I remain your Brother in Christ.

Bishop O. M. Kelley, NYC, December 10, 1962

From the time of his election, December 7, 1962 to April 1963, Bishop Jones held conferences with Church Leaders, and received advice, recommendations and suggestions for the future operations of the Church. He called in the young educators and scholars of the Church and received from them excellent ideas. With his many years of experience, by working with the Founders and other leaders of the Church and enhanced by the new insights from those with whom he conferred, he came to Memphis in April 1963 and presented a forecast of his approach to leadership. He appointed Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr., General Secretary; Bishop DeWitt A. Burton, Assistant General Secretary; Elder Samuel P. Nesbitt, Executive Secretary; Bishop R. E. Ranger, Chairman, Advisory Committee. He confirmed the appointment of existing officers, and he set up committees to study every department of the Church and to make recommendations for improving the same. Always a supporter of Education, and a strong advocate for trained, spirit-filled clergymen, Bishop Jones convened a committee to consider the matter, and invited Dr. Richardson, President of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Atlanta, Georgia, to come to Memphis and explain to us the requirements for the Church's participation in "the cooperative venture in theological education by the Black Church." Our present Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake was a member at that conference.

On the night when Bishop Jones was elected, he was physically weak, but when the Church called upon him to lead the Church his strength was renewed. He accepted invitations from all over the nation and traveled extensively, preaching, teaching and bringing good news as to anticipated programs for the Church. He called upon the saints to remain true to our Faith and to support the work of the Church, and they applauded his requests.

After two years in office the reports from various parts of the Church were favorable: Success, spiritual growth and wonderful fellowship were evident everywhere. Seeing the need for certain constitutional changes to enhance the expansion of the ministries of the Church, the Senior Bishop issued this statement: "Having been the one commissioned by our late Senior Bishop C. H. Mason, to clarify and codify our Church's doctrines and practices, I am fully aware of the contents of our existing Constitution, and of our existing Constitutional needs at this time. Therefore, as Senior Bishop, I will do all that is in my power to see to it that the Church is presented with recommendations of those rules and regulations which seem necessary for the continued spiritual and material growth of our Church. However, whatever finally is done in this regard, in order for it to be right, must be done according to the **Word of God**, and according to the **basic scriptural structure of our Church**, and done through the existing arteries of our Church. Moreover, the committee that shall be appointed to make a study and recommendations to the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** in this matter, will be made up of representatives of every segment of our Church. The proper rights and responsibilities of **EVERY** segment of our Church will be made clear and safeguarded. I ask your patience with us until, by the help of God, these matters can be worked out and peacefully and according to the Word of God."

With the desire to secure the Church's real property and to set in place a functional financial system for the Church, the Senior Bishop called for a report from the Special Committee that had been set to study those areas. The Committee's recommendations called for certain changes in the system which seemed to upset certain members of the Executive Board. The Senior Bishop asked that further study would be effected, with modified recommendations to be made subsequently. From that time the Executive Board appeared to take a negative attitude toward the Senior Bishop and his team. They set into operation a deliberate campaign to pull the people away from Bishop Jones' leadership. Because Bishop Jones had a long and outstanding record in the Church, and those whom he had selected to work on his team were persons of outstanding caliber, their tactics did not work. Bishop Jones was following the Constitution, but the Executive Board which was not in the Constitution, claimed to have the powers to do what Bishop Jones was doing. Therefore, they went about creating new jurisdictions, and appointing Bishops over them. It was illegal and unconstitutional, but gullible men fell for it. Considerable confusion was created throughout the Church, especially in the state of Alabama. In the Case: **EMMITT JACKSON, ET AL (Complainants) vs. JOHN F. KEY, ET AL (Respondents)**. The Executive Board sought to divide the State of Alabama and to create what was to be called Diocese #2. Elder J. M. Bailey, brother of Bishop J. S. Bailey, member of the Executive Board, was designated as Bishop of the said jurisdiction. Bishop Ashworth, duly appointed Bishop of the State of Alabama, contacted Senior Bishop Jones to ascertain whether or not the Senior Bishop has authorized such an action. The Senior Bishop informed Bishop Ashworth that such an action had not been authorized or approved. When an attempt was made by Elder John F. Key, pastor of East Birmingham Church, to transfer the Church from Bishop Ashworth's Jurisdiction to the newly illegally created Diocese #2, more that a two-thirds majority of the members and officers desired to remain with Bishop Ashworth. After appropriate hearings and conferences, Bishop Ashworth declared the pulpit vacant. When Elder Key refused to vacate the Church, the officers of the Church petitioned the Court for a Restraining Order against Elder Key and certain members of the Executive Board to prevent their taking their Church to the illegally created Diocese #2. A Temporary Injunction was issued, but the permanent Injunction was denied. At the Hearing, where the Executive Board and the Senior Bishop and his staff were present, it was necessary to establish that Bishop Jones was Senior Bishop, that he was duly elected to the said office, that he had performed in the office and that, by the Constitution, only he had authority to consecrate and appoint Bishops. The Attorney for the Church, representing the Senior Bishop, called Bishop J. O. Patterson, General Secretary; who was appointed by Bishop Jones in 1963, and questioned him as follows: Was Bishop Jones elected Senior Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ? He answered, "No, the Church honored him with that title because of his many years of service to the Church." Question: Did you sign any credentials or appointments on which Bishop Jones' name appeared as Senior Bishop? He answered, "No." We had sought to obtain copies of the credentials from persons who had been consecrated and appointed by Bishop Jones, but all refused to respond; except Bishop Eure of Delaware, who got up out of his sick bed and flew to Alabama to testify and present his credentials. Our Attorney

called Bishop Eure to the stand, he presented his credentials that were signed by Bishop Jones as Senior Bishop and witnessed by Bishop J. O. Patterson as General Secretary. Bishop Patterson was recalled to the stand and asked to identify an Open Letter, dated May 24, 1964, bearing his signature, which he had written to Bishop A. B. McEwen, Chairman of the Executive Board. The letter had been given to us by Bob Mason, son of Senior Bishop C. H. Mason, who was a great supporter of Bishop Jones. The Open Letter:

Dear Bishop McEwen:

It is with sincere regret that I am forced to write you this letter. I want you to know, first of all, that I am not angry, but I must admit, I am very heartbroken.

For years, I have been talked about and portrayed as an immoral, vicious, dog-eat-dog monstrosity, and now, to add insult to injury, my death is being prophesied.

Since your side of the story has been often told to many by you and I have held my peace, I think now is the time for me to speak.

Bishop McEwen, I want to believe that you love me, but your extreme jealousy is more cruel than a cancer. I have done all I know to respect you and work with you, but your jealousy and inflated ego will not let you trust anybody. Had you been a wise father and utilized the ability of men, I would be your assistant instead of holding the position I now have.

Bishop McEwen, you went all over these United States telling people you were the head of the Church and even had some states voting for you to be head of our National Church. I am admitting that you had the best chance of any of the older Bishops, with your labour and seniority coupled with my influence, you couldn't have possibly failed, but again you were defeated by your own jealousy. We talked at length several times and you assured me of your election, stating that you wanted me to work with you for you were sure that I would be elected General Secretary. I promised you that I would, and God knows I meant it, but when the National Meeting was held in which you were to be elected, news got out that there was a move to elect me head of the Church, and without saying one word to me, you unleashed your fury, again attacking my moral, calling me the father of bastards, a golf player with no time for the church, and that the church did not need anybody like me for its' head.

It was then that I decided not to further support you. I then used the same influence I would have used for you and got Bishop O. T. Jones elected as

Senior Bishop of the Church. Had you been a wise man, instead of trying to kill me, you would have been glad and assured of your election, knowing that your campaign manager had such high degree of influence.

My heart is relieved, I have no hatred in my heart for you. May God bless you, my father.

After Bishop Patterson had finished speaking, there was a brief moment of silence. The Court declared a Recess. When the Court was back in session, the Attorney for the Church concluded the case with these words: **"The uncontroverted evidence shows that Bishop Patterson was not telling the truth. But you can't wipe out the past. You might advise him to read Omar The Tent Maker, where he said: 'The moving finger writes, and having written, moves on. For all your piety nor wit can lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it. And that's what Bishop Patterson didn't know when he made that false affirmation, that he couldn't wipe out the past.'"**

The present "perverse Constitution" of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. was not designed for The Church Of God In Christ, Inc. that was established by our beloved Founder, Bishop C. H. Mason, and in which we really and truly believe. As the record will show, it appears that it was conceived, designed, printed and published under the auspices of a radical and ambitious group who wanted a Church which they could control by secular standards. Under extreme pressure, they used the power of their positions in the Church to influence a majority of the members of the First Constitutional Convention of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., January 30 - February 1, 1968, to renounce allegiance to the Constitution and form of Scripturally authenticated leadership that makes the Church Of God In Christ unique. It is because of the uniqueness of the original Church Of God In Christ, to which I owe allegiance, that I coined this statement: "The Church Of God In Christ is a unique Spiritual Organism, and its genius rests in the fact that it is unique. To know and understand it, is to love, support and defend it."

This blatant act of renouncing their allegiance violated Article 9 (a)(b) of the original Constitution of the Church which was a safeguard to protect the articles of our Faith and the Leadership style of the Church. We believe that according to the scriptures, our rule of Faith and Practice, that the "pattern" of organization in the Church is not mere human arrangement, its ministries and offices are of Divine origin. In the Scriptures we read:

"And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers . . ." – I Corinthians 12:28

"And he gave some, apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." – Ephesians 4:11

The Church Of God In Christ believes that the office of Senior Bishop, the office of the Chief Apostle, was placed in the Church Of God – just as was the offices of State Bishop and Pastor were placed in the Church by the Lord. The First General Assembly of the Church Of God In Christ recognized that Bishop C. H. Mason, the first Senior Bishop, was placed there by God, thus they recorded: “The Lord gave Elder C. H. Mason to be Chief Apostle, to which the whole assembly accepted.” – “History” in OFFICIAL MANUAL, Church Of God In Christ, 1957, Ed., pg. 9.

Our present “Perverse Constitution” appears to be anachronistic, non-functional and in conflict with the biblical principles we profess to observe. It does not meet the needs of a Church as ours is, and even the leaders; who have pledged before God and witnesses to uphold it, fail to comply with provisions thereof. This was evident at the demise of Presiding Bishop G. E. Patterson when three fellow General Board Members competed with the First Assistant Presiding Bishop for the position of Presiding Bishop, notwithstanding that the **“Perverse Constitution”** provided that upon the death of the Presiding Bishop the duties and powers of the Office would devolve to the First Assistant Presiding Bishop. In the General Assembly, God, through the people, overrode the actions of the competitors; who represented 25% of the 12-Man Leadership Team, and acclaimed the First Assistant Presiding Bishop the Presiding Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., and that with an overwhelming vote. I think these words from our **Rule of Faith and Practice** confirms that it is always safe to rely on God’s method than on what the **“Perverse Constitution”** provides:

“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

– Psalms 75:5 - 6

The last election also gave us a clear insight into reasons why the 12-Man Leadership model for the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. has not worked, is not working and has little or no chance of working within the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. that our Founders bequeathed to us. By observing some of the actions and conversations that ensued after the election, the secret as to why the **Vision** of every former Presiding Bishop, **even though good for the Church**, was blocked; thus causing him to either die or leave office frustrated, has been revealed. The answer is so clear that even Stevie Wonder and the late Ray Charles could join in a duet and sing: “I Can See Clearly Now.”

As I give study to our situation, seeking to ascertain why persons who profess to be **wise** and filled with the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of Truth that leads and guides us into all truth – are attempting to do that which is contrary to Nature – both spiritually and physically – it appears that we are trying to lead the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. by an unreasonable, man-concocted 12-Man Leadership Model, when the God-Given plan specifies a One-Man Headship Model. If

we will learn from nature, we will observe how difficult it is for more than one head to lead and control one body: There is always conflict and frustration. The siamese twins are a classical example, they struggled with that lifestyle until one day the twins chose to undergo surgery where one head would die in order that the body could live and be productive under the leadership of one head.

Physically speaking, what would life be like with 12 Heads trying to control one body. Well, if you are a compassionate person, just put yourself in the place of such a person and feel the pain, suffering and frustration that such a condition might produce. Use your imagination and look at our Church for the past more than 40 years; you will observe a 12-Headed Monstrosity, unable to move the Church in any one direction long enough to effect a meaningful program to help us carry out the Mission that God gave our Founders, and for which they lived, labored, sacrificed, suffered and died.

Our Founder and First Senior Bishop, and God anointed and appointed leader of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., led the Church for a period of 53 years. Under the aegis of the God-Given One-Man Headship, The Church Of God In Christ grew and waxed strong, thus making a powerful witness in the world. By the **"Foolishness of Preaching,"** people from the **"lowest and highest"** levels of society, and from all racial groups, were drawn into the glorious fellowship of the saints. We lived what we preached, our lives were transparent; therefore, we had nothing to hide. We were loving and caring saints, who were admired and respected by "sinners," because they wanted to be as we were: We were **FREE**. We were free from those things which had them bound, and our example gave them hope.

Your observation that the "Perverse Constitution fails to create and establish rights and protection for members of the Church" raises an issue that is of prime importance, and one that needs to be addressed before the general membership becomes aware of the fact that they are not protected by the Church that they love, support and depend upon for guidance, comfort and instruction in the Faith. Because there is no enforceable requirement in place that pastors are under a mandate to instruct members as to the doctrines, constitution and the laws of the Church, many members are not even aware that the **"Perverse Constitution"** does not protect them. A further check may also show that the Church Of God In Christ does not have in place a uniform Information-Education Plan for teaching Pastors and Bishops the doctrine, constitution and laws of the Church as a condition precedent to their being ordained or consecrated. If the Leaders are not trained to teach the membership, then the membership will lack the spiritual protection which they should possess in order to be productive Christians.

Our rule of faith and practice, as set forth in I Timothy 3:2, requires that Bishops should be able to teach. If they have not been taught, they have no justifiable reason for knowing. If they don't know, then their teaching capabilities are very limited: It is impossible to **"Teach what you don't know."** When knowledgeable members are taught in the word they develop into faithful

and dedicated members of the local congregations, the basic unit of the Church. It should be the endeavor of the Church to establish a uniform Christian Education Program that will equip members to be soul winners and to stand ready to defend the Faith. Members have a **right** to be taught and trained in the Faith, and it becomes the responsibility of the Pastor to **"feed the sheep."** Even if members never are exposed to the **"Perverse Constitution,"** they will be protected from the forces of sin, if the word that they are taught is **"hidden in their hearts."**

When one raises the question regarding constitutional rights, as they are viewed against the backdrop of our 12-Man Leadership Model and the "Perverse Constitution," what "rights" do any of us have? What or who is the source of our rights? Who has power to take away the rights which are ours? The answer to the afore-stated questions should help us realize just how important we are, for we will be made aware that God is the source of our rights. The "Perverse Constitution" does not control us or our rights: We are the children of God. As children of God, we believe that holiness – as prescribed in the Bible, and interpreted in our Faith – is the way which God would have us live. We further believe that, as saints of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., established in 1907 by Bishop C. H. Mason, we claim Memphis, Tennessee as our God-given **"Spiritual Home."** It is as sacred to us as Jerusalem is to Israel or Mecca is to Islam. Mason Temple, named for our beloved Founder, and the place where His body is entombed, is built for the saints on one of the highest elevations in the City of Memphis. The home of our sainted Founder is there; the dormitories that housed our fathers and mothers during Convocations are there, and it was on these grounds that Mother Lizzie Roberson, first Overseer of Women's work, Church Of God In Christ, Inc., "died while taking a nap during Holy Convocation." Yes, she had come to Holy Convocation, in **MEMPHIS**, to be with the saints and to be sure that the money which "Our Senior Bishop, Elder C. H. Mason," had asked the women to raise "for Special Help to complete our National Tabernacle," was raised. With the help of her assistant, Mother Lillian B. Coffee; and the faithful support of the women of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., she died with the assurance that "the funds had been raised to build the new headquarters and purchase a neon sign for the entrance."

Bishop Mason and the Founders; Mother Roberson and the faithful women of the Church, and our Fathers and Mothers labored, suffered, and made great sacrifices that we, descendants of slaves, could have our own place to come each year, in **MEMPHIS**, to meet in Holy Convocation. We are witnesses to the fact that during the Second World War, when steel was rationed for war purposes, God made a way for the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., to obtain the steel needed to construct Mason Temple. Each year, when we gather in Mason Temple for Holy Convocation; a certain feeling of reverence overshadows us. There, we are in the **sacred place** which has been **sanctified** for the **saints** in obedience to the **will of God**. There is no other place in the world that offers to us what we experience when we are in Mason Temple, in **MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**. There, **"We are standing on Holy Ground."** This year marks the 102nd year that we will have been blessed to assemble in Memphis for Holy Convocation. That is indeed a

notable record, and in the words of the Second Presiding Bishop of the Church, the late Bishop Louis H. Ford, "I think you ought to give us a hand for that." I wholeheartedly agree with Bishop Ford, and in addition to a rousing applause, I call for **TINTINNABULATION!**

Many are amazed when they discover that we have been meeting in Holy Convocation, in Memphis, Tennessee, for 102 years; and, they wonder why they couldn't do it. What is the secret, they ask. How can they draw so many people each year, and many of our people go there each year, too. Well, I can assure you that it was not because they came just to see a little, short black son of slave parents, because they came when he was there and after he died. It was certainly not because of the popularity of any of the leaders who succeeded Bishop Mason, because they came during the lives of each one of them, and they are still coming to Memphis for Holy Convocation by the thousands. If you will just ask God, He will tell you that **"they came and are still coming because I drew them there. My Spirit is there because Bishop Mason and the Founders followed My directions and established the Church as I led them. They sanctified the place for the saints to come for Holy Convocation, where they worship and are blessed by Me, and My blessings will be upon all who follow what I ordain."**

Presently, there is discussion, and even tentative plans, to move our Annual Holy Convocation from Memphis, Tennessee; the birthplace of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., to St. Louis, Missouri for 2010. **No justifiable reason has been for the anticipated move, but it has been alleged that the move is because the hotels in Memphis would not give us the desired room rates.** For the record, I think it is a blatant insult to the Faith and Devotion of our sainted Founders; one which tends toward profanation of our Holy and Sacred Purpose for gathering in Memphis each year, to suggest that we are willing to terminate a 102 year tradition for a few dollars for "hotel room rates." The record shows that we have been gathering in Memphis, by the thousands, when we were not allowed to stay in the hotels. We came by automobiles, buses, trains, bicycles, airplanes, and some came by foot. We came through the rain, snow, storms, and the sunshine. They came when they were sick, because they had **FAITH** to believe that, if they could just get to Memphis with the saints, God would heal them. And, they were healed and left rejoicing. We have come each year for a Special Blessing, for instructions in the Way of Holiness and for fellowship with the saints from countries around the world. There is no way that we can put a **PECUNIARY** value on the blessings we receive when we meet on **"Holy Ground"** and **PRAY TOGETHER**. For us, there is no place in the world just like Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee: Our Founder is entombed there.

Because God directed the Founders to establish the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., in Memphis, Tennessee; and further led them to establish the time for the saints to come together each year for Holy Convocation; and because God has blessed us to meet each year, for the past 102 years;

until we are sure that God is directing us to move from Memphis to St. Louis, I think we should remain in Memphis. From my many and varied experiences, I have found that it is not good to **TAMPER** with what God has ordained.

A few days ago, when talking with some of the saints who usually attend Holy Convocation in Memphis, they had not even heard about the plan to move to St. Louis. Because of our Church's inadequate communications system, it is possible that many others have not heard, and will not hear, about the anticipated change. If the Lord wills that we should go to St. Louis in 2010, in the Spirit of Unity, we must all say, "*Thy will be done,*" and look forward to a glorious time in St. Louis. While the saints are rejoicing in St. Louis, and in order that our Tradition of coming to Memphis will be increased to 103 years, **I ask that I, Bishop Samuel P. Nesbitt, will be granted the right to keep Mason Temple open during Convocation time to allow saints who will not go to St. Louis to come home for Convocation in Memphis. As a lifelong member of the Church, ordained for more than 60 years, and an attendee of Holy Convocation for almost 65 years, I, together with those who will be left in Memphis, will engage in fasting and praying for the success of those gathered in St. Louis for Convocation, and that God will revive us again. Together, we can make a powerful witness to the world at this time.**

In 1990, after the death of Presiding Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr., first Presiding Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., Bishop Charles E. Blake circulated a document in which he cited these words from I Chronicles 12:32: "***And the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.***" At the end of the quotation, he makes the statement: "God help us to know what Israel ought to do." At that time, it appears that he was styling the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. As Israel, thus it further appears that he was saying: God, help us, (The Church Of God In Christ, Inc.) To know what We (The Church Of God In Christ, Inc.) At that time, it was his opinion that "The 21st century will present great challenges to the Church, but I believe that our greatest days are still ahead. It is God's will that the Church Of God In Christ be on the front line, leading our troubled world back to God. Every sign indicates that God has a special and exciting mission for our Church. With God's help and direction we can join together to win millions to Jesus Christ."

As voiced by Bishop Blake in 1990; in 2009, I, too, envision great things for the Church Of God In Christ, and I also believe that our greatest days are still ahead. Why? Because the Church Of God In Christ is God's Church and the vision for it was given to Bishop Mason. God will uphold His name in the Church Of God In Christ, for Bishop Mason's sake, just as He saved Israel for Abraham's sake. If we are to lead "**our troubled world back to God,**" it stands to reason that we should check and be sure that we are positioned where we desire to lead the world. Before Bishop J. O. Patterson's death, he was heard to say words to the affect that, for the time I have left, I am going to try to bring the Church back to true holiness. He did not explain,

in every detail, what he meant by the statement, but the statement suggested that he was aware of the fact that we had gone away from where we should have been.

Bishop Blake seems to have been aware of some of the conditions which caused Bishop Patterson to suggest the need for the Church to be brought back to true holiness. He referred to those times as critical and said: "At this critical time, let us seek the power and guidance of God as never before. Let us walk in holiness and in the power of the Holy Ghost. If we will do this, no force can withstand us. God is about to do something unusual. May we be sensitive and responsive to the leading of His Spirit. All of us are united in our love and concern for the Church Of God In Christ, and in our dedication to its future. The destiny of the Church and our destiny as individuals are intertwined with one another."

It was in 1990 that Bishop Blake made this statement: "All of us are united in our love and concern for the Church Of God In Christ, and in our dedication to its future. The destiny of the Church and our destiny as individuals are intertwined with one another." This is 2010, and we are members of the Church Of God In Christ, we are all united in our love and concern for the Church Of God In Christ, and in our dedication to its future. We are one in the Spirit and in the Lord; therefore, the Church's destiny and ours are intertwined. That's the way it is, and we would have it no other way.

Because we are one body, bound together by one Spirit, whenever one member of the body is hurt, the whole body suffers. Until proper attention is given to the hurt part of the body, the total body is impaired. In 1968, our Church Of God In Christ, Inc., that we all love and of which we are integral parts, was the victim of very serious injuries to the head, the members, and the various systems (spiritual and physical) that gave it life, spiritual power, and the dynamic leadership that made it functionally effective in our society. For the past 40 years, it appears that we have been writing prescriptions to treat our condition before first conducting an examination to determine the true nature of the condition. When we seem to be recovering, something else pops up to let us know that there is a latent condition that still exists and needs to be healed. Patently, we look good, we sound good, and we give the impression of being happy; but we seem to lack the **JOY** that gives strength.

As was the case with ancient Israel, it appears that we have been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. We have been very busy: Amending the "**Perverse Constitution**," and the process continues. We have grown from 126 jurisdictions, in 1990, to more than 200 jurisdiction in 2009, but the growth was achieved by dividing and subdividing existing jurisdictions. We may show a quantitative increase, but some of the jurisdictions may have only two or three missions or congregations. We have more Bishops than we have jurisdictions; we have a bumper crop of Elders, Ministers, and more are coming off the assembly line on a regular schedule. Thousands of Missionaries and Aspiring Missionaries are available, but they are not working in the "**mission fields**" because nobody hired them. When dressed in their uniforms they look very impressive, and their names look good on the Credential Holders Report Sheet, but their production record is not easily available.

We are now 102 years of age, and there is no justifiable reason why our beloved Church does not have a National Office of Christian Education, staffed with a paid Director and a competently trained staff to design, write and produce a Uniform Holiness Christian Education Program for all Jurisdictions of the Church. More than 35 years ago, the Church established the C. H. Mason Seminary as a part of ITC in Atlanta, Georgia, but we are not realizing the benefits that Senior Bishop O. T. Jones and those who implemented his plan had in mind. If the plan has been followed, by this time, every three years, the Seminary should be graduating at least 5 or 6 young men and women who could be employed by the various jurisdictions as Jurisdictional Directors of Christian Education. Can you imagine what a difference it would make in the life of our Church, if a National Director of Christian Education could work with the Seminary to offer special courses of study for all of our future pastors, teachers and Bishops of the Church?

We often talk about how great we are, and some even have the audacity to say that we are the **"greatest Church in the world."** While it is good for us to think very highly of ourselves, it is not good that we should think more highly of ourselves than we are justified. It think it is reasonable to say that we are an integral part of the greatest Church in the world, **"The Church Of God In Christ"** (the Church of which Christ is the head), thus we may **"make our boast in the Lord."** We are all that we have ever been; we are all that we are now, and we are all that we can become, within the plan that God has predestined for us. Because this is true, wisdom teaches that we should go to our rule of faith and practice (the Bible) to ascertain what our condition is, what is needed to correct it, and what results should be expected. In the past we were the **Church Of God In Christ**, we are now the **Church Of God In Christ**, and in the future we will be the **Church Of God In Christ** that has accepted the diagnosis of our case, followed the prescription that the Word provides, and that we will be revived and carrying on the mission that God has assigned to us, assured of the reward that God has promised.

When one looks at the History of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc.' the Biblical doctrines and how they have been interpreted over the years; our present pattern of conduct and our lack of compliance with what we profess to believe, he may be led to conclude that we are suffering from a case of apostasy. Whether by design or misadventure, we are gradually moving away from those principles and practices that caused us to be classified as holy, peculiar or sanctified. In attempting to be like other folks, some have really departed from the Faith, as evidenced by disrespect for leadership and the Biblical principles of our Faith, as is evident by multiple court cases in which we are involved. Let me hasten to say that, thanks be to God, there are many that are holding on to our Faith. They are singing, "I Shall Not Be Moved." In spite of our backsliding, God has not divorced us. God loves the Church Of God In Christ, just as He loved a backsliding Israel, and He offers to us the same privilege as was given to Israel. *"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion."* Jeremiah 3:14. *"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."* Jeremiah 3:22. *"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from her."* Hosea 14:4

It appears that we have been wandering in the wilderness a bit too long. We seem to accept the Burger King Plan: **"Have It Your Way."** But, our way is not **GOD'S WAY: GOD'S WAY is THE WAY.** I have lived in the Church Of God In Christ for almost 86 years, and I have been involved in the affairs of the Church for 65 of those years. The fact is, I have personal and actual knowledge of some of the things that caused the Church to be in the condition that we find ourselves today, and until we **REPENT** we cannot and will not be the dynamic force that's needed to bring salvation to those who are in dire need of the same. Some of our past decisions, choices and actions that were made and implemented at the time in our History, which is referred to as a period that **"was evidenced by a polarization of deep seated opinions, broken spiritual friendships and fellowships, and questionable Christian conduct,"** are all coming back to haunt and tantalize us. Our Church is trying to operate on decisions, choices and actions that were made and implemented when our beloved Church was in the midst of very tumultuous times. The Church was confused, God was not acknowledged in all of our ways, and He certainly was not directing us to do what we did. Presently, there are some things that are lodged deep in our Spiritual Systems that need to be removed, and **REPENTANCE** is the spiritual force that can effect the Spiritual Catharsis needed to purge our hearts and minds and enable us to think and move in the right way. The following are some things for which we should **REPENT**:

1. **In 1968, we wrongfully removed from the Office of Senior Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., Bishop Ozro T. Jones, Sr., who was duly elected, December 7, 1962, to succeed the First Senior Bishop and Founder, Bishop Charles H. Mason.** He was giving excellent leadership to the Church; pursuant to the God-given leadership pattern that God gave Bishop Mason, the high and noble principles of our Holy Faith, and the Constitution of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., until certain ambitious persons conspired with others to take over the Church, at any cost. Bishop Jones and those who stood with him were flagrantly castigated and pushed to the side, simply because they dared to stand up for what was right and for what the Church said it believed. Bishop Jones, the man who had walked closely with Bishop Mason, and who had inspired many other young man and women to become leaders in the Church that he loved, and for which he gave his life, was made to die heart-broken at the hands of those whom he loved and helped to develop. They removed him from office, took his title and attempted to cover their dastardly acts by entering this false statement in the COGIC Manual on page XXXIII. **"Historians will regard 1961-1968 as the Dark Period in our Church history. The Dark Period was evidenced by a polarization of deep-seated opinions, broken spiritual fellowships and friendships, and questionable Christian conduct."** Real Historians would have examined the facts, and their research would have revealed the fact that Bishop Jones was elected on December 7, 1962, that he organized the Church and had all departments functioning well, and he had made changes in the Finance and Managerial operations of the Church. He had also made plans to establish the C. H. Mason Seminary in Atlanta. On page XXXV, COGIC Manual, after the election of Presiding Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr., it is said that the "celebrated Presiding Bishop immediately set out to implement unfinished goals and reveal new goals." The unfinished goals were those set by Bishop Jones, and were in process of being

implemented. The **"Dark Period"** was during the latter part of the designated period when the backsliding began. In that period, there was much **"Questionable Christian Conduct"** for which repentance is yet to be made.

2. **We blatantly disregarded the wisdom of Bishop Mason and the other Founders when we, in violation of Article 9 (b) of our original Constitution (which forbade the General Assembly from abolishing the General Superintendency of the Church) abolished the office of Senior Bishop, replacing it with a General Board of twelve Bishops who would be elected every four years. This new organizational change has caused our total system to be in disarray.** The national leadership is elected every four (4) years, but they appoint Jurisdictional Bishops over Jurisdictions for life or until they become disabled. We have instability in our National Leadership, but a more stable leadership in our Jurisdictions and local congregations. Changing our Form of Government was a **BIG** mistake, and one which should be rectified before Jurisdictions and local congregations desire to be like the Parent Unit: Changing every four years.
3. **In the Story Of Our Church the "Church Of God In Christ," Pages XXIII - XXXIII, COGIC Manual, the writer committed the grave sin of not mentioning the vital role that the women of the Church have played in the growth and development of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc.** How could anyone, who knows anything at all about the Church Of God In Christ, leave out the name of Mother Lizzie Roberson, first Overseer of Women Work, who was appointed by Bishop Mason. She was a woman of great talent and organizational skills, an excellent teacher, a wonderful evangelist, and a missionary of the highest order. When one walks into Mason Temple, he cannot help but think of her efforts to raise finance to complete the Temple. Mother Lillian B. Coffee, Mother Roberson's assistant and successor in office, was also a dynamic leader. She was a person of great vision for the Church. Continuing the work of Mother Roberson she organized multiple auxiliaries and she gave the Church the National Women's Convention, the largest and best organized Convention in the Church.
4. **We have failed to utilize the excellent preachers, teachers and other competently trained men and women of the Church who constantly volunteer their service (without pay) to help us plan, develop, and implement those programs that are needed to enable the Church to offer the "Salvation Plan" that is needed in various areas of our society.** In our Convocations, we don't diversify our Preachers, but we seem to preach the same persons each year; notwithstanding, we have hundreds of other competently trained men and women who are Holy Ghost filled, loyal supporters of the Church, who are capable of delivering messages that would edify the Church, motivate others to embrace the Holiness Faith, and challenge the minds of many who feel that we are just a **"hand-clapping, foot-stomping, Pentecostal Church Of God In Christ."**

We have had many wonderful opportunities to participate in programs that would have yielded many great benefits to our Church and those whom we are called to serve, but our failure to use the talent that was available to us just may be reason why we failed to reap the benefits that could have been ours. "Time, ever growing older, teaches all things," and by this time it should have taught us that giving a person a title, who does not possess the training or qualifications to perform the task which the title denotes, suggests that it was never intended that the task would be accomplished. There are many blessings awaiting us, but we must apply the rule of allowing others to receive the honor which comes from a job well done, especially when it benefits everybody.

In 1990, when Bishop Charles E. Blake was offering himself as a candidate for the position of Presiding Bishop of the Church, this is what he had to say: **"Our Church is extremely valuable, the cause of Christ is of great urgency, and the souls of many are perishing. The selection of our future leadership should take place under a covering of prayer, deep contemplation, and sincere concern for the future of the Church. Organizations rise and fall as the quality and dedication of their leadership rises or falls. We can predict what a man will do in the future by observing what he has done in the past. Past successes predict future accomplishments. We must be concerned about the ability of the future leadership of the Church as we are about the ability of the pilot of our airplane or the surgeon who operates on us. We must not rely on sentimentalism and emotionalism. We must rather seek the wisdom and the will of God. We must not allow our today, and our tomorrow to perish in the hands of yesterday.**

The Church Of God In Christ is a spiritual institution with a spiritual mission. At the same time, it should also be remembered that the Church Of God In Christ is a very complex human organization. It is made up of about twenty administrative entities. These groups deal with the basic legislative and executive functions of the Church. There are several departments which operate on a day to day basis at Headquarters. There are several separate corporations which are subsidiaries of the Church Of God In Christ. There are six major departments holding or participating in major conventions and other special activities.

The Presiding Bishop must not only administer all of these areas, he must also relate to all the 126 jurisdictions of the Church, other denominational organizations and a host of secular institutions. The leader of the Church must be not only a man of the Spirit, he must also be a person of organizational skill. I am prepared, committed, and willing to serve our Church as Presiding Bishop."

Bishop Blake's words, uttered more than 20 years ago, convinced the Church that he was qualified to give leadership to the Church. We elected him to the General Board and kept him there until he was elected to the high office of Presiding Bishop of the Church, the position that he now holds with distinction. The record shows that he is the seventh person whom God has

raised up to lead the Church Of God In Christ. Over the years, I have watched his growth and development in the Church, and his diligence in the pursuit of excellence in academic, managerial, pastoral and business affairs. For the past 38 years, his work as pastor and developer of the West Angeles Church project has been phenomenal and is a classical example of his acumen, his leadership ability, and his love for and devotion to the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. In April 1973, the General Assembly of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. chose Elder Samuel P. Nesbitt, a young theologian and lawyer, Jacksonville, Florida, as Judge of the First Ecclesiastical Court of the Church Of God In Christ, established specifically to hear and decide the case which confirmed him as pastor of the West Angeles Church. Led of the Lord; he, a young man of aplomb; took a divinely inspired paradigm and modus operandi, and with the cooperation and support of a small congregation of about 150 persons, developed the largest congregation in the Church Of God In Christ, Inc.

The Number 7 seems to have been a very significant number in the lives of the Jewish people: It is said to have been called the perfect number. Today, the number 7 just may be the number which signals the time for us to say: **IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE**. Not only should we say it, but we should do what is necessary to effect change in our Church: Change that will enable us to flourish and become spiritually strong and productive again. Our first order of business should be to take a good dose of **REPENTANCE**. At the root of so many little things that continue to go wrong in the Church, for the past 40 or more years, are the four (4) sins that are cited above. Repentance will remove the roots which continue to give birth to other wrongs and it will purge our spiritual system so that we may sing: **"We can see clearly now."**

A SUGGESTED MODUS OPERANDI FOR EFFECTING POSITIVE AND MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, INC.

1. Our first order of business should be to call a solemn assembly of the General Assembly of the Church, at National Headquarters, Memphis, Tennessee.
2. Together, we should humble ourselves before the **LORD** in **Prayer**, **Confessing** our sins, in **Repentance** and in **Accepting** forgiveness for our sins.
3. Renounce our allegiance to the 12-Man Leadership Model, which we adopted in 1968, and agree to revert to the 1-Man Leadership Model, Senior Bishop and Board of Bishops, as was revealed to our Founder.
4. That we, by **ACCLAMATION**, approve Bishop Charles E. Blake, our Present Presiding Bishop, as the **THIRD SENIOR BISHOP** of the Church Of God In Christ. He is our present Leader, he was elected by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly; therefore, no election is necessary. At the present time, **"He appears to be 'Our God-given' Man, with the Plan, to lead the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. to the Promised Land."**

5. Select, appoint and retain competent persons and commission them to do those acts and perform those functions that are needed to produce for and present to the Church the following:
 - A. A clear, correct and concise statement of the Christian Doctrine as believed, advocated and taught in the Church Of God In Christ, Inc.
 - B. A new Constitution and By-Laws that prescribes the Laws, Rules and Guidelines for organizing, operating and managing the affairs of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc.
 - C. Prepare a Manual or Handbook which explains the doctrine of the Church (with substantiating Biblical Notes); that explains the various Laws and how they should be applied, and that gives other pertinent information about the Church Of God In Christ.

Note: If the above suggested **PLAN** for reorganizing the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. is followed, we will avoid the kind of disruptive activity in the Church that took place in 1968 when "**QUESTIONABLE CHRISTIAN CONDUCT**" was observed. God is not the **Author of confusion**, but of **peace**.

PAX VOBISCUM



Bishop Samuel P. Nesbitt

jfj

My response to your **Constitutional Rights Expose'** was intended to be very succinct, but as you can see, your observations and insights seem to have inspired me to write a more detailed response. In reviewing what I was inspired to write you, I think it should be shared with others; therefore, I am sending copies to special persons who may elect to spread the **WORD** around.