

The following was copied from a book titled “Sermons – Speeches and So Fourth” by H.L. Olmstead. This book was published in 1995 by Word & Work from a collection of notes of H.L. Olmstead by his daughter Florence Olmstead Collins.

I must confess that I personally had few “in-person” connections with Bro. Olmstead. He was what I would classify as an “Old Time” preacher with great wisdom and humor. The note below is the preamble of the printed text of his message to be delivered to the Louisville Christian Fellowship of 1950.

For some reason, this morning, I picked up a copy and this “preamble” struck me with the degree of wisdom and humor that this Godly man conveyed. The actual printed copy is below, with some of my personal comments to follow. (The total article is 9 pages long)

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES

"Dealing with Differences" is the theme assigned to me at this preachers' meeting. It ought to be a good place to discuss a question of this nature, as most of the differences between brethren are started by, and even fostered by the preachers. The rank and file of the brotherhood would have very little difficulty in getting along together, regardless of many differences, were it not for the preachers. And I might say were it not for the false pride of preachers who, once having taken a position, reached a conclusion by induction or deduction, are ashamed to admit they are wrong. The rule is: the "bigger" the preacher, the more difficult it is for him to admit he is mistaken.

In the initial letter I received from the program committee, my subject was to have been "Dealing with Differences in Interpretation." The printed program gives me a great deal more latitude, and gives me the wide field of dealing with all differences. (I hope they have not seen fit to change my subject again since I left home.) However, I do wish first to speak somewhat about differences in general.

A Re-type of the noted preamble: “Dealing With Differences”

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(Some personal thoughts on this portion of the article)

One part of my career in the appliance manufacturer was to address and fix problems that would arise in the appliances we produced. In some instances the issue might be in our 'design" while others might be in our “manufacturing process” while others might be in the ability or understanding of our customer/user of the product and “how to use it”. In order to really fix the issue, it was always necessary to search out the 'root-cause” of the problem. (That is, to find the actual “source” of the problem rather than just fix the “issue” that might be first seen.)

It is my opinion that that process of finding the “root cause” is applicable for all issues of things that “do not work properly” (or as we desire) in our society. I believe Bro. Olmstead has used this process in an effort to address the “differences” we all see within the Lord's Church.

A Look at Bro. Olmstead's comments:

- **“...the differences between brethren are started by, and even fostered by the preachers”.** *This comment recognizes that many of the differences (disputes) are both “started” and “fostered” (continued or enhanced) by the preachers of the churches. That recognition of the “source” and “promotion” of such disputes (divisions) between both congregations and/or church groups is largely the responsibility of the leaders of these congregations or church groups.*
- **“The rank and file of the brotherhood would have very little difficulty in getting along together, regardless of many differences were it not for the preachers.”** *This comment acknowledges that the different views about Scripture or how worship is conducted is not created nor promoted by the people within the congregations themselves, but done by the leaders of these groups.*
- **Bro. Olmstead continues: “...were it not for the false pride of preachers who, once have taken a position, reached a conclusion....are ashamed to admit they are wrong.”** *This comment seems to “hit the nail squarely on the head” by digging deeply enough to find the actual source (beginning) of many disputes and the ‘false pride’ of not admitting an incorrect conclusion made earlier in life. [That seems to indicate that many have forgotten a primary foundation of our salvation is to “Repent” (change position or direction).*
- **He continues on the subject: “The rule is: the “bigger” the preacher the more difficult it is for him to admit he is mistaken”.** *That seems to get much deeper to the issue of “differences” (divisions) that exist within the church (and in society). We humans never want to admit that we ever have made a wrong decision or conclusion on a matter.*

I am again impressed with the last paragraph where Bro. Olmstead notes the assigned subject he was asked to present at the upcoming meeting. First was “Dealing with differences in Interpretation” and later “Dealing with Differences” and his hope the subject didn't change since he had already left home to deliver the message. (A real demonstration of the “Humor” of this leader of times gone by.)

The more I read of H.L. Olmstead, I am impressed of the simplistic and realistic approach to the subject of studying, interpreting and conveying the message of the Bible. Even though he has been gone for over a half century, he is still teaching (at least to me). He is most certainly a Hero of Faith in Christ Jesus.

I sincerely believe a reading of the writings of this man of faith will be an inspiration to each of you. I suggest that you search for such writings.

May God Bless, *Jim Rowe (August 2026)*