

## **Excerpts from "The Whole Truth" written by Bishop Samuel P. Nesbitt; October 29, 2011**

### **2. Bishop Holsey L. Thomas and the Delaware Jurisdiction**

After the death of Bishop L. T. Blackshear, Jurisdictional Prelate, Church Of God In Christ, Inc., a distinguished leader, pastor, preacher, and builder, the National Church appointed Bishop Thomas L. Holsey, his faithful assistant as his successor. Bishop Holsey was to Bishop Blackshear as was the Prophet Elisha to the Prophet Elijah: he honored him, he served him, he respected him, he traveled almost everywhere with him, he suffered with him, he contributed to and learned from him, they wept and rejoiced together, and Bishop Holsey was with him when he was "taken away:;. Bishop Holsey has the distinction of being known in all circles of the National church as one who respected and supported leadership, and one who worked well with people. He served on the National Trustee Board, the Screening Committee, the Finance Committee, the Adjutants Corp, and other capacities which give evidence of his leadership abilities.

He was honored and respected in all circles of the Church; consequently, it was obvious that he was a man of aplomb and capable of leading the Jurisdiction. Bishop Blackshear, who was licensed by my father, the late Bishop W. R. Nesbitt, Sr., Pioneer Bishop of the Church here in Florida, would be proud of Bishop Holsey, and that he is his successor. Often when we would meet in Memphis or at airports throughout the country, I would tease Bishop Blackshear about having this young man always with him. Once I remember saying: He must be trying to learn how to be a bishop. He smiled and said: "I thank God for him, he always sticks with me and he is a great help to me. Most of these young fellows don't want you to tell them anything, but he is not like that: he is just like my son."

In November, 2009 he was appointed Jurisdictional Bishop of the Delaware Jurisdiction, and in December, 2009 a Gala Inaugural Banquet was given in his honor. The Presiding Bishop, First Assistant Presiding Bishop, Second

Assistant Presiding Bishop, other General Board Members, General Secretary, Bishops, Civic Officials and more than 500 friends and supporters were there. The Presiding Bishop acclaimed him to be one of the Church's best, and had only good things to say about his loyalty and dedication to the Church. All of the other speakers spoke very highly of his leadership abilities and wished for him and his family the blessings that God would give to a faithful servant.

Earlier in the year, before he was appointed, he had made generous gifts to the Presiding Bishop, First Assistant Presiding Bishop, Board of Bishops and others to show appreciation for their work and to assist them with other ministries in which they were engaged. Being aware of some of the financial pressure that some of his brethren were undergoing, and because God had blessed the Delaware Jurisdiction he, with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Jurisdiction, showed brotherly love to some of the National Church Officers and Pastors of the Church, by allowing them to borrow needed funds to help them in their time of trouble. It was all done in Good Faith and with the assurance that it would **be repaid**.

He purchased a beautiful Episcopal Residence for the Jurisdiction, obtained and equipped a Headquarters Office Building, gave \$19,000 to the Haitian Relief Program, and paid off mortgages for congregations in the Jurisdiction. The record shows that all of these acts of altruism were done with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Jurisdiction. He was very wise: he put a sizable sum in investments for the benefit of the Jurisdiction.

It appears that in process of being generous in his giving and trying to help his leaders and others, Bishop Holsey seems not to have taken time to balance his check book before writing a few checks. Not knowing that it lacked sufficient funds to cover two of his checks that he wrote to the National Church for Reports that were not honored at the bank. Based on my knowledge of what happens in the Church's Finance Office, I think it safe to say that there have been other occasions when Bishops have made their reports with checks that were not honored. When the particular Bishops were notified, adjustments were made and the matter was settled. The officers of the church did not proclaim to the world that the Bishops were dishonest or unreliable.

They understood that fallible creatures make mistakes and that they also were candidates that were prone to make similar mistakes.

There must have been something special about the Delaware case, because it attracted the attention of the highest executive leadership of our beloved church. Just about six months before, in the City of Dover, Delaware; in the presence of more than 500 people, they had extolled the virtues of this distinguished gentleman, not because he had been very gracious in giving them financial gifts, but because the evidence would corroborate all that they said. It was in the month of June, 2010 that the General Board, after receiving word that two insufficient funds checks had been received from the Delaware Jurisdiction for national reports, that the Presiding Bishop appointed an Ecclesiastical Oversight Committee to enter the Delaware Jurisdiction and investigate the financial activity of that Jurisdiction.

While some reasonable and prudent men might question his reason or right to have appointed the committee to perform such an audacious process, when one looks at the General Boards Performance Record, it might reveal the fact that nobody does it just like the General Board. Led by the First Assistant Presiding Bishop, the committee went to the Delaware Jurisdiction and looked, questioned whomever they desired, and found things in order pursuant to the requirements of the guidelines set forth in the Charter. They might have also been looking for all of the finance that they might have been told that was there, but it appears to have been “Safe In The Arms Of Jesus, and Nobody could disturb it there.”

After a few days of enjoying the gracious hospitality of Delaware, they summarily removed Bishop Thomas L. Holsey from his office. They would not allow him to preside over his first jurisdictional convocation, they removed him from the churches he was pastor, they took his salary and would not allow him to participate in any of the jurisdictional functions. They closed his jurisdictional headquarters, removed the furniture and equipment and placed it in storage. They accused him of fraudulent activities and this information was voiced among the saints and the public.

Not only did they take away his livelihood, but they also cancelled his insurance and collected the money from it. Just think of the undue stress that

he and his family were made to experience. Is this the way that Godly Leaders should treat a brother in the Lord?

Do you think Jesus would approve such action? Would Bishop Mason and the Fathers of the Church have treated a brother or anyone with such callousness? The CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, INC. of which I have been a member for 87 years, and which follows the JESUS WAY, BELIEVES: “BRETHREN, IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN THE SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS, CONSIDERING YOURSELF LEST YOU ALSO BE TEMPTED.” ( GAL. 6:1). Judging from the action cited above, how would you rate the spirituality of the LEADERSHIP?

In this case, there is no evidence to established the fact that our beloved Bishop Holsey perpetrated any trespass, crime or sin, but the persons whom we have entrusted to lead the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., when the General Assembly is not in session, removed a Bishop from his office and stripped him of everything that they could, because of “TWO CHECKS” THAT COULD NOT BE HONORED AT THE TIME THAT THEY WERE PRESENTED TO THE BANK. Was that a crime? Don’t many people sometimes present checks that, for one reason or another, must be returned for insufficient funds? Aren’t there some checks in our Finance Office that have not been honored? If the National church were in financial distress, the Leaders to whom the Church been so gracious could have easily given a tenth of what they received from National Meetings, Income from the thousands of Official Day Convocation DVD’s and other gifts that they have so graciously received. Then, too, they might have returned the very liberal financial gifts that Bishop Holsey had given to them just a few months prior to his being unfrocked. This might have helped cover the “TWO CHECKS”.

In St. Paul’s letter to Titus (Tit. 3:13), he instructed him to send Zenas the Lawyer to him at Nicopolis. The bible does not tell us why Zenas was named, but it is reasonable to conclude that the “Religious Leaders” of that day were trying to put him out of circulation and he needed the advice of a good lawyer to help keep him alive a while longer. The old saying: “all lawyers are liars”, is not true. The fact is, Good Lawyers know how to study

facts and present them in such a way that makes “Religious Leaders understand the facts and that they are obligated to “Practice What They Preach”. After it has been brought to their attention, if they elect not to follow it, the LAW will show them how; it will enforce the LAW, because the LAW is for the LAWLESS. ( I Tim. 1:9).

I salute the lawyers who advised Bishop Holsey. His personal attorney, who attended the Inaugural Banquet, where he had the privilege of hearing our beloved Presiding Bishop, was afforded the opportunity to instruct the Leaders of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., relative to the provisions of the COGIC Constitution. He refreshed their minds by telling them of the history of how our laws have been applied in other pertinent cases. He called upon them to comply with our laws, which will satisfy the provisions of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. His letter was a Wake Up Call to the Leadership. The process was initiated, Bishop Holsey was tried before the Board of Bishops. As was the case when Jesus was tried by Pilate, they found no fault in him. It was made clear that the “charges”, that were alleged against him by the General Board, were not supported by the evidence that was presented. The order was given that he should be restored to his position as Prelate in Delaware, and Bishop Holsey was restored. In our beloved Church, the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., whose very name symbolizes the concept of Reconciliation, (II Cor. 5:19) one would think that the Presiding Bishop and General Board would have rejoiced over the fact that their Appointee was cleared of the false charges that had been brought against him.

To the contrary, they appear to have been quite displeased. “Subsequent to the verdict and entry of the Order by the Board of Bishops, Bishop Holsey was never given access to the books and records of the Jurisdiction. The General Board demanded that Bishop Holsey would turn over to them records which he had never received. He told them that he had not been given the said records and books of the Jurisdiction. In response to Bishop Holsey’s answer, the General Board approached the Executive Committee of the Board of Bishops ex parte and demanded that Bishop Holsey be removed from his post as Prelate and also that he be removed as Pastor of his two churches. No prior notice was given to him of such a request or allegations of insubordination. The Board of Bishops acquiesced to the demand and

issued the Order again removing him from his post as Jurisdictional Prelate and as pastor of his two local churches without due process of any kind.

The Lord provided for him another Good Lawyer, one whose legal acumen and apparent understanding of our COGIC Constitution, and how the principles of it should be applied in all phases of the operation of the Church, to appeal his case to the Judiciary Board of the Church . Before the highest Judicatory Authority of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. he made it clear that within our system we believe that the Presiding Bishop, General Board, Officers and members must abide by the constitution, which included the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the church as an organization and non-profit corporation. Noncompliance by any within the system jeopardizes the effectiveness of the total system, thus bringing harm to those who fail to comply.

The point of view expressed by the Lawyer recognizes, as did St. Paul, that every soul should be subject to the higher power because all power is of God (Rom. 13:1). His appeal was successful because there was a Higher Power within the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. to which his appeal could be made: The Judiciary Board. The Godly decision of the Judiciary Board restored him to his position as Jurisdictional Prelate of Delaware and pastor of the two churches from which he had been removed. It is very interesting to observe that while Bishop Holsey was seeking justice within the Church's system, the General Counsel and certain other COGIC representatives visited the U.S. Attorney's Office in Delaware seeking information as to what was needed to effect a federal criminal investigation concerning the alleged fraud that was said to have been committed by Bishop Thomas Holsey.

They were told that it was necessary that they provide the F.B.I. Special Agent with transcripts and other related documents from the internal COGIC trial that they described so that the U.S. Attorney's office might review them to determine whether or to what extent a Federal Criminal Investigation into the allegations might be undertaken. After thirty days had passed, and there were no records from the General Counsel, a letter was sent from the U.S. Attorney's office to the General Counsel to ascertain when he would send the documents. He informed the General Counsel that he was in no way obligated to send the documents to law enforcement, and asked if he wished

to produce the required documents. It appears that those whom the General Counsel represented elected not to produce the internal COGIC records. No records, no review, no possible investigation. I think it is reasonable to conclude that there was no INVESTIGATION. The fact is, the federal authorities never said there would be one. Should we have some concerns as to why the General Counsel petitioned the Judiciary Board seeking to postpone its hearings until the COGIC responded to the governmental-related activities? To what governmental-related activities was the reference made? As I observe, just about two weeks prior to the General Counsel's petition to the Judiciary Board, letters were sent out from the Presiding Bishop and General Counsel, respectively, asking that we all cooperate with the government's inquiry. Did the government's inquiry ever occur? Since we were asked to cooperate with the inquiry, do we have the right to know what the inquiry was all about? I can certainly appreciate our beloved Presiding Bishop's desire that we cooperate with the government's inquiry. Church and State must always work together for they are both empowered by God to work in the interest of the people. It would also be most helpful if the Church would cooperate with the State by taking care of its own business within the Church and not place an undue burden on our Criminal Justice System which is already loaded with "real crime cases".

In our rule of faith and practice, the Holy Bible, we are given the guidelines for adjudicating any matter which arises within our Church. The Bible is our Law Book, and it was inspired by the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of Truth. It is the Law of God for the people; therefore, those who lead God's people and his church must be led by the same spirit that inspired the writing of the Bible. God's people, in God's Church, must be taught God's Agenda, THE WORD OF GOD. As I looked at the theme for our Church this year: "God's people, God's Church, God's Agenda, it was revealed to me that the theme lacks something. Could it be that it is the leadership that will instruct God's people, in the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., by precept and example, to live by the rules that are set forth in God's agenda, the Holy Bible? By permission, I feel led to add the missing component to the theme. Now, the theme should be: "God's Leader, God's People, God's Church, God's Agenda.

PRAYERFULLY, I have set before you two cases that the General Assembly should review and take action on immediately. To delay much longer just may not be the wise thing to do. The problems are a direct result of the failure of our Leaders to follow the spiritual guidelines as set forth in the Bible, “our rule of faith and practice,” or even our own constitution. Our Church is found upon Spiritual Principles, and when we resort to the Civil Law to attempt to solve our problems, there is a real conflict. I am not speaking as a Novice, but as one who has been in Ministry in the Church Of God `In Christ, Inc. for more than 66 years I have been recognized as a Bishop since 1963. I meet the requirements for being a Bishop as set forth in I Tim. 3:2,6.

If you must know, I graduated from College with degrees in Philosophy and History, finished the School of Religion, Howard University 59 years ago, (the first COGIC student to graduate from Howard’s School of Religion), finished Law School 53 years ago, served as College Professor in Humanities and Fine Arts, served as one of seven Board Members for the 17<sup>th</sup> largest School District in the U.S. for 10 years, Executive Secretary of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc. during the Administration of the Second and last Senior Bishop of the COGIC, Chief Justice of the COGIC Judiciary Board, and multiple other training that qualify me to speak. It might please you to know that I was the First and only Judge of the First and only Ecclesiastical Court of the Church Of God In Christ, Inc., established in the 66<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1973) for the purpose of adjudicating the West Angeles Church Of God In Christ, Inc. case where Elder Charles E. Blake, now our Presiding Bishop, was the pastor. That case received nationwide publicity, and Bishop Rimson, Chairman of the General Assembly, presented me by telling the General Assembly that he was appointing a man to handle the case that “knows our Laws and Doctrine and is qualified to judge the case”. After two days of hearing very interesting testimonies, the Lord led me to render a just decision, and the General Assembly gave me a STANDING OVATION. When Justice was given, the people rejoiced.