

## *The Letter I Almost Discarded* by Gene McCoy

A letter arrived in the church mail this morning. It was written by a coward. No, the woman didn't sign it that way. That's just the point. She didn't sign it at all. That is cowardly.

It isn't that I am stooping to name-calling, either. I am merely stating a fact known by all sincere, civilized and Christianized individuals, specifically, that an anonymous attack of this nature is cowardly.

Normally, I would discard a vindictive letter written anonymously. And I was about to discard this letter until I realized she wasn't directing her venom toward me, but toward you, the members of this congregation.

The writer alleges that "some of your members are not real Christians." Her basis for this allegation is that she sees some of you display a critical spirit, while others "look down their noses" at those who don't fit into your way of life.

Why didn't I throw away the letter and refuse to burden you with her cowardly attack? Because I agree with her! Our congregation has its share of imperfect people. I see spiritual and social deficiencies throughout our congregation. It frustrates and concerns me when I see Christians living lives on Monday that do not correspond to their profession of faith and

holiness on Sunday. But the inconsistency that concerns and frustrates me most is that which exists in me.

The fact of the matter is that each of us could take to heart the criticism of this woman. For every one of us is guilty to some degree. And every congregation of Christians (and Elks, Rotarians, Eagles, Optimists, etc.) is a worthy target of her criticism. In fact, I will not be surprised to learn that the same letter was mailed to several congregations, an indication that she is just angry at Christians in general who have disappointed her.

But the fact that we recognize faults within each of us is not a reason to abandon the others. It is, in fact, a reason to stay and hopefully encourage others by our example of what a "real Christian" is.

The reasons I selected this forum to address my thoughts to the letter-writer are at least two. First, I did not know to whom or where to address a personal reply. Second, if it is true that the writer actually attended our meetings, she is very likely a recipient of this paper. So this is the only channel of communication I have.

Allow me, then, to reason with her on your behalf. Consider these thoughts, my friend.

Since you present yourself as a stellar example of how a Christian ought to behave — "to show the sinner the right

way to live and not to judge them on how they live," for "God will work through us to bring them to his way of living" — I have to wonder why you 1) judged members of our congregation, and 2) abandoned this holy cause you accurately define.

It is obvious you were not present all the times we preached and taught the Bible method of correcting a sinning brother or sister. Did not Jesus teach us to first go to the offender in private (Matt. 18:15)? And didn't Paul teach us to gently restore a brother who is blindsided by sin (Gal. 6:1)? It is apparent that you, like the rest of us, have not heeded all that is taught here.

I wish you success in your quest for a fellowship of perfect or fully matured Christians. But I have to be concerned about a congregation with no immature or recent converts present. Those Christians are not fulfilling the commission of Christ to bring into the fold fledglings and refugees from the wicked world.

My other concern for that congregation is the fact that adding you to their fellowship is going to ruin their perfection. In the event the congregation realizes that fact and refuses your fellowship, perhaps you will return and work with us in our common pursuit of spiritual maturity and Christian conduct. Until we all get it right!