

**LESSONS TO FORTIFY**

**YOUR FAITH**

**IN THE DAY OF**

**A CHANGING CHURCH**

**by**

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**CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW**

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# INTRODUCTION

Winds of change are blowing gale force across the landscape of the churches of Christ. That which fifteen years ago was a problem only in a few scattered places has now become a raging controversy that is affecting congregations in every major city in every state of the Union and in many of our mission outposts. Teaching that a few years ago would not have been tolerated on the campus of most our Christian schools or allowed in the pulpits of the overwhelming majority of our churches is now commonly heard in both quarters. While a significant number of our brethren have embraced the denominational agenda of the change agents, many more are ignoring the problem, refusing to deal with it and thus allowing it to grow in their midst.

The family of Christians that assemble on West Bell Road in Surprise, Arizona, though small in number, are rich in faith and good works. When they saw the damage the agents of change were imposing on the Lord's church they decided that they would do what they could to fortify the faith of their brethren and strengthen the resolve of sister churches to resist this destructive movement. In addition to the monthly publication of **Christianity: Then and Now** which is mailed to the leaders of over 5,000 congregations, they launched a weekly email publication entitled "**Lessons to Fortify Your Faith**." These are prepared by John Waddey, minister of the West Bell Road church.

Two years of these lessons are collected together in this book. They are sent forth with the prayer that they will serve a useful purpose for Christians as we face the storms of change that are upon us. Most of them are formatted on a single page. The book can easily be taken apart so sheets can be copied for distribution. We hope that elders and preachers will use these lessons to further instruct the members of their congregations.

May God protect his church from those who would harm her. May he raise up a band of faithful men and women who will be steadfast in faith and strong in their defense of the faith once delivered to the saints.

JHW

If you wish to order a copy of this book, make your check to the Church of Christ for \$7.50 and send to John Waddey, 12630 W. Foxfire Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375.

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Dear Friend in Christ:

Please take a moment to read about:

## **A TEAM EFFORT TO PROTECT THE CHURCH FROM HARM**

A spiritual war is being waged against the brotherhood of churches of Christ. Across the nation battles are being fought as agents of change work to gain control of congregations, schools, and mission outposts. They are well placed, well-funded and well prepared for their conquest. They are fully aware of what they are doing and where they are going. They are highly motivated and confident of victory. Unfortunately the majority of those who are their intended victims are unaware of the danger facing them. Some realize there is a problem but seem not to perceive the extent of it and the imminent danger it poses. If we are to effectively block this takeover of congregations which will result in their being swept into apostasy, those who love the Lord and his church must take action. We must act now and act decisively. We must recruit an army of volunteers and we must educate and inform our fellow-Christians.

### **An Operation in Which You can Help**

We need a thousand Christians who have access to the Internet to join hands with us in an educational project, beginning today. Each Saturday I will send you an article addressing some aspect of the change movement among our brethren. Some of the articles will remind us of the Biblical reasons why we believe and worship as we do. They will address those items being challenged by the promoters of change. Other articles will address the errors or fallacies of the false teachers. Some will review their books and speeches.

I will send the articles to fellow-soldiers on my e-mail list. When you receive the article, read it and then forward it to ten or more members of the church on your mailing list with a note encouraging them to read it and forward it to Christians on their list. Such an effort has the potential to reach thousands of brethren within an hour's time. Each week they will receive a brief lesson that will remind them of who we are, what we believe and why. They will be reminded of the dangers of the change movement. In a year they will have received 52 such lessons. Hopefully some of them will see the need to get involved and help us. This effort will not cost anyone a penny. It will take no more than 20 minutes a week. It will reach thousands. It can make a difference.

Can I count on you to help? If you wish to participate, expand your e-mail list to at least ten, hopefully many more, fellow Christians. The first lesson is posted below. Read it, forward it to Christians on your mailing list. (Hopefully they can be elders, preachers, teachers, but any brother or sister in Christ). You are encouraged to send it to the congregations in your area who receive e-mail. Send it forth with a fervent prayer that God will bless your efforts and save his church from being swept away.

Thank you for caring enough to get involved in the most important thing in the world.

Yours for the church we love,

John Waddey

\*If you wish to work with us in this ongoing weekly endeavor, contact me at [johnwaddey@aol.com](mailto:johnwaddey@aol.com) and you will be placed on our mailing list.

## A NAME OF WHICH WE SHOULD NEVER BE ASHAMED

To the Christians in Rome Paul wrote, "All the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). Other names are also ascribed to the Lord's church. In I Corinthians it is called "the church of God" (1:2). Paul also called it "the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28). Sometimes it was simply called the church. This shows us that Christ did not appoint a single, exclusive name for his church. Since in heaven's plan there only one church, there was no need for a specific name to distinguish it from other religious bodies.

In a world of over 2,000 denominations, all claiming to be Christ's church, we identify ourselves as **Churches of Christ**. We do so because it is clearly a biblical name that God approves of. It tells the world to whom we belong. It gives the glory to our founder and savior. While not the only name that a body of Christians can scripturally use, it is highly appropriate for many reasons.

- \* Christ established the church (Matt. 16:18).
- \* He called it "my church" (Matt. 16:18).
- \* He gave himself for the church, dying for her (Eph. 5:25).
- \* In his death on Calvary, he purchased the church with his shed blood (Acts 20:28).
- \* The church is his spiritual body, of which he is head (Eph. 1:22-23).
- \* He is the chief cornerstone of the church (Eph. 2:20).
- \* It is his house (Heb. 3:6).
- \* The church is his bride (II Cor. 11:2).
- \* He is the savior of the church (Eph. 5:23).
- \* He adds to his church all who are saved (Acts 2:47).
- \* The church is his family (Eph. 3:15).

Given all of these facts, it seems entirely reasonable that we call the church "the church of Christ." This holy name gives our Lord recognition for his role in giving us the church, preserving and protecting her. It acknowledges our dependence upon him. It expresses our love for him who saved us. It glorifies him as head of the church.

Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16), nor should we ever be ashamed of, embarrassed by, or apologetic for this holy name we wear. JHW

## A WATERSHED SITUATION

In his book, **The Great Evangelical Disaster**, Francis A Schaeffer used the analogy of a watershed to describe what was happening in many evangelical churches as theological liberalism made inroads within them. Imagine a snow covered ridge on the central divide of the Swiss Alps. The snow all looks the same. It all came down from the same sky. Yet when spring comes, the melted snow will flow in two different directions and end up far apart in two different Seas. That on the one side of the ridge will flow into the Rhine River and end in the North Sea. That on the other side will enter the Rhone River and end up in the Mediterranean. The two destinations are a thousand miles apart. So it is among our people today.

There are some things wherein we can differ and yet still hold in common the essential truths of Christianity. There are others that are so essential to being a faithful church that if we find ourselves on opposite sides the end result will be as different as the waters on either side of those mountains.

**The inspiration and reliability of God's Word** are watershed issues. Conservative people of all faiths have always held that the Bible is a special book. It is not the product of men. Rather it is the message of the Living God. It was written by men who were inspired, and guided by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21). Being from the all-wise, infallible and all powerful God, it is perfect in its message. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Again he said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). David wrote, "The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9). Based on such self-assertions, faithful believers have long believed the Bible to be **inerrant**, i.e. the original manuscripts that came from the pens of the inspired writers were flawless in their message. While this teaching is unpalatable to certain teachers who have been trained and indoctrinated in the classrooms of skeptical and unbelieving scholars, it is entirely reasonable to those who take Christ and his word seriously. If God truly is what he claims to be, is it not within his power to deliver to man a flawless record of his will and is he not able to preserve that word for future generations?

If God's Word is not free from error, then we must ask how we can trust any thing it says? If the possibility of error exist, could not the whole production be spoiled? If that be the case then we are left as travelers lost in a desert with no dependable map to help us find our way out. If it is not inerrant then we, of all God's creatures, are most pitiful. The inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible are truly watershed issues.

Another fundamental issue is **the authority of God's Word in all things that relate to the faith, worship and practice of his people**. Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He is said to head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). He told the apostles to teach converts to "obey all things whatsoever he commanded" (Matt. 28:20). Paul warns us not to go beyond the things that are written (I Cor. 4:6 ASV). John warns only those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have the blessing of the Father and the Son (II John 9). The only possible way we can know the will of Christ is by reading his New Testament. A Christian and a church will respect and obey the authority of Christ as revealed in his word or they will not. Only those who obey Christ are promised salvation (Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21). The complete and final authority of the New Testament in all matters of faith, worship and practice is a water shed issue. Those who honor this principle will be "truly his disciples (John 8:31). Those who do not, will end up a thousand miles away in a human organization, founded by men, led and guided by fallible men, with no promise of divine approval.

Any thinking person can see that these principles form a watershed. Holding the one set of beliefs will lead a person into simple New Testament Christianity. Holding the other will lead him into some other kind of religious body. Depending on ones preference, it might be Catholicism, Protestantism or some other cult or ism. Clearly there is no room for compromise or accommodation on these watershed issues. Those of the change movement who have abandoned them are headed in an opposite direction from the rest of us and our fathers before us. They have made shipwreck concerning the faith. Time will reveal their destination. JHW

## **CHANGE YES: APOSTASY NO!**

An army of younger church members are clamoring for change in the worship, faith and practices of our churches. They have naught but criticism for the efforts of the past and are certain they have discovered a far superior way of "doing church" as they are fond of saying. They leave the impression on immature and gullible disciples that those of us over 50 are stubborn, close-minded and impervious to change, no matter how beneficial it might be. In this they are less than honest. Some ultraconservative types might well be that intractable, but for the majority of us it is not change that we reject, it is unlawful departure from God's authorized Word and way.

- \* We are willing to change such things as the hour, the length or the order of our services, but we are not willing to change the nature and substance of them. God has specified singing, praying, communing, offering and instruction as acceptable aspects of his worship.
- \* We are willing to try new songs or new hymnals, but not a new kind of music. Only singing did the Spirit authorize (Eph. 5:19). Instruments, other than the voice and heart, we will not, we cannot accept.
- \* We are willing to consider different methods of observing a communion service, but we cannot mix the sacred meal with a common meal (I Cor. 11:20-22). Nor can we observe the feast on a day not ordained by God (Acts 20:7).
- \* We are willing to accept any or all Biblical names for the church, but we will not brook those who seek to dismiss or discredit the Biblical name "church of Christ" used by Paul (Rom. 16:16). It is never wrong to give due glory and honor to Christ the founder and head of the church.
- \* We are willing to change our methods of evangelism but not the gospel message given by Christ. Methods flourish and grow obsolete but the message is divine, perfect and eternal (Rom. 1:16).
- \* We can tolerate those who prefer other reputable translations than the King James Version but not those who reject the authority of the Bible.
- \* We can adapt to modern improvements in our meeting houses but we cannot be party to those who would "modernize" the church which Christ built, which is revealed in Scripture.
- \* We can admit our failures to measure up to the divine pattern for faith and practice, but we can never admit the church which Christ built is any less than perfect.
- \* We can preach salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), but we will never be able to preach salvation by grace alone or faith alone (Jas. 2:24).

Change in non-essentials, in matters of judgment and expediency our people have been making for the last 200 years. Changes in the God-given faith and practice of Christianity apostates have been engaging in for the same period of time. Sydney Rigdon's changes took him into Mormonism. Dr. John Thomas' changes led him into the Christadelphians. The changes of instrumental music and missionary societies took their promoters into Disciples of Christ/Christian Church denomination. Changes regarding the doctrine of the kingdom of Christ and His return lead Robert H. Boll into Premillennialism. Changes in the teaching of the role of miraculous gifts of the Spirit led Don Finto and the Belmont Church of Christ into Pentecostalism. Changes in the government of the church and the doctrine of Christian liberty led Chuck Lucas and Kip McKeen of the Boston church into the International Church of Christ cult. The changes proposed by the "change agents" centered in Abilene, Texas are leading toward a new denominational body with which we want no part. JHW



## IF YOUR CHURCH LEAVES YOU

We are used to hearing the sad news of a member or a family leaving the church. Today members of churches of Christ in America must face the possibility that the congregation of which they are members is in the process or has already **left them!** If it is your sad lot to face this painful experience, please consider the following thoughts.

\* If your church is leaving you and God's Word, please **don't close your eyes and pretend it really isn't happening.** We see this sad phenomenon all across the land. Some elders can't believe their preacher really means what he says in his classes and sermons that question the ancient truths of God's Word or promote unscriptural changes. Some members close their eyes and ears to activities in their congregations that would not have been tolerated in days past. Some watch as youth programs are clearly leading young people away from the ancient gospel. We must face the hard fact that a deadly apostasy is presently at work in our midst and unless stopped it will destroy the church we love.

\* If the preacher and elders of your congregation abandon the Word of God for the program of the "change agents," **refuse to go with them.** They are unfaithful shepherds (Jer. 50:6). You are personally responsible for your soul (II Cor. 5:10). The gospel you obeyed, you learned from God's Word. The church you were added to was the church Christ built. The worship you offered was that you found set forth in Scripture. Don't give up the solid ground of truth for the shifting sands of popularity, emotionalism and promotionism.

\* If your congregation departs, **don't grow discouraged and quit the Lord and his church.** When this long struggle is over there will be three losing parties. 1). Those who follow the pied pipers of change will be lost in apostasy. 2). The faithful survivors who held fast to God's standard will be greatly reduced in size and strength. 3). Those who grew discouraged and left the church for some denominational body or to live without fellowship with God's people will stand condemned as well. They were not faithful unto death, they will not receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

\* Should your church start down the broad road of departure, **pray** that God will give you the wisdom to understand the problem and the information you need to fortify yourself and help others; that he will give you the courage to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might (Eph. 6:10); that he will use you to help his people..

\* If your church is leaving you, **take your stand for the Lord Jesus and His holy Truth.** Don't be timid or ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Like Paul be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil 1:16). If you love the church don't stand idly by while unfaithful disciples ravage and ruin her.

\* If such is your fate, then **rally other like-minded souls together.** Confront your leaders, if they are unresponsive and determined to abandon the old paths, then;

\* **Find a faithful congregation where you can indeed worship God** in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); where you can serve God with a good conscience (Acts 23:1). Seek out a church where you can invest your energy and finances in work that truly glorifies Christ and honors the church for which he died ...rather than promoting unfaithfulness and apostasy.

\* If no faithful church is close at hand, invite those who love God and wish to be simple New Testament Christians to join hands with you in **starting a new congregation dedicated to faithful service to our Master.**

Would to God that every Christian was privileged to live and die in a strong, faithful congregation where godly shepherds keep the wolves driven from the door and loyal preachers boldly proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Unfortunately, for many of us this lovely wish will not be realized. That being the case, we must gird up our loins and be mentally and spiritually prepared should the evil day come. JHW

## **WHEN IS A CHURCH OF CHRIST NOT A CHURCH OF CHRIST?**

There is a Church of Christ of the Philippines, a denomination that bears no resemblance or relation the church of Christ of which we are part. There is a Protestant denomination called the United Church of Christ. In the South one encounters the Immanuel Church of Christ, a radical Pentecostal body. The International Church of Christ is a denomination with its headquarters at Boston, governed by a body of men who fancy themselves apostles of Christ. Many have had the experience of entering a meeting house with the name Church of Christ over the door, only to find an organ, a choir and a reverend pastor within. In reality it was a Christian Church, in spite of the name. The name on a church building or on the deed of trust is not sufficient to make a worshiping group a bonafide church of Christ. Nor does the fact that the people choose to call themselves by that Biblical name necessarily make them truly a church that Christ will own and accept.

To be a church of Christ, certain basic essentials must be met. The disciples must be born again by the birth of water and Spirit or they cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). They must have been buried with Christ in their baptism (Rom. 6:3-4) for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 22:16). It is that one baptism (Eph. 4:4) that puts people into the one body or church of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). They must recognize Jesus to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22) and submissive to his authority (Heb. 5:8-9). They must be willing to worship and serve the Lord according to his revealed will (Luke 6:46).

The question posed in our title is pertinent because of problems that have surfaced among us in the past twelve years. There are people who still wear the name church of Christ who have long since abandoned the very truths that identify them as a church of Christ. Regardless of the name a body of people might wear, a church is not truly a church of Christ if any or all of the following factors be evident among them:

- \* If they no longer accept the New Testament of Christ as the ultimate and absolute authority in determining matters of faith and practice. The words of Christ will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).
- \* If a congregation no longer worships according to the New Testament pattern. This is true whether it be in their communion, their song worship, their day for sacred assembly or any other aspect of worship.
- \* When a congregation is no longer content to be governed as Christ ordained. There is no acceptable alternative to elders and deacons to lead His church. (Tit. 1:5).
- \* When a congregation places women in positions of leadership which God has forbidden (I Cor. 14:33-34; I Tim. 2:8-11-12).
- \* When a body of people no longer teach sinners to be saved in Christ's appointed way. Grace and faith can never eliminate the need for obedience and specifically for baptism in salvation (Acts 22:16).
- \* When a body of people despise and ridicule Christ's church, his doctrine, his worship and his faithful servants they make it clear that they are not a congregation of Christ's people, regardless of the name they may wear.

When any or all of these conditions are found in the life and teaching of a church that identifies itself as a church of Christ, it is a case of false identity or at the very least, mistaken identity. Remember the congregation at Ephesus? Without genuine repentance they would have ceased to be a church of Christ (Rev. 2:1-5). The church in Sardis had a name...but they were dead in the eyes of the Lord (Rev. 3:1). JHW

## WORSHIP IS NOT ENTERTAINMENT

In the **Daily News Sun** (Feb. 26), Richard Ostling wrote, "*Much of Evangelical worship has degenerated into showmanship, with applause and canned orchestra music—a naked (and rather successful) quest for popularity in a media culture.*" In this the writer is right on target. One need only look at many of the televised religious services to see his point in living color.

As a whole, our brethren continue to resist the temptation to join the mad rush away from the simplicity of New Testament Christianity to the paltry substitute of entertainment...but a few exceptions are being heard of.

As a young congregation with a great future unfolding before us we must ever keep our eyes on the Bible as our only standard and guide in worship, faith and practice. As the writer of Hebrew says, "See saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee." (Heb. 8:5). Paul made it clear that we must not go beyond the things that are written (I Cor. 4:6 ASV).

Those who perceive of worship as a time for entertainment need to ponder how their "show time" exercises (I hate to call such worship), would resonate in those early days when Christians risked their all to assemble for worship to their crucified and resurrected Lord; when they saw their brethren dragged away to a horrid death before a screaming mob. The entertainment crew would be so ashamed they would hang their heads and slink away in embarrassment for the insults they had offered to God and the harm done to his church.

Let us commune in sacred "remembrance of Christ" (I Cor. 11:25); let us sing and pray with the Spirit and understanding (I Cor. 14:15); and preach not ourselves but "Christ Jesus as Lord" (II Cor. 4:5), lest we be rejected (I Cor. 9:27). JHW

# THE WONDERFUL GRACE OF GOD

Few themes of Scripture are as prominent or important as the grace of God. Tragically, many know little of God's marvelous grace. Others hold a distorted view of grace. A proper understanding of grace will revitalize our spiritual life.

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S GRACE

Grace is "the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds; graciousness, loving kindness and goodwill generally." The grace of which we speak is God's unmerited favor toward us, demonstrated in the gift of his only Son for our salvation (John 3:16).

\* God's grace is exhibited in Christ (Eph. 2:7; Tit. 2:11).

\* It is inexhaustible. "With everlasting loving-kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah" (Is. 54:8). "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly..." (Rom. 5:20). We can never use up or wear out God's grace. It is like the air we breathe: there is always enough to go around. It is sufficient to meet any need in your life (II Cor. 12:9). Paul believed that "God shall supply every need of yours" (Phil. 4:19).

\* Grace is always immediately available. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people from this time forth and for evermore" (Ps. 125:2; Ps. 145:18-19). Like the atmosphere, it surrounds us, waiting to be let in. The moment we admit our need and comply with his terms it floods our souls.

\* God's grace is constant and dependable. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). With God and his grace, there "can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 2:17).

## What God's Grace Does For Us

\* It saves us from our sin. "By grace have ye been saved" (Eph. 2:5). It is all-forgiving and offered to all men. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Tit. 2:11). It is able to forgive all sins, no matter how heinous. As Paul put it, even those of the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15-16). The one sin that grace cannot cover is the refusal of God's offer. Jesus "came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11). Christ made it plain that "except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God..." (I John 1:9).

\* Grace causes us to serve God and others. "Let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God..." (Heb. 12:28). We all have "gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us..." (Rom. 12:6-8).

\* His grace makes us to stand. Through Christ "we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand..." (Rom. 5:2). "It is good that the heart be established by grace..." (Heb. 13:9). "Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:1).

\* The happiness His grace brings to us makes us sing with joy. Paul exhorted the Colossian saints to sing "with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16).

## Grace Must Not Be Abused

Some think that since salvation is ours by God's grace, there is nothing for us to do in receiving it. But Jesus is the author of eternal salvation "to all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). There is also the temptation for carnal-minded Christians to think that since God is gracious to forgive, therefore they can sin with without penalty. Shocked at such thinking, Paul asked, "shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace?" The answer is no! He urged the Corinthians to "receive not the grace of God in vain..." We are warned to look "carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God" (Heb. 12:15).

Lost souls need to hear the good news, that "When the kindness of God our Savior, and his love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved, us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Tit. 3:4-7). Every child of God should lift up his voice with that mighty chorus that sings, "Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous, yea our God is merciful" (Ps. 116:5). JHW

## A GENERATION THAT KNOWS NOT

Following the successful invasion and occupation of Canaan, and the death of Joshua, a generation of Hebrews arose, "that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel" (Judg. 2:10). Sad to say, they were not the last generation who knew not their past spiritual history. Today, among our brethren, there is a generation which knows not.

I. Some don't know, understand or appreciate the plea to restore New Testament Christianity. They know little or nothing of those noble patriarchs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who abandoned sectarianism and human doctrines and struggled to find their way back to the faith and practice of the apostolic church. They cannot visualize nondenominational, Biblical Christianity.

II. Some do not know or understand the apostasy that occurred in our ranks following the Civil War. A generation arose then that no longer felt the need for Bible authority in matters of faith and practice. They surrendered congregational autonomy for a national organization that began with the American Christian Missionary Society and later blossomed into the denominational machinery of the Disciples of Christ. They adopted open membership. They ignored the apostolic restrictions on women preachers and elders (I Tim. 2:11-12). Their preachers evolved into pastors. They rushed to embrace denominational churches in fellowship. Most of our generation doesn't know that 80 percent of our congregations and all of our schools were lost in that apostasy. They evidently don't know of the hardships and struggles of our forefathers to rebuild the shattered walls of Zion and to reestablish congregations that had been lost to apostasy. They know nothing of the insults, taunts and ridicule heaped upon them as they struggled to hold on and survive.

III. A generation has arisen that does not know or care about the battles fought to plant the Lord's church in every state and hundreds of foreign fields. They do not appreciate the courage of those who labored to clear the ground, or the grueling work and sacrifices of those who labored to win lost souls and lead churches to maturity.

IV. They know not the roll call of heroes of the past; men who were not ashamed to proclaim the gospel (Rom. 1:16) without apology and with no uncertain sound (I Cor. 14:8). They know little or nothing about such men such as David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, H. Leo Boles, N. B. Hardeman, A. G. Freed, R. L. Whiteside, Austin McGary, C. R. Nichol, Gus Nichols, Otis Gatewood, Roy Lanier, Sr., Guy N. Woods, B. C. Goodpasture, Batsell B. Baxter, to name just a handful out of hundreds.

V. A generation of preachers now exists who enjoy well-paying jobs in numerically strong churches that others established and nourished to strength and stability. They preach in fine meeting houses built by those who sacrificed for a cause they loved. These who have made no sacrifices and fought no battles are now inclined to surrender all the ground others have won. Now we see men who preach a different gospel. They poke fun at the preaching of those who went before them. Their preaching is hard to distinguish from that of our Protestant neighbors. Baptism for remission of sins is almost an embarrassment to them. They want a different kind of worship. To sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs does not satisfy their spiritual appetites. Their hearts incline toward the use of instrumental music. They resent those who ask for scriptural authority for such things. They wish for a choir and see just how close they can get to having one. They crave entertainment. They look with longing admiration at those who use showmanship and entertainment to attract large crowds. They crave to be recognized and accepted by their clergy peers in their communities. They yearn for others to think we really aren't so different from them. Some wish to be seen as thoroughly modern on "women's issues" and are willing to move ladies into leadership roles in the church. Much of our preaching has lost its distinctiveness. There was a time when a gospel preacher of the Church of Christ could easily be identified by his knowledge of Scripture, his citing of verses to establish his points, his boldness in proclaiming the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:28). But now a generation exists whose concept of preaching is a vague and generic. One must be told that he is employed by a Church of Christ.

In ancient Israel that generation that knew not Jehovah and what he had done for the Hebrews soon drifted away into idolatry and moral wickedness. They were swallowed up by their heathen enemies. Those who are younger will live to see many of our current congregations and preachers abandon the Christianity of the Bible and slip into the apostasy of denominationalism. We can only pity those of this generation who know not. As in days past, the faithful remnant will cling to the precious Word of God and pass the faith of Jesus on to future generations. JHW

## **BACK TO THE FOUNTAIN HEAD**

Many years ago I visited the little mountain town of Elijay, GA. An elderly gentleman gave me a tour of the area. Our drive took us to a spot high on an Appalachian mountain. Parking the car, he led me to a bubbling spring that gushed from the rocky ground. Taking a small cup from his pocket, he filled it with the crystal water and said "Have a drink from the Tennessee River." That pure water not only quenched my thirst, it provided me an illustration I have used hundreds of times since. No one in his right mind would drink the water from the great Tennessee River that flows through the valleys on its way to the Mississippi. Sewerage systems, chemical plants, industrial waste, agricultural and road run-off foul its water, making it unsafe to drink without purification. But if one makes his way back to the source, it is pure, clean and wholesome.

This aptly illustrates the situation in modern Christianity. In the beginning, when the Word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem, it was pure sweet and wholesome, bringing only the richest blessings to those who partook of it. As years passed and the gospel spread across the face of the earth, changes began to creep in. There is something about the human mind that leaves us unsatisfied with what has come from the past. We are always trying to improve on such things. Men thought they could improve on the religion of Christ. For some that meant creating a governing body to control the life of the church and her members. Others sought to improve the worship, by incorporating practices and customs popular with the newly converted masses. Still others felt the need to enhance the church's power by moving her into the political realm. Some found the original doctrinal basis of the church too simplistic. They sought to make it more philosophical. In time there came the splintering of the church into hundreds of competing bodies, some large, some small. The current situation in the world of Christendom is like that polluted river.

When one reads his New Testament, he sees Christianity as it was in the beginning; pure, undiluted. One marvels at the simplicity and beauty of the message: a message of personal salvation; of encouragement to live the Christ-like life and avoid those things that will alienate one from God. There he finds a church without all the modern accouterments: no political power, no wealth, no real estate, no social standing, no entertainment,. There we see the church in her true glory as the family of God, the bride of Christ, the kingdom of God, the body of Christ. In the Book of Christ we discover the real power of the Christian message to change the world for good. It is addressed to the individual. Like leaven, the heavenly message goes from life to life changing people's hearts into the likeness of Christ. No physical force is ever used, no political or legal coercion is found. The servants of the Lord go forth with a message and seek to win the hearts and minds of humanity.

Today with our Bibles in hand, we can make our way back to the fountain head of Christianity. Leaving behind the foreign items accumulated over the ages, we can learn for ourselves and practice the pure, undiluted religion of the Son of God. Clear and clean, wholesome and pure, it will truly be a blessing to our souls. JHW

## ***DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN***

To folks who are unfamiliar with our brotherhood's history, the current clamor for change emanating from the halls of our Christian Colleges and Universities may seem new, strange and different. But for those who have studied the history of our movement from 1850-1925 know that today's events are a virtual replay of brotherhood events in that distant generation. As Yoggie Bera, that famed philosopher of New York use to say, "It's *deja vu* all over again."

\* In 1849 D. S. Burnett of Cincinnati, Ohio led a drive to persuade our brethren to create a Missionary Society to do the mission work of the church.

\* In 1859 Dr. L. L. Pinkerton of Midway, Kentucky introduced the first musical instrument into a church of the Restoration Movement.

\* In ca. 1885 Bro. Isaac Errett of Michigan was being addressed as reverend.

\* By 1880 Sis. Emma Babcock was preaching among the "progressive" churches.

\* Bro. J. H. Garrison and others progressives began to speak of our denomination and work for our inclusion in ecumenical religious organizations.

\* The Disciples' Divinity House at the University of Chicago was a generating plant for liberal thought. They indoctrinated a multitude of young preachers and educators who moved into our churches and schools with their message of skepticism.

Religious papers, such as the **Christian Standard**, **The Christian**, **The Christian Quarterly** and **The Disciple** kept up a continual drumbeat for progressive change in our faith, worship and practice.

\* Congregations were convinced that to grow and prosper, to compete with heir denominational neighbors they had to embrace the changes and the vast majority joined the progression away from the simple faith of the New Testament Christianity.

A few lonely voices were raised against that tidal wave of apostasy. Noble sons of God such as Jacob Creath, Jr., Tolbert Fanning Benjamin Franklin protested but to no avail.

It was Fanning's pupil and protege David Lipscomb, an humble farmer from rural Tennessee who dug in his heels, rallied a small but determined band of courageous men and drew a line in the sand. The progressives swept away some 85 percent of our people, all of our schools, and most of our mission work. Our forefathers in the faith had to start over again, virtually from scratch to rebuild the body of disciples known as Churches of Christ.

What is being promoted among our universities and churches today is "*deja vu* all over again." Pray that God will raise up a courageous band of Creaths, Fanning, Franklins and Lipscomb to lead his church in this mortal struggle against the progressives of our day. They identify themselves as **agents of change**. In reality they are apostates, kin to those Paul warned would depart from the faith in later times (I Tim. 4:1). JHW

## DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORIZE THE USE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

Dear Bro. Waddey: I have read attempts to prove that the New Testament authorizes the use of instrumental music in worship. The basic thesis is as follows:

"According to Young's Analytical Concordance, the same word translated psalms in Eph. 5:19 and Col 3:16 is also the word used to refer to the Old Testament book of Psalms in Luke 20:42, Luke 24:44, Act 1:20 and Acts 13:33. Many of the verses in the book of Psalms say to sing using musical instruments (e.g., Psalms 33:2, 92:3 and 144:9)."

"Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary defines the word translated psalms in these verses as a set piece of music, that is, a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm"); collectively the book of the Psalms"

"Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible defines this word as a song of praise (on an instrument)"

I would appreciate your thoughts on this reasoning. Isn't it also true that early Christians abstained from instrumental music to distance themselves from pagan religions that used instruments? Willis

Dear Willis: If the passage in Eph. 5:19 authorizes the church to use instrumental music in its worship, we must ask why from the beginning in 33 A.D. unto 670 no one figured that out and no one used instrumental music in worship? In 670 Pope Vitalian introduced the first instrument into Christian worship. It was 400 years later before the use became widespread.

The Hebrews sang praises to God with instruments because God clearly commanded them to do so. Note II Chron. 29:25, "for the commandment was of Jehovah." Jesus fulfilled and retired the Law of Moses when he died on the cross (Col. 2:14-16). In its place he gave us his New Covenant and tells us to obey all things whatsoever he commanded (Matt. 28:20). In his covenant we find no instruction or example of churches using instruments in their praise. That a psalm can be sung with instrumental accompaniment is evidenced by the fact that Jewish families sing them in their home devotions, we and other a cappella churches sing them in our worship. Are you aware that Presbyterians were also a cappella in the early stages of their history? A friend is writing a history of their departure from their original practice.

Grammarians have noted that the meaning of "*psallo*," the verb form, evolved over the years and that by the first century it meant to sing but did not necessarily include instrumental music. Dr. Everett Ferguson notes this in his study on "**A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church**" 1972, p. 13-15.

Note too that Paul was careful to indicate the instrument which was to be used when singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs: "Making melody with your heart" (Eph. 5:19). Thus he speaks metaphorically, likening the heart of the worshiper to a harp, with which we sing our praise to our God.

It is also helpful to notice Col. 3:16 which is a similar passage about praise. There Paul indicates two significant purposes of our singing: "teaching and admonishing one another." This is something an instrument cannot do. It can assist us in singing, it can thrill us with its lovely sounds, it can entertain us, but it cannot teach or admonish us. JHW



## THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONALISM

The denominationalism prevailing in contemporary Christendom is in sharp contrast with the church which Christ established. Consider the following:

- \* Christ founded his church (Matt. 16:18), but mortal men and women founded denominations.
- \* Christ's church was founded in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. but all denominations were founded long afterwards, in other places.
- \* Christ's church, which is his bride, wears his holy name. Paul wrote, "All the churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). Denominations wear their own distinguishing names that honor men, doctrines or practices.
- \* Christ is the only head of his church (Eph. 1:22), but men are chosen to head denominations.
- \* Each congregation of Christ's church is overseen by its own elders (Acts 14:23). Denominations are ruled by governing bodies.
- \* Christ's church follows only the Bible (Matt. 28:20). Denominations are guided by creedal books written by uninspired men and traditions of men (Matt. 15:9).
- \* The church that Christ built worships as he ordered in his word (John 4:24). Denominations change their worship to suit the wishes of their members and leaders.
- \* Christ's church teaches people to be saved as Christ ordained. They must hear the gospel preached, believe it and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). Denominations teach other ways of salvation. Some offer salvation by faith alone which Scripture clearly denies (Jas. 2:24). Others demand a Holy Spirit baptism, but the Bible knows only "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Some posit salvation on works of human merit. Paul plainly declares that it is, "not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Eph. 2:8-9).
- \* Christ loves, blesses and saves his church (Eph. 5:22-25). But denominationalism is contrary to his will (I Cor. 1:10-13). Those who promote denominationalism stand condemned by Him. We are told to "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ..." (Rom. 16:17-18). Denominational division thwarts the dying prayer of Jesus for the unity of his people (John 17:11).

In the Church of Christ you can experience true, undenominational Christianity. Come and see. JHW

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## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

The Holy Spirit is a divine person, a member of the holy godhead. It is erroneous to think of Him as merely a power, influence or feeling. Masculine pronouns are applied to the Spirit (John 14:26). Attributes of personhood are given him. He speaks (Rev. 2:29); He leads (Rom. 8:14); He forbids (Acts 16:6). The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in our salvation. We are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). He is the seal of our salvation and the "earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:13-14).

Contrary to popular opinion, God's Spirit is not given to alien sinners to convert them. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit, through the inspired Scripture, works on the minds and hearts of sinners, convicting them (John 16:8; I Pet. 1:23). When a sinner believes the gospel message regarding Christ, repents and is baptized, he receives remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Thus the Spirit is given, not to make us sons, but because we have become sons of God. God gives his Spirit to those who in faith obey Christ (Gal. 3:14; Acts 5:32).

Without God's Spirit, you cannot be saved (Rom. 8:9). You cannot receive the Spirit apart from Christian baptism (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). JHW

## GOD'S REMNANT

Scripture teaches that God has always had a faithful few in the earth who served him. That small group is described as a remnant, i.e., "A small fragment; an end of a bolt of cloth of good quality but small in size."

\* In Noah's day the remnant consisted of Noah and his family, just eight souls (Gen. 6:5-10).

\* In Sodom and Gomorrah the remnant was only four souls (I Pet. 2:6-7).

\* In the days of the Exodus, of those adult Hebrews who escaped Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb were counted faithful to enter the promised land (Num. 14:29-30).

\* Throughout their history, the great majority of the Hebrews refused to walk in the paths of God. In Elijah's day God had only seven thousand who had not bowed unto image of Baal (I Kings 19:18). Isaiah told his generation that there was only "a very small remnant" who were faithful (1:9). Just a remnant survived the Babylonian Captivity to return home to Canaan (Ezek. 6:8).

\* Jesus never expected the vast majority of people to follow him. "For narrow is the gate and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." (Matt. 7:14). "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). Paul affirmed that today there is "a remnant according to God's election of grace" (Rom. 11:5).

It is the faithful few who always have and always will carry the Cause of Christ forward.

One is not predestined or programmed to be part of the remnant. It is a matter of personal conviction, based on teaching and guidance. When we preach the gospel, those who believe and choose to be baptized are saved (Mk. 16:15-16). Like newborn babes they must long for the sincere milk of God's word (I Pet. 2:2). To receive the reward for the remnant we must be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Only God know for sure if a brother or sister is truly part of his remnant. Only He can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12-13). We can only judge by the fruit they bear if they are part of God's remnant (Matt. 7:16-21). Each of us must examine ourselves to see if we are part of the faithful remnant (I Cor. 11:28).

This truth presents many lessons for us today.

\* A large church is not necessarily a faithful church.

\* That a body of people is small is no reflection on their standing with God. "It is the remnant that shall be saved" (Rom. 9:27).

\* That the majority of people may believe a certain doctrine is not proof it is acceptable to God. It may be just the opposite.

\* That the wealthy, highly educated or powerful do not embrace a particular teaching is no proof it is not a true principle of the Christian faith. Many prefer the broad gate.

\* We must not expect everyone to follow Jesus. We should not be discouraged when the majority turns its back and only a remnant chooses to follow the Master.

\* We cannot expect everyone who makes a profession of faith to be wholly committed to Christ to the end. They never have and never will. JHW

## DO YOU REMEMBER?

Several years back a pop song asked, "Do You Remember the Days of Our Lives?" Moses encourage his Hebrew brethren to "Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations" (Deut. 32:7).

Living in an era of change when many despise the things of the past and where moral and spiritual confusion prevail, many younger Christians have never known those wonderful days when God's blessings rested upon his church and she prospered greatly. From 1900 to 1970:

\* All of our brethren loved the Church of Christ and gave themselves without stint or reservation to her service. They believed in the church, not as their savior, but as God's saved people.

\* There was a holy pride of membership in the church. We had confidence in our faith. We were growing. We were building. Our champions met and routed those of the sectarian world.

\* Our preachers and our members knew what they believed and why. Most members were Bible readers and knew enough to give an account their faith to any who asked them about it (1 Pet. 3:15).

\* Our brethren were not ashamed of their faith or their church. They were not apologetic of the sacred truths they professed. They stood up for the church and bravely defended her against her enemies.

\* All congregations had at least one, often two, evangelistic programs each year. We called them gospel meetings. Capable preachers who knew how to lead sinners to Christ were invited to come and preach. We knew how to knock on the doors of our neighbors homes inviting them to come and hear the gospel, and we did so. Usually there would be a harvest of souls. It was not uncommon for many to respond.

\* Frequently, all the congregations in a city or a county would pool their resources and combine their efforts in great city-wide gospel campaigns. Those efforts had a great impact on all the community. Brethren worked together in love and harmony. They got to know each other more intimately. Christ and his church were exalted and glorified.

\* Back then thousands of average Christians learned how to be effective soul-winners. They used charts and filmstrips developed by skilled brethren and went forth teaching their neighbors. Many of those soul-winners who were not preachers, won as many or more disciples as did their ministers.

\* We sent out hundreds of missionaries to plant the Lord's church in new communities at home and abroad. We sent them not to dig wells or teach farming techniques, but to preach the gospel and save lost souls. Churches were planted in over 100 nations of the world.

\* Our preaching brethren were Bible men. They were full of scripture. They clearly understood why we worshipped and served as we did and they were not ashamed nor afraid to teach those Biblical truths in any forum or circumstance (Rom. 1:16).

\* Our preachers were admired and respected for their Bible knowledge and their skill in wielding the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:10), rather than for their attainments in education and their interaction in community civic associations.

\* Our preachers generally spoke with one voice in proclaiming the blessed gospel of Christ.

\* They could disagree about minor matters and opinions without being disagreeable.

\* They directed their arrows at the enemies of Christ and his church rather than at each other.

\* Our Christian schools were bastions of truth and served the church rather than trying to change her into a human denomination. When our young people who attended them came forth they were stronger in faith and more useful to the kingdom, rather than confused and weakened in their commitment.

\* Teachers in our schools were chosen because of their Bible knowledge and loyalty to Christ and the church rather than on the basis of higher education gained in secular and denominational schools.

\* Back then false teachers were promptly rejected.

\* Apostates felt so out of place that they soon left us for other bodies of people.

Tragically things have changed. I pity those younger Christians who were not privileged to see the church in those wonderful days of old. May God in his mercy bring his people to repentance, purify his church and restore to her the happiness she once knew. Let the renewal begin with each of us personally. JHW

## VOCABULARY OF CHANGE AGENTS

The speech of a person can give indication of where they are from, or what even what their religion or politics might be. Peter's speech betrayed him (Mark 14:70). Those who are observant have noticed that those who are promoters of the change movement use a number of unique terms that reveal their leanings.

\* Those of the change movement no longer speak of "**brotherhood**." The chic term is "**fellowship**." This usage evolved out of the Restoration Unity Forums with the Christian Churches. "Brotherhood" sounded too exclusive so they adopted the word "fellowship" to describe our relations with fellow-members of the churches of Christ and extended "brotherhood" to encompass those of the Christian Churches.

\* Agents of change no longer speak of "**the Lord's church**," it is "**our faith tradition**." Claiming to be the Lord's church is thought to be narrow and presumptive. "Our faith tradition" suggests that we, like all denominations have our traditions, none of which are superior to the others.

\* Rather than speak boldly of "**Christ as the founder of the church of Christ**," change agents prefer to speak of Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone as the founders of their denomination. Interestingly, that would have come as a shock and a surprise to either of those great men of God. They dedicated their lives to escaping denominationalism and breaking down its walls.

\* "**Grace**" is a favorite word in the vocabulary of those who want change. It is a rare sermon, article or conversation of theirs that does not mention it. Grace is surely one of the great themes of Christianity. None could be saved without God's grace (Eph. 2:-9). But change agents mean more than salvation is an unmerited gift of God's favor. As they use the term, many of them have in mind grace that will save a person without him having to be obedient to the conditions of salvation set forth by the Holy Spirit. Most of all, their concept of grace will let a sinner be saved before and maybe even without baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Grace alone is just as foreign to Scripture as faith alone. Although it seems so full of comfort to those who are unlearned and ignorant of God's Will, it is in reality, a false doctrine that will lead one to disaster.

\* Change agents love to speak of "**freedom**." Certainly freedom is a Biblical concept. "For freedom did Christ set (us) free" (Gal. 5:1). Christ has freed us from the obligations of the Law of Moses. Truth makes us free from sin, ignorance, error and superstition (John 8:32). But when change agents speak of freedom that mean that we are free to ignore Bible teachings that restrict the way we worship and serve God. Especially do they wish to be free from the exclusive oneness of Christianity and the church. They crave freedom to fellowship and be accepted by denominational bodies. They chaff under the limiting obligation to "sing and make melody in our hearts" in worship (Eph. 5:19). They want to be free to use instrumental music. The wish to free women from the limitations placed on them by the sacred writers (I Cor. 14:33-34).

\* Proponents of change like to speak of "**patternism**." You may rest assured that this term is not complimentary. Rather it is a sarcastic put down of those of their brethren who believe what God said about his "pattern of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13) and feel obligated to "do all things according to the pattern" God has shown us (Heb. 8:5).

\* Those committed to change often refer to "**traditionalists**," meaning those who do not embrace their call for change. The word is pejorative. First it implies that what we hold as faith is really only our tradition. Secondly it implies that we are old fashioned, obsolete and out of date hence unworthy of attention. The fact is we gladly accept the insult since it is hurled at us because of our determination to cling to the "traditions" received from the apostles of Christ (II Thess. 3:6).

\* Promoters of change talk a lot about "**legalism**" and "**legalists**." Legalism is defined: "1. Emphasis on the letter rather than the spirit of the law. 2. Belief in salvation by obedience to the law rather than by the grace of God or by faith. 3. Undue stress on legal details without balancing considerations of justice or mercy" (**Dict. Of Religious Terms**, Kauffman). Change agents want folks to think that all who oppose them are narrow legalists. All would agree that the attitudes described above are faulty, but respect for God's Word and loving obedience thereto are not legalism. They are the fundamental aspects of faithful discipleship. Jesus said, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). With the Psalmist, without shame or apology, we declare our love for God's commandments (Ps. 119:47). JHW

## THE PARABLE OF THE MOSQUITO

Just recently I visited an old friend who is confined to a convalescence home. Just 65, Bill was still strong and healthy. He owned his own business and was flourishing. Then one night a tiny mosquito landed on him and bit him. When he felt the sting he brushed it away and thought nothing of it. But in the seconds that the creature was on him, it injected him with a terrible virus. A few days later he experience fever, chills and headaches. Three days later his brother found him on the floor of his home, in a deep coma. His diagnosis, viral encephalitis. Physically he recovered, but he suffered irreversible brain damage. Today he is much like a stroke victim. All because of a tiny mosquito carrying an invisible virus.

This poor fellow's unfortunate experience reminds me of a terrible spiritual virus that is being spread among Churches of Christ. There are men circulating among us like that mosquito. They look and seem harmless enough. Many brethren don't care for the ideas they are promoting, but they mistakenly view them more as an annoyance than a deadly threat. The disease they are carrying is called "Change." The carriers of this disease are a band of preachers and university teachers who have taken it upon themselves to introduce revolutionary changes into the faith, worship and life of our congregations. They have successfully infected a large number of young men while they were attending Christian Universities. They have gone forth and sought out positions in our churches...and begun to spread their deadly ideas. Scores of churches are already infected.

So drastic are the changes proposed that any congregation that embraces and follows them to their logical end will no longer be a Church of Christ. The symptoms are easily discerned: a loss of respect for the authority of the Bible in the life of the Church; especially a refusal to recognized the law of silence that forbids us to go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:6). Victims are restless and bored with the worship Christ ordained and crave entertainment and sensual excitement. They tend to experience a marked change in their attitude toward fellow-Christians, past and present, who do not embrace their program of change. They feel a strong urge to reach out and fellowship denominational people and their activities. Singing praises to God with the sacred hymns of the past is unpleasant for victims. They demand new songs and instrumental music to accompany them. Their spiritual appetite for the Lord's Supper flags and they find it necessary to turn it into a common meal for their bellies.

The virus affects their ability to read Scripture. When God says, "I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have authority over a man" (I Tim. 2:12), to their jaundiced eyes it seems to say it is alright for women to do just that. When the Book of God says, "by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24), the words are scrambled in their minds and come out "a man is justified by faith alone without works." The change in their spiritual personality is pronounced. They dislike their own spiritual ancestors and embrace those who despise the church of which they are members. They often feel ashamed of who they are and try to disguise their places of worship, by calling them "Community Churches" or some other non-Biblical name.

This viral infection has reached epidemic proportions among our people. It can only be brought under control by isolating those infected and not allowing the carriers into the pulpits and classrooms of congregations. Students should shun schools where this disease is breeding, lest they too be infected. Any coming from a church or school that is infected should be carefully examined before being accepted into the fellowship of a congregation. Behold what terrible damage that one small mosquito did to my friend Bill. Be warned what one promoter of change can do to your congregation. JHW

## IDEAS ABOUT EVANGELISM IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

It is not enough for us to oppose the errors of the change agents. We must be actively engaged in building up the kingdom of Christ. Too many of our churches are stagnant in growth. More than a few seem to have quite trying. From my perspective our lack of evangelism flows from several sources:

\* Preachers and elders do not seem to understand the evangelistic imperative of the gospel. We do not exist just as a worshipping or fellowshiping body of people. A major reason for the church's existence on earth is to "go preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

\* Since evangelism is hard work and since there are many negative responses to each positive reception, many brethren have chosen to erect a building, offer teaching and other activities and leave it up to the lost to come and get the blessing if they wish to.

\* If the preacher and elders of a church make little or no evangelistic effort outside of the assemblies of the church, there is little incentive for other members to do so.

\* We must be reminded that failure to evangelize is disobedience to Christ and thus sin. It reflects a lack of genuine love for Christ (John 14:15).

\* Another reason for our retreat from active evangelism is that we are wedded to approaches that are not effective in our generation. In days past gospel meetings were the primary method for reaching the lost. Today few people in America attend gospel meetings in a church with which they have no affiliation. Yet some churches still dutifully have their meetings to which few if any non-Christians come. Most people in our generation will be won, one at a time by personal instruction. That demands personal involvement. It demands time that most prefer to use for other purposes.

\* Rather than reject all of the methods of the past we need to sample all of them and find which will work in our community. Perhaps by modifying them or combining them we can come up with an effective model.

\* Another cause of our decline is our failure to teach and convince the average Christian that he is a member of Christ's royal priesthood, (I Pet. 2:5-9), thus he has an important role to fill in the life and work of the church. Too many of our people have gradually slipped into the false notion that activities such as evangelism are the work of professional church employees. They don't realize it but they are thinking of preachers just as denominational folks think of their pastors.

\* The fear of rejection by those whom they approach, keeps multitudes, including many church leaders, from actively approaching their neighbors about Christ. Proper biblical teaching would make it clear that rejection by the multitudes is to be expected by those who go forth with the Lord's invitation.

\* Still another cause is a loss of faith and conviction in the power of the Gospel to win sinners to the Savior. The Bible makes that claim (Rom. 1:16). God can still open the hearts of sinners (Acts 16:14) as in days past, but we don't seem to believe that he can do so. We see ourselves as incapable of persuading our neighbor so we give up and quit trying.

\* Another powerful factor is the prevailing philosophy of postmodernism that has settle like a cloud of deadly pollution over the minds of many Americans, including Christians. The postmodern view is that all religions are of equal value, thus there is no advantage in one over the other. It strongly asserts that no one has the right to judge another person to be wrong in his faith, worship and practice. That leaves many Christians unable and unwilling to even attempt to show their neighbors that their religion is not acceptable to God and that Christ's way is the only acceptable way to approach God. Postmodernism preaches that truth is not absolute and that each person, each culture, each religion, discovers its own truth, all of which are of equal value and acceptable to God. Such a world view is absolutely contrary to the gospel of Christ and it is paralyzing to the Lord's people who fall under its influence.

The solution is:

\* For Christian leaders to show the way, leading by their good example;

\* By teaching our brethren the importance of sharing their faith;

\* By providing instruction on how to talk to others about Christ;

\* By seeking and trying new and better methods of outreach;

\* By providing the tools for evangelism: tracts, home Bible Study materials (Videos, tracts, correspondence courses, etc.).

\* By increasing the amount of seed we sow outside of our meeting places. We must utilize the marvelous tools God has provided to sow the gospel seed. Radio, television, the Internet, Newspapers, the mail, all of these venues allow us to get the seed into the hands and hearts of people. Then when Christians speak to them about Christ, or invite them to our services, the seed already planted will make them receptive to their invitation.

May God help us all to be zealous workers for the Master who gave his life for us. Strong, growing churches can best resist the challenge of the change movement. JHW

## AVOIDING THE DITCHES

The highway of holiness has dangerous ditches on both right and left hand sides. Whether we wreck on one side or the other is of little consequence. The results are fatal in either case. Moses warned Israel, "Ye shall walk in all the way which Jehovah your God hath commanded you, Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. 5:32). From the earliest ages, God's people have been plagued with the extremes of liberalism and legalism. The great challenge of every Christian and congregation is to maintain a balanced position between these two perversions of God's way.

**What is Legalism?** Legalism is an unwholesome attitude toward religion. It is a blind zeal for law with no thought for the spirit or intent of it. Paul was a minister of the "new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6). Legalists have a greater concern for rules than for people. When Jesus healed the poor invalid at Bethesda, the legalistic Jews showed no sympathy for the man. Rather, they persecuted Jesus because he broke their uninspired rules about Sabbath keeping in so doing (John 5:1-18). He reminded them that, "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath..." (Mark 2:27). Legalists worship the law more than the Law-giver. Traditions are gradually elevated to equality with God's law in the legalistic mind. A legalist is obsessed with details and numerous insignificant matters, while casually overlooking serious matters of major importance. Pharisees who were legalists, were scrupulous to tithe even their garden herbs; mint, anise, and cummin. Yet they had little interest in weightier matters of the law such as justice, mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23). They majored in minors while minoring in major things. With the legalist, there is always the disposition to make additional rules to reinforce what they perceive to be God's law. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were classic legalists. They bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders; but they themselves would "not move them with their finders" (Mat. 23:4). James tells us that "One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and destroy" (4:12). When man sets himself up to criticize and judge his brother, he has ceased to be a doer of the law and is condemned.

**What is Liberalism?** It too is an mistaken attitude toward Christianity. The liberal has a low view of Scripture. More extreme liberals deny the miraculous element of the Bible. They question the full, complete inspiration of God's Word. Especially do they reject the Bible as the final authority in religious matters. In liberalism there is always a willingness to place human wisdom above the revealed wisdom of God. Liberals feel that they can select the portions of the Bible which they choose to accept and follow. We are describing a frame of mind that does not feel obligated to do all that God says to do. We definitely have an element of liberalism in the Lord's church today. It is a movement away from doctrinal preaching. It substitutes subjectivism for objective Biblical authority. It shows a willingness to fellowship denominations. It compromises truth with error. It is unhappy with simple New Testament worship. This spirit has always found fertile ground in Christian Universities.. The Sadducees of Christ's day were liberals.

The departure of our "non-institutional" brethren in the 50s did not end our problem with legalism. From then till now we have had a small but noisy band of "ultraconservative" brethren who have carried on a belligerent agitation against all who would not heel to their demands. Lacking a significant organ of communication and champions who commanded wide respect, they have not succeeded in forging their own independent fellowship, though for years many have tried to do so. Like a thorn in the foot, this legalistic element have imposed a decided limp on our brotherhood.

Today while we endure the legalism on the right, we are faced with a much greater threat from a wave of liberalism on the left. This assault is originating primarily from those associated with our Christian Universities and their proteges. Most of them are men with high educational credentials and a following among the young adults of our churches and schools. There are having marked success in many of our large city churches that have younger memberships. While few of these "liberal teachers" would openly question the miraculous events of the Bible, or the inspiration of the Word, by their words and deeds they demonstrate that they do not respect the authority of the Bible in regulating the faith and practice of the church. They are working to broaden our fellowship to include that of denominational bodies. They especially chaff at having to sing without instruments, choirs and soloists. They wish to move women into roles of public leadership. They think they have found a new way of interpreting the Bible that will allow them to do all of this and still claim to be New Testament Christians. If they cannot capture and lead our brotherhood into their liberal camp their future will be with the Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ who have long trodden the same path. Either of the ditches described herein will wreck and destroy a congregation. God's way is the Biblical way that stands between these two extremes. May God grant us wisdom to clearly see his way and the courage to walk therein. Only by so doing can Churches of Christ survive the current crisis. JHW

## OUR PAST, THE KEY TO OUR PRESENT PROBLEMS

Across the nation Churches of Christ are faced with a host of preachers and teachers who have undertaken a campaign to mold and changed them according to a new pattern. These "agents of change" think they have found something new and better for the Lord's church, but in reality what they are promoting is almost identical to the changes proposed by the progressives among our churches in the 60 years from the end of the Civil War to World War I. The changes they insisted upon ravaged our brotherhood with strife and division. When the dust was settled there were two separate bodies; Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches. Those who departed from us had begun a journey which continues to this day, farther and farther from the Biblical ground their fathers occupied.

\* Those brethren were unhappy with our acappella singing. They desired choirs, soloists, pianos and organs. \* They felt that a brotherhood of independent congregations could never do the Lord's work in an adequate way. They proposed all sorts of brotherhood organizations to manage that work. They created missionary, Bible, tract, publishing, benevolent and other societies, believing they could do it better.

\* They were convinced that our preachers were not reaching their full potential as simple ministers or evangelists, and so they reshaped theirs to be pastors and reverends.

\* They felt lonely and alienated from their ministerial peers in other religious bodies, so they joined their ministerial alliances and eventually the Federal Council of Churches (Now, The National Council of Churches).

\* They were embarrassed at their fathers' resolve to be Christians only and the church which Christ built and blessed. Such an approach seemed narrow and ungenerous to others, so they began to seek acceptance as fellow denominationalists.

\* They felt shackled and restricted when obliged to abide by the authority of the New Testament in their faith and practice. They needed the Old Covenant to broaden their range of options for worship. Eventually, even that did not provide adequate latitude for their innovations.

\* They concluded that we were mistaken in not placing women in our pulpits and leadership offices. So they remedied that by doing so.

\* Eventually they concluded that the whole idea of restoring the original faith and practice of the church was an obsolete and unworkable idea and abandoned it.

Within 40 years (by 1906), the differences between the progressives and our fathers was so great that it was clear they were two different bodies of people. Today you can examine the mature fruit of their progressive ideas by visiting a Disciples of Christ church. They still talk about our common past, but in faith and practice there is little that we hold in common.

Today the seeds, if not the plant, of all of these departures from the faith are found among us. Many of the great grandchildren of those courageous men who stood in the forefront of the battle and salvaged a small remnant of faithful disciples are prepared to embrace the apostasy that was rejected by their forefathers. Like Hymenaeus and Alexander, they are making shipwreck concerning the faith (I Tim. 2:19-20). Let all who love the Lord reject their overtures. JHW



## IS BAPTISM A WORK OF MAN?

Some folks label baptism as “a work.” Since the Bible says, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works...” (Eph. 2:8-9), they conclude, if baptism is a work it eliminates the need for God’s grace. In this they are mistaken:

The Bible mentions three different kinds of works in connection with our religion:

1. **There are works of God that we must do.** Jesus said, “We must work the works of him that sent me...” (John 9:4). “This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28-29). Peter said, “he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:35). Paul wrote, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).
2. **There are works of the law of Moses** which are of no avail now that Christ has come. Paul wrote, “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:16). Thus “we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law (of Moses)” (Rom. 3:28).
3. **There are works of man’s own righteousness.** “Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Tit. 3:5). Such works of man’s righteousness are cited in I Cor. 13:3 “If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” No matter how good or how many, such things cannot save us from sin. Only the blood of Christ washes away sins (I John 1:7-9).

Remember; while works of the law of Moses and works of our own righteousness are of no value for salvation, the works that God ordained and appointed for us are. Scripture says clearly, “Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith” (Jas. 2:24). Baptism was ordained by God as the appointed time and place where he would save us from our sins. We do not believe in water salvation. We believe we are saved by the blood of Jesus when in faith we obey his command to be baptized (Acts 10:48). JHW

## **BEFORE YOU INVEST IN A NEW THING, CHECK IT OUT**

Folk-wisdom is a wonderful thing. Without the advantages of higher education, our forefathers learned valuable lessons of life and encoded them in wise sayings. "Don't buy a pig in a poke," i.e. don't make a purchase without first inspecting the item. There is a certain risk in ordering merchandise from a catalog. The actual product is often not the quality that the picture implies.

Those progressive-minded elders, preachers and members, who are taken with the proposals for change being promoted by some of our university scholars, really need to check out the actual product before they buy the package. What sounds exciting in a religious journal or a book may appear quite different in a real life setting. They owe it to themselves and the church to visit a Disciples of Christ Church. There was a time (125 yrs. ago) when these folks were one with us in faith and practice. They chose the road now being promoted in a flurry of books being produced and circulated by faculty members of Abilene Christian University and endorsed by the president of that institution. To see the end results of the "drive to introduce change" in our brotherhood, "go and see." Then you can make an informed decision whether or not to proceed.

\* In a Disciples Church you can see the "new hermeneutic" at work. Their seminaries have been instilling in their students this approach to the Bible for a full century. One's approach to the Bible plays out in the faith and practice of the congregation.

\* You can see the kind of music the agents of change will bring into your worship assemblies. When the question of instrumental music in worship is no longer a "faith or salvation issue," you get not only the pipe-organ, the piano and the chorus, but the rock band as well.

\* There you can see first hand what the talk about "freeing our women to serve God" is really all about. They have women preachers and elders.

\* You can see how replacing the search for Bible authority on questions of faith, practice and morals with the "story telling" approach can lead to gay membership and ordination.

\* You can see for yourself the real meaning of, "we are Christians only, but not the only Christians." There you will find participation in the Billy Graham type of crusades, membership in the ministerial alliance, acceptance of the unimmersed as fellow-Christians and membership in the World Council of Churches.

\* You can see how "we can do anything the Bible does not condemn" plays out in the practice of a church. First they rejected the idea of "the law of silence" that says we can only do what the Scripture authorizes us to do. They then abandoned "book chapter and verse" Bible preaching. They now have no trouble embracing things clearly forbidden and condemned by Scripture.

\* You will see the fruit of theological liberalism in the life and teaching of a church. Many of their theologians and preachers blush not to lay their sinful hands on the sacred text of the Bible and question if it is even legitimate.

\* You can see a full blown denomination. With its national governing body, headquarters, presiding officers. They now proudly acknowledge that they are truly a denomination.

\* You can see the kind of preachers it genders; reverend pastors whose preaching has been reduced to the level of cold water

\* You can see a dying church. For half a century the Disciples have been declining in membership. Standards have been lowered to the bottom notch, entertainment has replaced worship. Every new social fad of liberalism has been embraced, still they are dying.

Please, Christian leader, before you buy the "change" package being promoted among us, make the visit; check it out. Is this where you really want to go? Once you invite the change-makers in, the likelihood of restoring the Biblical faith and practice of the past is almost nil. JHW

## LET'S DISARM THE ENEMY

Change agents have landed many successful blows by accusing those who oppose them of certain failures in their teaching, worship and practice of Christianity. The effective use of this approach has been the reason large numbers of brethren allow these false teachers to stay and function in their midst, even though they really do not agree with their philosophy and call for change. The change agents present themselves as pleasant, kind, caring and tolerant and since they emphasize practicing the principles of Christ in daily life, these brethren tolerate them.

To disarm and neutralize these accusing invaders we must live our lives and do our work in such a way as to put the lie to their accusations. I challenge every preacher among us to consider the following suggestions which will effectively disarm them.

\* When we preach, let the truth be presented in love (Eph. 4:15). Away with harsh, hateful proclamations that insult and offend even good people. Away with sarcasm and ridicule in the pulpit. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6).

\* When we have to correct a brother, let us do so with love and compassion, in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Treat the erring brother or sister as you would wish to be treated were you in their place (Matt. 7:12).

\* Let us never be quarrelsome and factious in our attitude and conduct. Agents of change really make an issue of the quarrels and divisions that disgrace our congregations and many of our preachers. God has no use for the factious man, nor should we (Tit. 3:10-11). Be peace makers (Matt. 5:9). Give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). If division must come, let it clearly be at the hands of the agents of change!

\* Let us live out our sermons in everyday life with deeds of service, care and compassion for those about us (Gal. 6:10). Greatness is in service not in position or recognition (Matt. 20:26-28).

\* Let's us work to make our worship services truly meaningful so that no one can complain that they are dry, boring and lifeless. We all know the difference between singing and preaching that is uninspiring and that which is. Where worship and lessons are uplifting and inspirational, change agents are powerless.

\* Let us be less critical and judgmental of our brethren and seek the good they do and dwell upon it. If we are honest, each of us falls short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). All of us are limited in some areas of our knowledge. All of us desperately need mercy if we hope to be saved (Tit. 3:5). All of us have been wrong in some areas of our thinking and had to make adjustments as we learned better. Hence we need to be patient with each other and slow to attack, condemn or reject a brother with whom we differ. We should receive each other as Christ received us when we first came to him (Rom. 15:7). Such an attitude is "to the glory of God."

\* Let us be true students of the sacred book. Change agents shame and ridicule us as mere pikers who know only the outer wrappings of the word of God. Spend the necessary hours in your books, searching the Scriptures and verifying your information so that when you preach and teach, you can do so with authority (Matt. 7:28-29). Thus prepared, no man can gainsay your message (Tit. 1:9)!

\* Be interested in young people. Where they are neglected they will either leave the church or gravitate to those who show interest in them. Change agents allure them into their silken web and their apostasy.

\* Be flexible in all areas where God has not legislated. Many things in our life and society change for the better. We have modern buildings, creature comforts such as air-conditioning, cushioned seats, carpeted floors. Such things will continue to improve and we should be not resistant to them. Be firm in the essentials of the faith but flexible in all other areas. Such things as length of services, new hymnals and song books are matters we must not quarrel about.

\* Be evangelistic. Don't allow yourself to be consumed with fighting error. Be a soul-winner. Support missionaries. Build up the cause rather than use all of your time and energy shooting at those who have gone astray.

Follow these suggestions and you will create an environment where change agents cannot succeed. Their calls will fall on deaf ears because you have disarmed them by your wise conduct. JHW

## DELUDED DISCIPLES WHO LOATHE THE LORD'S CHURCH

Since the Youth Rebellion of the 1960s we have witnessed the bizarre phenomena of Americans who are so disenchanted that they loathe their nation, their race, their culture, their parents, ancestors and their religious heritage. They even hate themselves and seem ashamed of the life they enjoy.

This self-loathing is nurtured by many academics, media types and politicians of the left. The amazing aspect of this self-loathing is that America offers more equality, freedom, opportunity and advantage to its citizens than any other nation on earth. We have rescued more people from aggression, protected more weak nations, fed and financially supported more people than any nation in history. In the climate of freedom which America offers, tremendous advances have been made in medicine, science and technology; progress that we have shared with all the world. Here freedom of religion, thought and speech have flourished as nowhere else and yet these poor deluded souls, spend their days loathing America. "President Reagan set about to change their self-loathing. He openly proclaimed that America was great and that the traditional values of faith, family, community, enterprise—remained the building blocks of a decent and good civic society."

It is doubly strange that a similar self-loathing has arisen among some members of the church of Christ. Howard Norton in the Preface to "**Directions for the Road Ahead: Stability in Change Among Churches of Christ**, offers interesting insight into this strange behavior. He cites Dr. Gordon W. Allport of Harvard (*The Nature of Prejudice*), who notes that people have an "**in-group**," i.e., those folks whom they can comfortably refer to as "we." They also have a "**reference group**" i.e., a group by which they measure themselves and with which they prefer to be recognized. When a person identifies with a "reference group" different than his "in-group" he finds himself in conflict. He may "repudiate his own "in-group" and develop a hatred for them.

This analysis well describes those among us who are so unhappy with the church of their fathers and who are determined to restyle her in a new mold. A number of our intellectual preachers and professors look to the Evangelical churches and scholars as their reference group. They long for the acceptance and approval of those men and institutions where they have gained their advanced education. They wish to be respected on the same level as men like Billy Graham, Robert Schuller and other notable and successful Evangelicals. The problem is, the leaders of the Evangelical world, as a rule, hold Churches of Christ in contempt because of our unyielding commitment to the commands of Christ and our refusal to compromise our faith for their approval. Thus, "unable to receive approval from the Evangelicals because of the 'in-group' to which they belong, (i.e. fellow-members of Churches of Christ), a kind of self-loathing develops, and churches of Christ, (their fellow-disciples jhw) become to them the enemy; the cause of their discomfort."

This helps us understand the bitter, hateful criticism the change agents are hurling against the Lord's Church. They despise us, yet for some reason they are not yet willing to leave us. They find a hundred grounds for complaint and virtually none for commendation. Like Israel of old, they long to be like the world around them (I Sam. 8:5). Jesus said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh..." (Mk. 8:38).

Precisely because we love the church of Christ and seek approval only from Christ, we will reject the criticism of these self-loathers and the changes they want to force on us. With saints of old, with true conviction we will sing, "I love thy kingdom Lord...the church our blest Redeemer saved with his own precious blood." JHW

## CAN YOU SEE THE WOLF?

Granted some preachers among us have been “**shouting wolf**” for the last 35 years. Time and again brethren looked but could not find the wolf. After a while, many became inured to the warnings of the wolf-warners. They finally decided those who were constantly sounding the alarm did not merit their attention. Such a response was just what Satan hoped for. Now, with their eyes closed and ears plugged, he could do his work of infiltrating churches with no serious opposition. Muffled and blindfolded, preachers and elders neither saw nor heard as the Adversary’s minions did their work. First they captured the administration and Bible departments of some of our schools. The Father of Lies emboldened a few of our successful young preachers to launch a program of change. Intoxicated with the taste of their “new wine,” they worked evangelistically to recruit others to join their campaign.

When more responsible watchmen saw these **real wolves** savaging churches in many places and sounded a warning, the majority of our preachers and elders still had their blindfolds and earplugs in place. They could not hear. Many did not wish to hear or see. Such knowledge is disconcerting. Warnings were brushed aside as scare-mongering, complaints from preachers jealous of others’ success, nitpicking or other ignoble motives.

Last month (Aug. 03) a leading change agent issued a bold announcement that rang a bell even the deaf could hear and caused a flash of light that pierced the thickest blinders. Max Lucado, the most daring of the change agents and the darling of our liberal brothers, preached a sermon announcing a new agenda for his Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio.

\* Their name would be changed to “Oak Hills Church.” His logic was, “Some people find the name ‘church of Christ’ to be an insurmountable barrier...Let’s seek to remove any barrier that would hinder a person from hearing the Gospel.” Immersion is also a barrier to many. Jesus as Lord is a barrier to Jews and Muslims!

\* He proposed, “establishing Oak Hills Campuses in other sections of the city. These satellite churches will at least initially, be a part of the Oak Hills family... Our multi-site churches could stay linked together by viewing a video of the sermon from the ‘mother church.’” In the world of Catholicism, this is called a diocesan form of church government.

\* Instrumental music would be used in their Sunday evening services for young adults. Max said, “I will present the...message and we will target twenty and thirty year olds. Recognizing the power of contemporary music, the new assemblies will be instrumental...A soft keyboard beneath an altar call, the sound of a cello during communion service...I am convinced instrumentation reaches hearts...We feel it is wise to use this tool.” Note his absence of Scriptural authorization for this change. For change agents “feelings” trump Scripture when it gets in the way.

\* In an interview in the **San Antonio Express-News** (9/6/03), Vic King, Oak Hills’ minister of missions, said “Oak Hills’ core values are similar to those of other **evangelical churches**.” He continued, “Oak Hills also believes that salvation doesn’t come through baptism, but that baptism is the initial step of obedience after salvation.”

\* Their core values were said to be like the “Evangelical” churches. In “lay” terms, this refers to Baptists, Reformed Churches, Assemblies of God and other “conservative” denominational bodies.

\* Bro. Lucado also said, “Our Lord called us to be a force for unity among San Antonio Churches. We, for the first time, ‘swapped pulpits’ with Trinity Baptist Church.”

Now I ask those who preach and those shepherd our churches: Can you see the wolf? Yes, Bro. Lucado is gifted and an effective, successful writer. Yes, he has had far greater acceptance among those outside our brotherhood than any other writer. Yes, he did attend Abilene Christian University. Yes he once was a missionary and a preacher of truth and righteousness. Please, take off the blindfold, remove the earplugs and see the sad and ugly truth. This brother and the church he serves have abandoned New Testament Christianity for the appealing fields of “Evangelical” Protestantism. Like Hymenaeus and Alexander, they have made shipwreck of the faith (I Tim. 1:19-20). Given his high visibility, his popularity and success Bro. Lucado will influence many young men to emulate his example.

As unfortunate as this case is, Bro. Lucado and Oak Hills congregation are but one example of scores of others who have done likewise. A tidal wave of error is sweeping across the face of our brotherhood. It will eventually reach your congregation. The time to prepare for this invasion and protect your flock is **now**! Ours are not premature or unfounded warnings. The wolves are already within the fold. Many casualties have already been suffered. For the sake of the Lord Jesus and his holy church, rise up and be the faithful watchmen and shepherds God expects you to be! JHW

## RENEWING CHRIST'S CHURCH

Christ established his church (Matt. 16:18). He loves his church as a man loves his bride (Eph. 5:23-32). He wants to present her holy and without blemish unto God (Eph. 5:27).

The history of the church reveals a never-ending warfare waged by Satan to harm the Lord's church (Rev. 12:13-17). One time it may be persecution. At another it may be by convincing society to ignore her to treat her with contempt. In yet another day he will seek to destroy the church by sowing discord and confusion among her members. In another day he entices the church to become satisfied with her attainments, to absorb the spirit of the sinful world in which she dwells. She can become dead and lifeless, without zeal and love for Christ, her fellow Christians and the lost. The church has always survived and triumphed over persecution, the scoffing of unbelievers, but she suffers most from the last four categories of assaults. Today we endure no serious persecution for Christ's sake, but we definitely are afflicted by the last of the latter.

\* To survive, the Lord's people desperately need to be renewed in faith and spirit; back to the love and devotion all knew in the early days of their life in Christ (Rev. 2:4-5). David expressed this need when he wrote, "Wilt thou not revive us again" (Ps. 85:6).

\* We need renewed commitment to love and stand united with all of God's faithful children (I Pet. 2:17; I Cor. 1:10).

\* We need renewed commitment to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), without let or stint. In too many places worship has devolved into dull meaningless ritual. Love for Christ grown cold always eventuates in cold, lifeless worship.

\* We must renew our zeal for the Cause of Christ (Rev. 3:19). Too many modern disciples are trying to serve in lukewarmness. Christ says he will spew them out as some disgusting food or drink (Rev. 3:16). He desires disciples who are zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14).

\* We must renew our commitment to evangelism and growth. Preaching the gospel to the lost (Mk. 16:15,) bringing souls to salvation and expanding the kingdom of Christ are essential elements of faithful discipleship. Yet in recent years evangelism and growth are at virtual standstill in many congregations. We have allowed ourselves to be distracted from our great commission and the church is now languishing because of it.

\* We must renew our spirit of generosity. Money is the fuel that drives the engine of activity and progress in the kingdom. Without money evangelism and benevolence are of necessity limited. Without adequate funds every aspect of the church's activity and outreach will be hindered.

\* There must be renewal of our commitment to sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1). Too long folks have been tolerant towards those whose teaching has a certain smell of falsity to it. Some have flirted with error and others have openly embraced it. The command to refuse and reject teachers of error has been ignored and neglected (II John 10-11). Those who sow discord with their faulty teaching must be marked and turned away from (Rom. 16:18) if we are to be the pure church Christ wants us to be.

\* We must renew ourselves to holy living. The definition of Christian is one who is like Christ. Too long many have lived like sinners of the world rather than sober righteousness and godly lives Christ has called us to (Tit. 2:11-14).

A church whose love has grown cold cannot be pleasing to God. Lavish cathedrals are mere grave monuments to dead faith. Let us pray that God will renew our hearts and those of our fellow-Christians. May our zeal burn like holy fire on the altar of our God (Rom. 12:11). JHW

## SACRED MUSIC 101

Just as today's school kids know little or nothing about history, Western Civilization and America's illustrious past, so many in the church (including preachers) seem to know little about the history of the religion of Christ and of our attempts to restore the faith and worship He instituted. From the great **Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature** by McClintock and Strong ( Vol. 6, pp. 757-759), we offer the following basic introduction to the worship of the early Christians.

It was the practice of the early Christians to praise God with congregational singing. **Pliny** in his letter to Trajan (103-104 A.D.) observed that Christians would "meet before day to offer praise to Christ). **Tertullian** (160-220 A.D.) and **Eusebius** (260-340 A.D.) described the praise worship of the church in their day thusly, "Arising at the dawn of the morning, they sang hymns to Christ as God" (**Eccle. Hist.** 3:32). Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote, "We manifest our gratitude to him by worshiping him in spiritual songs and hymns, praising him for our birth, for our health, for the vicissitudes of the seasons, and for the hope of immortality" (**Apology**, 5:28). "Their psalmody was the joint act of the whole assembly in unison," according to **Hilary** (A.D. 355). **Chrysostom** (347-407 A.D.) wrote, "It was the ancient custom, as it is still with us, for all to come together, and unitedly to join in singing....all join in one song..." (**Hom.** 9: Vol. 12., p. 349). McClintock and Strong then conclude, "Such was the character of the psalmody of the early church..."

Under a section appropriately headed "**Innovations**" the authors note, "The appointment of singers as a distinct class of officers in the Church for this part of religious worship, and the consequent introduction of profane music into the church, marks another alteration in the psalmody of the church. These innovations were first made in the 4<sup>th</sup> century; and though the people continued for a century or more to enjoy their ancient privilege of all singing together, it is conceivable that it gradually was forced to die, as a promiscuous assembly could not well unite in theatrical music which required in its performers a degree of skill altogether superior to that which all the members of a congregation could be expected to possess. An artificial theatrical style of music, having no affinity with the worship of God, soon began to take the place of those solemn airs which before had inspired the devotions of his people. The music of the theater was transferred to the church, which accordingly became the scene of theatrical pomp and display rather than the house of prayer and of praise, to inspire by its appropriate and solemn rites the spiritual worship of God."

The Church Historian **J. A. Neander** wrote, "We have to regret that both in the Eastern and the Western Church their sacred music had already assumed an artificial and theatrical character, and was so far removed from its original simplicity that even in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the abbot **Pambo of Egypt** complained that heathen melodies (Accompanied as it seems with the action of the hands and the feet) had been introduced into their Church psalmody"

**Jerome** (342-420 A.D.), in remarking upon Eph. 5:19, says: "May all hear it whose business it is to sing in the church. Not with the voice, but with the heart, we sing praises to God. Not like the comedians should they raise their sweet and liquid notes to entertain the assembly with theatrical songs and melodies in the church, but the fire of godly piety and the knowledge of the Scriptures should inspire our songs..."

**The Roman Catholic Council of Trent** (1545-1563) "arranged the choral service on a proper footing, freeing it from all extraneous matters, gave choral music also a sanction which it had hitherto wanted. From that time the Church of Rome began to display that profound veneration for choral music which it has continued to manifest down to the present day" The same spirit that worked to introduce the choirs and solos in ancient times is still at work and is seen in our agents of change.

In section III, under **Use of Instruments in the Church**, McClintock & Strong continue, "The Greeks as well as the Jews were wont to use instruments as accompaniments in their sacred songs. The converts to Christianity accordingly must have been familiar with this mode of singing; yet it is generally believed that the primitive Christians failed to adopt the use of instrumental music in their religious worship." "...the general introduction of instrumental music can certainly not be assigned to a date earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> centuries; yea, even Gregory the Great, who towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century added greatly to the existing Church music, absolutely prohibited the use of instruments. Several centuries later the introduction of the organ in sacred services gave a place to instruments as accompaniments for Christian songs, and from that time to this they have been freely used with few exceptions. The first organ is believed to have been used in

Church service in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Although our position is presently a minority view such was not always the case. Notable scholars from various religious bodies understood the Bible's teaching just as we do.

\* **Charles Spurgeon**, the greatest Baptist preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England, refused to allow instruments of music in his Metropolitan Tabernacle.

\* **Adam Clark**, the brilliant Methodist Bible commentator wrote, "the whole spirit, soul and genius of the Christian religion are against this (instrumental music); and those who know the Church of God best, and what constitutes its genuine spiritual state, know that these things have been introduced as a substitute for the life and power of religion; and that where they prevail most, there is least of the power of Christianity. Away with such portentous bauble from the worship of the infinite Spirit who require his followers to worship in spirit and in truth" (Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 684). He continued, "I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I never knew them (instruments) productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe they were productive of much evil...instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor."

\* **John Wesley**, founder of Methodism is quoted by Clarke as saying, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN."

John Calvin, founder of Presbyterianism wrote "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists (Catholics) therefore, have foolishly borrowed these, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise, but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing." (Commentary on Psalm 33).

\* **Thomas Aquinas** Roman Catholic theologian wrote, "instrumental music as well as singing is mentioned in the Old Testament, but the church has accepted only singing on account of its ethical value"...Therefore their use is unwise, and consequently the Church refrains from music instruments" (**Summa Theologica**, Question 91, Article II).

**Alexander Campbell** great preacher and scholar of our Restoration Movement wrote, "That all persons who have no spiritual meditations, consolation and sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aids is but natural. Pure water from the flinty rock has no attraction for the mere toper or wine bibber. A little alcohol, or genuine Cognac bandy, or good old Madeira is essential to the beverage to make it ruly refreshing. So to those who have no real devotion or spirituality in them and whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I think that instrumental music would no only be a desideratum, but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But I presume to all spiritual-minded Christians, such aid would be as a cowbell in a concert." (**Millennial Harbinger**, Series 4, Vol. 1. p. 581). (These quotes as cited by James Tolle in his excellent tract, **Instrumental Music in Worship**.)

Keep this information safely stored and when the sirens of change seek to convince you that our congregational **acappella** singing is only our tradition, share it with them for they obviously know not the Scripture or the past history of the church. JHW



## IF WE DO NOTHING

Powerful winds of change are blowing across the landscape of the Lord's church. Criticism and speculations that would not have been tolerated a generation ago now go unchallenged. Schools that once were bastions of faithful teaching now ring with uncertain sounds. Champions of the faith, that formerly stood in the breaches to turn away proponents of error, have now finished their course and await the Lord's return. Today such giants of the are hard to find. Looking around we see in their place too many preachers who either do not know the fundamentals of the faith, or how to defend it. Worse still, there are some who do not hold those sacred truths. In the last twenty years those who no longer believe in the restoration of New Testament Christianity have grown bolder and now openly speak and write things which they would only have whispered in private in days past. To those timid souls who cannot find it in themselves to address the issues before us I raise the question, "What will happen to the Church of Christ if nothing is said or done to preserve her from those who are daily working to change her into something new and different?"

Some no longer feel obliged to look to the New Testament as the sole authority for their faith and practice.  
Some are experimenting with new concepts of leadership for congregations.  
Some are creating their own organizations to do the work God commissioned his church to do.  
Some are willing to open the leadership of the church to women.  
Some are ready to embrace the use of instrumental music in worship and denominational ideas regarding the Lord's Supper.  
Some are ready to embrace other religious bodies in Christian fellowship, even though they do not wear the name of Christ nor respect his holy Word.  
Some are anxious to convince us that the church is nothing more than a denomination like those around us.  
Some feel superior to those saints who went before us and hesitate not to belittle them and the work they did.  
Some thirst for an emotion-based worship like they see in the electronic churches of the tel-evangelists.  
Some have embraced a humanistic code of human conduct and come to terms with the sinful world.

We are truly engaged in a great struggle for the heart and soul of the church and her members. The problem is, only one side is doing much fighting. Those whose job it is to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3) and to fight the good fight of the faith (I Tim. 6:12) are often found sleeping, playing, running or encouraging those who are enemies of Christ's Cause. If we do nothing, those who would reconstitute the church will win by default. They will train our preachers, they will write and publish their corrupting message. They will influence our children in the colleges we have built and sustained. Their disciples will fill our pulpits and the day will come when the church of Christ that we have known and loved will cease to exist. Do not deceive yourself by saying such could never happen. All one need do is to look at our religious neighbors. Bodies that once were pillars of conservatism are now sink holes of liberalism that bear little or no semblance to their past.

Fellow preachers and elders "quit ye like men" (I Cor. 16:13). Get to work today fortifying the souls of those in your charge. Teach them the fundamentals. Take nothing for granted. Provide good sound tracts that explain what we believe and why. Recommend dependable Christian journals. Use your church bulletins to set forth simple lessons on every truth we hold. Let your pulpits ring with solid, timely lessons that do more than build self-esteem. Teach your brethren why we are what we are. Explain the problems facing us and show their fallacies. If you are so fortunate that these problems have not yet come your way, prepare you brethren so they will be alert and set to resist them when they do appear. Pray mightily unto God to help us successfully defend the walls of Zion so that we can pass the true faith of Christ to the generation that shall follow us. JHW

# BROTHERHOOD

All Christians are children God by faith in Christ Jesus, having been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Being children of a common Father, we frequently refer to fellow Christians as brothers and sisters (II Pet. 3:15). Our relationship in the church is set forth under the analogy of a family. While tied together by blood, members of a common family may live in separate places. Although sharing common parents, brothers and sisters can be strikingly different in appearance, height, and size. Their taste in style and dress, customs and manners can vary greatly. The costliness and style of their housing and furnishing can be noticeably diverse. The same differences are seen in the church. Christians brothers and sisters are scattered around the earth. They are of different racial and national origins and speak different languages, yet all are "one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

All Christians are members of the one church which Christ built (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47), but as family we have different levels of maturity, occupations and skills. Our differences are seen in numerous areas. We range from primitive to highly cultured, from uneducated to highly educated, from poor to wealthy, weak to powerful, employees to employers, and from young to old. One of the ongoing problems that nags the church is our inability to understand and tolerate such differences as these, to appreciate our spiritual kindred, and to hold them in high esteem and to treat them as beloved brethren.

As members of the brotherhood of the saints of God there are certain expectations incumbent upon us.

**I. Brotherly Love.** "Let brother love continue" (Heb. 13:1). Agape love is our new commandment (John 13:34). Without brotherly love we cannot love God (I John 4:20). Such love worketh no ill to his fellow Christian (Rom. 13:10). "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth..." (I Cor. 13:4-7).

**II. Brotherly Concern for Each Other.** It is the common expectation that brothers and sisters will manifest genuine concern for each other. There should be concern for those who suffer—whether it be mental or physical. This will be readily seen in solicitous care and attention, visiting those sick and afflicted and bearing their burdens (Gal. 6:2). It will be demonstrated in sharing with brethren who are in need. Some may be in perpetual poverty, others in financial distress because of sickness or disaster. We who are blest will give to those in need (Eph. 4:28) and gladly do so. Our love will reach out to encourage the faint-hearted and discouraged (I Thess. 5:14). We will by all means rally to the side of the brother or sister persecuted for righteousness sake (Phil. 2:21-30).

**III. Brother Consideration.** Children of the same parents must exhibit consideration for each other if the family is to be happy and remain intact. There must be allowance for individual thought and opinion in a family. Brothers should feel free to ask their questions (John 14:5-9). Treatment of other members must be fair and equal (Matt. 7:12). Members must be honest in their dealing with each other (Eph. 4:25). Advantage must not be taken of ones siblings. In a happy and peaceful family there is patient allowance for the weaknesses and shortcomings typical of humanity (Eph. 4:2). All of these consideration are of vital importance to the well-being of God's spiritual family.

**IV. Brotherly Cooperation, Fellowship and Support.** Among the most visible and admired aspects of family life is the cooperation, support and fellowship of loving, loyal brothers and sisters. In olden days when most families farmed for their living this was especially evident. When one member was bothered by an adversary, he had the support of his brothers. If there was a large or difficult task to be done, all would lend a hand. Even when the children were grown, with families of their own, they eagerly looked forward to those family reunions where all the brothers and sisters could be together. Oh how this spirit is needed in today's church. We are brothers; not competitors, not antagonists, not enemies to be destroyed. We must never knowingly hinder another brother's work for Christ (Phil. 1:15-18). Paul pleads with us to be tenderly affectioned, one for another (Rom. 12:10). With such care and concern we can evangelize the world for Christ, drive Satan from his conquered lands and build up the kingdom of Christ as never before. Without it we are doomed to failure.

**V. Brotherly Correction.** A loyal brother will tell you when you are wrong. He cannot stand silent while you do wrong or bring harm to yourself. Jesus tells us, "If thy brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him" (Lk. 17:3). It was

brotherly concern that prompted Paul to withstand Peter when he gave way to social pressure and shunned the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:11-14). At times this will entail the painful duty of public censure and disfellowship (I Tim. 5:20). Yet even then, we must "count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (II Thess. 3:15).

In a day when the church is as a city under siege, as a pilgrim band in a hostile wilderness, we desperately need to understand and meet our duties to our brothers and sisters in Christ. A scoffing, unbelieving world delights to see us fragmented and at war within. Lost sinners need to see a demonstration of the family of God into which they are invited to come. A family filled with angry bitterness will turn them away. Our young people and new converts need the loving care and strength that a strong spiritual family can provide. Without it many of them will be discouraged and lost.

Let not a single day pass without giving thanks for your spiritual family. May we all walk worthily of our holy calling lest we bring hurt and embarrassment to our family (Eph. 4:1). JHW

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## **RESTORING A THING OF VALUE**

Lovely works of art are often marred by accumulations of dirt and grime. Specialists are employed to restore them to their original beauty. They carefully remove the foreign matter than obscures their true nature. Fine furniture can become worn and damaged. Its beauty is hidden by tattered upholstery and layers of paint. To see it as it came from the hands of the artisan it needs to be restored by a skilled workman. The paint and ragged upholstery needs to be stripped away.

Christianity is two thousand years old. Its modern appearance is greatly marred and distorted by the accumulation of human doctrines and practices imposed upon it over the ages. A careful reading of the New Testament provides one with an accurate picture of Christianity as it came from the hands of Jesus. A comparison of that with modern denominational versions of Christianity reveals a stark difference. Hardly a single teaching or practice of the original faith has been untouched. Human hands have defiled and marred its beauty with their changes. But as with the work of art or the fine furniture, we can restore the church to its original simplicity and beauty. First we look to the New Testament of Christ to determine just how he intended the church to be; what she was to believe; how she was to worship. We then resolve that we will follow those guidelines faithfully. Each item of faith and practice must be examined carefully in light of Christ's word. Anything not as old as the New Testament must be discarded. Anything that has been left out or neglected must be put back in its proper place. We must be willing to endure the complaints, criticisms and ridicule of those who love their human traditions more than they do the original faith of Christ. We must be prepared to be a minority because Jesus said "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). We must resolve to hold fast to that which we find to be true lest we let it slip from us (Hebrews 2:1). The labor will be intense, the cost will be high, but when you have done the necessary work of restoring you will possess the pure and holy church of Christ which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28). You will have found the way that is right, which cannot be wrong. The restoration of New Testament Christianity is the goal and commitment of faithful Christians around the world. JHW

## CHANGES DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In a suburb of Nashville, there once was a flourishing congregation of the Lord's people. They had a lovely meeting house and prospered for a season. Because of internal conflicts and poor leadership, the congregation disintegrated and ceased to exist. The building still stands but changes have taken place. The sign identifying it as a church of Christ was taken down. The pews, pulpit and communion table were carted away. The former doors were removed and large garage doors installed. At last report an auto repair shop occupied it.

No longer do saints assemble there for worship; the gospel is not proclaimed therein. The sacred memorial meal is not observed, nor do sinners have their sins washed away in its baptistry. No children fill its classroom for Bible study. Satan won the victory! The changes have been overwhelming and permanent. It is no longer the home of a church of Christ, it houses a car repair shop.

Across the nation scores of churches of Christ are engaged in a similar process of change. Led by skilled, intelligent promoters of change they have embarked on a project that will impose significant alterations in every aspect of their being. Consider what their mentors propose:

- \* Many have already changed their name. They prefer to be known as a "Community Church" or some other cognomen than church of Christ.
- \* They have rejected the Bible as the divine pattern for the church (II Tim. 1:13), preferring consensus and the example of various successful denominational bodies.
- \* They are changing their doctrine. They have repudiated much of what their fathers taught about grace, baptism, worship, church government, the role of women, the nature of the church.
- \* They are changing their worship. The plain simple worship of the apostolic church is not pleasing to them. To be bound and limited by Scripture is too restrictive. They view our acappella singing, our simple memorial feast, our Biblical preaching to be old-fashioned, boring and ineffective. They long for excitement and the freshness of change. They wish to be like their religious neighbors who acknowledge no such limitations (I Sam. 8:5).
- \* They have changed their message of salvation. Salvation by grace (Eph. 2:8-9) has been replaced by salvation by "grace alone." Baptism to wash away sins (Acts 22:16) has been replaced by baptism to declare one's previous salvation by grace. The one church which is God's family of saved souls (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13), has been replaced with a choice of denominational churches, none of which are really important.
- \* They have replaced the Biblical teaching and practice of exclusive male leadership for the church (I Tim. 2:8-12; 3:1) with a new model, fashioned after the Feminist cult, that allows women to participate in "all aspects of church life" i.e., as preachers teachers, deacons, etc.
- \* Preaching the gospel has been replaced by story-telling, dramatic skits and other new means of sharing.

More examples could be given, but these suffice to make the point. Congregations that have embraced the above mentioned changes may once have been faithful churches of Christ. But given these major changes in every essential aspect of their nature and being, are we not correct in concluding that somewhere along the way they ceased to be what they once were? Yes, they may still be a church, but they are no longer the church one reads of in Scripture, or the church they were 25 years ago! They may talk of their spiritual roots in the Restoration Movement, but they have abandoned those roots. Just as that building housing the auto shop in Nashville is no longer the home of a church of Christ, such changed congregations are no longer the church they once were! Actually it would be a blessing, if all of those who are determined to take this course would take a new name and disassociate themselves from us, lest those seeking salvation and the church of the Bible be misled. JHW

## CHRIST AND THE CHANGE AGENTS: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Artists often render their concepts by displaying two people or objects in contrast. Recently, while musing on matters currently troubling the Lord's church, I was struck by the contrasts between our Lord and those preachers among us who are committed to promoting the change movement.

Consider the following differences between Christ and the change agents:

\* When Christ witnessed the money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals turning God's House into a den of thieves and robbers, he drove them out. Of him it was written "Zeal for thy house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). Zeal for their agenda of change causes change agents to consume and destroy congregations of God's people.

\* Christ loved the church so much he readily gave his life for her (Eph. 5:25). Change agents hold the church of Christ in contempt and are working to impose their changes on her even if it destroys her.

\* Christ believed there was such a thing as truth that could be known (John 8:32) and that God's truth was absolute and unchanging (Matt. 24:35). Many change agents, embracing Postmodernism, see truth as an uncertain commodity that is seen differently by different people in different ages and cultures. They insist that culture and custom determine much of what we believe and practice.

\* Christ believed that the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). Whereas some change agents shrink back from confessing that God's Word is inerrant. They say that there are some contradictions and conflicts in Scripture and go on to say that such is no problem for their faith.

\* Christ taught that his word will judge humanity in the last day (John 12:48). His apostles described his word as his law (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:2). Some change agents argue that the New Testament is a love letter, not a law by which we will be judged.

\* Through his chosen messengers, Christ told us his Word is a "pattern" we should carefully follow in our faith, worship and practice (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5). Change agents deny there is such a pattern.

\* Christ founded his church (Matt. 16:18). The Holy Spirit repeatedly tells us that he has but one church (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:20). But change agents believe that men can found their own churches and design their own faith and worship and Christ will accept them as equal with his church.

\* Christ wants all who believe on him to be one in his family (John 17:20). But change agents believe and practice that people can be pleasing to Christ in any number of different church families.

\* Christ believed in and taught that a fiery punishment in hell awaited the wicked (Luke 16:19-28; Matt. 25:41). Some change agents deny there will be such a fiery punishment.

\* Christ taught that salvation would come to those who first believe and are baptized (Mark. 16:16). Change agents believe one can be saved before baptism.

\* Christ expects us to obey all things whatsoever he commanded us (Matt. 28:20). Change agents believe one can add many other things to the Christian religion just as long as Christ did not specifically forbid them.

\* Christ gave us the Lord Supper, as a memorial to his suffering and death (Matt. 26:26-28). Some change agents would turn it into a joyous occasion combined with a fellowship meal.

\* Christ rebuked those whose religion consists of the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:6-9). Change agents claim that much of what they practice is only human tradition.

\* Christ respected and honored women without appointing them apostles or public teachers in his church. Through Paul he said (I Cor. 14:37) they should keep silent in his church (I Cor. 14:34) and not teach nor have authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12). But many change agents are eager to allow women to assume public leadership roles in his church.

\* Christ said that whoever receives the apostles receives him and the Father (Matt. 10:40). Some change agents suggest that the writings of the apostles are not of equal value with the word of Christ in the gospels.

Very enlightening is this study of the contrast between Christ and those preachers and professors among us who are promoting their agenda of change. I don't know about you, but for me and my house we will follow the Lord. JHW

## THE PATTERN OF CHRISTIANITY

Those promoting the agenda of change for Christ's church deny that God has given us a divine pattern which we are expected to follow. They ridicule those who believe otherwise. In derision they call them "*patternists*" and their approach to serving Christ "*patternism*." Of course this is the way members of the church of Christ have been serving Christ since the beginning of our back to the Bible movement. It is also the procedure God in his word teaches us to follow.

To reject the idea that God has given us a divine pattern to follow is to reject what is clearly taught in the following Scriptures:

\* Paul exhorted Timothy to "**Hold the pattern of sound words** which thou hast heard from me..."(II Tim. 1:13). The Greek term translated "pattern" is *tupos*, which Strong defines as "a model (for imitation)."

\* The author of Hebrews quotes God who said to Moses, "**See...that thou makest all thing according to the pattern** that was showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). His lesson to Christians was that they too must observe God's New Covenant pattern.

\* Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that in their conversion, they had obeyed "from the heart ...**that form of teaching** whereunto (they) were delivered" (Rom. 6:17). Thus there is a pattern for being saved!

\* The brethren in Thessalonica were commanded to withdraw their fellowship from every brother that walked disorderly and "not after **the traditions which they received of us**" (II Thess. 3:6).

\* Paul believed that Christ used him (Paul) as "**an ensample** of them that should thereafter believe on him..." (I Tim. 1:16). He often exhorted disciples to "imitate" his example (II Thess. 3:7; I Cor. 11:1).

\* Peter tells us that Christ left us "**an example** that (we) should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). Such examples are intended to be followed!

Students of the Old Testament know that when God ordered Moses to build him a tabernacle, i.e., a portable house of worship, he said, "According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Ex. 25:9). If God gave Israel a pattern and expected them to follow it, is it unreasonable that he would do the same for us who serve him under Christ? The reason we need a pattern is that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

All of these verses teach us that God has given us a pattern or example of what he expects of us and that it is our duty to conform to that pattern. That divine pattern is the message of Christ expressed in written words; in a permanent record for all men of all nations in all ages (Matt. 24:35). We know it as our New Testament.

Furthermore we are strictly warned neither to add to nor take away from that which he has given us (Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6). His words will be the standard by which we will be judged in eternity (John 12:48).

We can't help but wonder why anyone professing Christ would deny that which is so clearly taught in his Word. The agenda proposed by the agents of change cannot be implemented where the Divine pattern is respected and complied with. Hence to accomplish their goals, they must deny the concept of a heavenly pattern and persuade brethren to accept things which have no basis in Scripture and might even be contrary to portions of it. If no Divine pattern exists no one could object to their changes!

Everyone desirous of spending eternity in heavenly bliss should focus his mind on that day when he will stand before Christ, the Supreme Judge of humanity. For the dead will stand before the throne and the books will be opened and the dead will be judged by the things written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 22:11-12). God has a pattern for his church. Do you respect it? Are you complying with it? JHW

## DID DAVID HAVE GOD'S AUTHORITY TO USE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

Bro. Waddey: My question is about instruments in worship. I am a member of a church in which I play the drums for our praise team, up until learning about your beliefs, I never considered that it might be wrong. There is nothing inherently evil about it in anyway, and it is still praising God. I know that you are going to say that the New Testament does not mention the use of instruments and so you simply choose not to use them. That is a simple and harmless decision, but in the Old Testament David praised with the sound of trumpet and with the harp and lyre and symbols and so on and so forth. You would reply to this by saying that they also sacrificed bulls and burned incense, but Christ fulfilled and completed the old laws and we do not live by those anymore. The point I make is that David did not praise God with music and instruments, dancing and whatever else he could because God commanded him to, he praised God that way because he loved him, and because he wanted to do everything he could to praise God. Christ set aside the Old laws, but that was not a law in the first place. David did not praise with instruments because of a law, and I don't think that I have to stop doing it because of a lack of one. Just because Christ didn't say to do it, doesn't mean that he was opposed to it. Just as God was not opposed to the way David praised, even though he didn't specify it. I am eager to hear your response to this. I am not writing to tear down your beliefs, because it is surely not wrong to praise God in the way you choose, I am simply seeking to further my understanding of my faith. Peter.

Dear Bro. Peter: From the contents of your letter I can discern:

- \* That you most likely are a member of the Church of Christ;
- \* That your congregation has now adopted the use of instrumental music in your worship;
- \* That you had never been taught why Churches of Christ have not and most still do not use instrumental music in worship;
- \* That when you encountered such teaching someone either tried to provide you a justification for what you are doing or pointed you to written material prepared by one of our progressive brethren which seeks to assure you that you are not wrong in playing your drums while the church is worshipping.

Unfortunately you have gotten faulty advice. If you will read **II Chronicle 29:25** you will find that when King Hezekiah reformed the Temple worship "he set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; *for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets...*" David introduced instruments of music in the temple because "the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets" namely, Gad and Nathan. Thus your argument about David fails.

You should remember that although the Old Covenant authorized the use of musical instruments for those it governed, you are not a Jew You are a Christian. You are not amenable to the Law of Moses, but to the Law of Christ (Matt. 28:18,20). On the day of judgment you will not be judged by Moses, David or the Old Testament, but by the words of Christ (John 12:47-48). Christ, through his apostles, has told us to sing and make melody in our hearts unto God (Eph. 5:19). When you sing you are doing what he has told you to do. When you play your drums you are doing what your preacher wishes or perhaps what you wish to do. But your preacher has no authority to grant you that permission, and you have not right to presume to offer to God what he has not approved of.

As you friend and brother in Christ, I hope you will take these thoughts to heart and cease from your unauthorized practice. Be content to worship your Creator as he has instructed you. You need never fret about that being wrong.  
JHW

## WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

We live in the midst of the Feminist Revolution. The champions of this social/political movement have challenged every traditional concept about the role of women in the home, society and the church. Without doubt some of the old ideas needed challenging. Some of the changes have been wholesome and beneficial. In two areas however, the goals of the feminists are in direct conflict with the will of God as revealed in the Bible. This poses no problem for most feminists since many of them reject God and Christ, and refuse to recognize the Scriptures as having any authority in their lives. However, to those women who fear God and follow Jesus; who order their lives by the New Testament and hope to spend eternity in heaven, their liberties must conform to the divine plan.

In the realm of the family: God ordained that "wives be in subjection unto (their) own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church..." (Eph. 5:22-23). Husbands are expected to "love (their) wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it."

For the church God declares: "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law." (I Cor. 14:33-34). "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (I Tim. 2:11-12).

From these injunctions we learn that women are not allowed to fill leadership roles over men in the administration and public teaching of the church. Men are to be selected as elders (I Tim. 3:1-2). Men are to be the preachers, evangelists and teachers of the congregation.

This does not mean that women have no role to fill in the life and teaching of the church. A woman can teach women and children (Tit. 2:4-5). She can be a leader among the women in their activities. But mixed classes of men and women are taught by men and public worship is conducted by men. In rare cases where no men are present, then women could do anything that needed to be done since they would not be exercising authority over men by so doing.

Such doctrine is anathema to committed feminists, but to women of God, it is truth and righteousness and must be accepted. Tragically, most of the denominations about us have capitulated to the noisy demands of the feminists. May God grant all of us the courage to stand faithful to his revealed will, even if the whole world rejects it. JHW



## INCREMENTALISM: ONE OF SATAN'S DEVICES

Bill and Hillary Clinton accomplished much of their political agenda by a method described as incrementalism. That which was unacceptable and could not be passed in one large package was accomplished in several small incremental steps. This method of reaching unpopular goals has been effectively used by the feminists and the homosexual rights movement. Observing the success of this approach in the volatile world of politics, the change agents at work among us have adopted this incremental approach to reach their goal of imposing major changes on the church.

In his book **Women in the Church**, Carroll Osburn quotes Mary Tolbert who writes, "Feminist hermeneutics stands over against patriarchal hermeneutics (its goal achieved CO) by small unnoticed acts of subversion. Numerous such incremental changes, like erosion, will eventually bring down the fortress" (p. 32). Those conversant with what is occurring in our churches and schools will immediately recognize some of those small acts of subversion that are transpiring today: a woman chaplain at one of our Christian Universities; a woman associate preacher here; a female co-teacher of an adult class there; schools offering women courses in ministry and featuring women preachers on their lectureship; books advocating expanded roles for women in church leadership. At the end of the day one is not surprised to read that a church here and another there has a woman preacher in their pulpit.

Similarly, change agents are attacking the foundations of the church by a series of incremental changes that "like erosion will bring down the fortress." Many of the proposed changes are small and at first seem of little consequence. But added together and in time a congregation one day awakens to find that they are no longer a church of Christ. Few change agents are so confident or stupid as to try to grab control of a church in one bold move. It is a step by step process which they patiently pursue. They might ridicule the efforts of past brethren, or seek to shame their hearers for their old fashioned faith and views. They propose more contemporary services, perhaps a praise team to improve the worship. Guest speakers are brought in to promote the proposed agenda. Young people are gently led to use instruments in their devotionals. Younger ladies who have absorbed feminist views are encouraged to reach for leadership roles in the church. Collegiates and young adults are used as a leverage tool for accepting changes. If we want them to stay or to bring their friends, some changes must be made. Fun is poked at the old faith and practices long held by the church. The great success of certain denominational churches is held up as a worthy example. Young people are taken to programs that offer new and unconventional activities for worship. New elders and deacons are proposed that will be sympathetic to the change agenda. Step by step the process advances until the foundations are totally undermined and finally the resistance crumbles. The few hold-outs are encouraged to get with the program or leave. The results: another church has been subverted and changed into a denominational body.

Tragically many elders are totally oblivious to the incremental changes their preachers, youth ministers or campus ministers are initiating. The majority of their members sit in silence while a small handful who are committed to change, step by step work their project. Brethren we are under attack in every quarter. If we continue with the current level of indifference and unconcern, we will surely be overwhelmed. Remember the losses we suffered a century ago. That generation of change agents swept away eighty five percent of our brethren and congregations; most of our mission work, all of our schools. Shall we suffer the same fate all over again? Remember their goal; "one step at a time until the fortress falls." JHW

## THE MANY SIDES OF BAPTISM

To many people baptism is seen only as an initiation into the church. Others only know baptism "for the remission of sins." The truth is, baptism is much wider in its scope and blessings. It is much like the many facets of a finely cut diamond. Notice just some of the meanings of baptism.

1. **Baptism is like a birth.** Jesus said in John 3:5, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." A birth is a "coming forth" into a new relationship. Just as an infant comes forth from his mother into the world of light, the obedient believer comes out of the waters of baptism a new born babe in Christ (I Peter 2:2). His Christian life has just begun. This new birth puts him into the kingdom or church of Christ (Matthew 16:18-19). Just as one is born a citizen of America, so in baptism we are born into the kingdom of Jesus. Only an immersion in water and a coming forth from the water can adequately depict a birth. This sprinkling or pouring can never do. It is important to remember when interpreting metaphors and analogies that we never press more than the main point of comparison. Many foolish points have been wrung from this teaching by teachers who did not remember this rule. The water is not our mother, the Holy Spirit is not the sire, nor do you have spiritual life before baptism. The one simple point is, we must come out of the water of baptism into the kingdom, even as the baby comes out of the womb into this life.

2. **Baptism is like a burial and resurrection.** Paul writes that sinners must die to sin, then be buried with Christ through baptism into death, in order that they might be raised up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). The conversion experience simulates the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Everyone who is saved demonstrates his faith in the Christ who died and rose for him, by his baptism into Christ. It is a proclamation to the world of the crucified Christ as their only hope of pardon.

When seeking to understand such figurative expressions as death, burial, and resurrection in salvation, we must never mingle or confuse other figures with these. Great confusion results when one tries to mix the illustrations of the new birth in John 3 with this of Romans 6. Each must be understood and explained separately.

3. **Baptism is like the purification and preparation of a bride** for her wedding. In Ephesians 5 Paul speaks of the loving relationship of Christ and his church under the figure of a man and his bride. He tells us Christ gave himself up for the church "that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Among the ancient peoples, great emphasis was placed upon the cleansing and purification of a bride before being presented to her husband. (See Esther 2:12-13). So each person who becomes a member of Christ's bride, the church, must be purified by the washing of water (baptism) and the Word. Should anyone dispute the "washing of water" being baptism, we ask, is there any other use of **water** in the gospel, regarding salvation, church membership and Christian worship?

4. **Baptism is like the ritual of circumcision.** Under the Abrahamic covenant no male could be a member of the holy nation unless he had been circumcised. The removal of that tad of flesh from the infant's body identified him as one of God's spiritual sons (Genesis 17:9-14). Today, everyone, male and female, must undergo a circumcision of the heart in order to be a child of God. This Paul explains in Colossians 2:11-13, "In whom (Christ) ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism..." Baptism is similar to the act of circumcision in that God **cuts off** and removes the old sins of the heart when we are buried with Christ. God, not a physician, administers the spiritual surgery when we are baptized to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16).

5. **Baptism is like the purification rites of the Jews.** Those living under Moses' law were continually faced with the problem of ceremonial defilement and uncleanness. Touching any dead body or having any running sore or skin disease and a host of other things rendered them impure and disqualified them to enter the worship assembly. A ritual of purification was set for that included the blood of sacrifice and the washing of the body with water (Leviticus 15:13-15). So in this age the unclean sinner comes before God's great priest Jesus, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and having his body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22). I am confident that this refers to Christian baptism for the only use of **water** in the New Testament in reference to salvation, church or worship is baptism (Acts 10:47). When we are washed in the waters of baptism, the blood of our sacrifice, Jesus, is applied to our conscience, giving us a clean and good conscience before God (I Peter 3:21).

6. **Baptism is like giving life to the dead.** The sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), being separated from God by them (Isaiah 59:1-2). Only God can give new life to those dead in sin. It is "not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit..." (Titus 3:5-6). To **regenerate** is to make alive again. **Renewal** has the same basic meaning. When does God do this for sinners? When they are "**washed.**" But in baptism He washes away our sins (Acts 22:16). When we are baptized in water He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). So we are made alive from our death in sin, by God, when we are baptized.

7. **Baptism is the entrance initiation into the church of Christ.** "For in one Spirit were all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians 12:13). But the one body is Christ's church (Colossians 1:18). Water baptism puts us into the one true church at the same time our sins are being forgiven. This is when the Lord adds us to the church (Acts 2:47, KJV).

8. **Baptism unites us with Christ.** It puts us into Christ. In it we are clothed with Christ. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death..." (Romans 6:5). The context shows this to be in baptism.

9. **Baptism is like the flood of Noah's day** in that it separates the righteous and the wicked. The flood waters destroyed sinners upon the earth at the same time it floated those within the ark to safety. "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism..." (I Peter 3:21). The water of baptism stands as a distinct line separating the saved and lost. All the saved have experienced baptism. All who have not are yet in sin.

How beautiful are the many sides of Christian baptism. Surely every soul that loves God will eagerly desire to obey this command of King Jesus. (Mark 16:17; Acts 10:48). Of such great importance is it that we urge you to do so today. If you need assistance in fulfilling your obedience to God, please contact us and a faithful Christian will soon be in touch with you. JHW

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## PARABLE OF THE DARING FLY

Once there was a young fly who prized his independence and boasted of his freedom and liberty to fly anywhere, anytime he wished to do so. He bragged he was not fearful of things new or different. He enjoyed exploring things new or different. He especially delighted in doing things the old flies thought were foolish and dangerous. Although he often heard stern warnings about the danger of those shiny, shimmering things the old folks called webs, he scoffed at their fears and ridiculed their fears. He was determined to check it out for himself.

Roaming the country side one day, he spotted the most beautiful sight. Shimmering in the morning sun, it looked like a queen's crown. With his curiosity burning like fire, he dove down to get a closer look. It seemed like the experience of a lifetime. His eyes were dazzled and his mind was enchanted by the attractiveness of the web. He flew ever closer, reasoning how can anything so lovely to the eyes be dangerous? Now he was sure it was just another case of old flies not wishing young flies to enjoy the real pleasures of life.

He first lit on a limb and viewed the beautiful web from a distance. He felt drawn to make a closer inspection and thus he moved closer, feasting his eyes on the beauties before him. When he lifted his wings to fly away, something was wrong. His feet were stuck, with all his might he struggled to break free, but it was impossible. He was hopelessly snared by the silken net. Ever the optimist, he kept reassuring himself, it was not really that bad. Nothing that beautiful could hurt a fly. Rather than warning other flies buzzing nearby he kept shouting, this is wonderful, it is so refreshing, I never enjoyed the likes of this before. He was still reassuring himself when the spider's quick bite sent the numbing venom into his body. As he drifted off into his final sleep he was heard saying, "It's wonderful. The old heads don't know what they are talking about." He made a nice meal for the spider's hatch.

So it is with those who are attracted to the change movement. It is deceptive. Its promoters promise glorious things for those who come to their web. Young flies find it hard to resist visions of large churches, worldly honor, recognition and liberty. Like the fly they will be snared and find it difficult ever to break free. With minds numbed, they will think being free from Christ's authority, his Word and his church is a great and wonderful thing. Thus they will meet their Maker. JHW

## LESSONS FROM THE TERMITES

Termites are social insects of the order Isoptera. These tiny creatures are harmless and vulnerable when alone. They operate in the secret. They cannot succeed when they are in the open, visible to all. They cannot survive in the absence of moisture. They could search out and find dead tress and discarded wood, but they much prefer the homes of human beings who are struggling to pay for them. Undetected or ignored, termites can do enormous damage to a lovely house. They can weaken it to the point that it become uninhabitable.

There are also spiritual termites that quietly invade congregations of the church and set about eating away at the spiritual foundations. We call them change agents.

\* Spiritual termites could gravitate to a church that is already dead, or to a denominational body, but they much prefer one that is a faithful, thriving family of Christ's disciples. Perhaps the challenge is more exhilarating and the victory is much sweeter there.

\* If the leaders are unaware of the danger these termites pose or if they are unconcerned, they can and will invade and establish themselves with ease.

\* Left undisturbed, in a few months they can corrupt the faith of a sufficient number of members to challenge the elders and preacher for control of the future direction of the congregation.

\* If they cannot succeed in taking control of the congregation and its property they often will lead away a disaffected element and thus weaken the congregation, perhaps bringing it to its knees.

\* Wise leaders inform themselves about spiritual termites. They keep a sharp eye out for the least sign of termite activity (Acts 20:31).

\* Thy pre-treat their congregation before the problem arises rather than wait until the damage has been done. Paul's practice was to forewarn his brethren before problems presented themselves (Gal.5:21)

\* If termites do appear the go into full defensive mode to destroy the invaders or at least to drive them out and make the environment so inhospitable they have to go elsewhere (Rom. 16:18; II John 9-10).

I ask every preacher and elder, Is your congregation termite proof? If not, what are you doing to see that Satan doesn't get the advantage over you (II Cor. 2:11). JHW

## TWO WAYS OF VIEWING THE CHURCH

Within the current membership of churches of Christ are two sets of disciples with two very different ways of viewing the church. Those who are committed to imposing significant changes on the church manifest one viewpoint while those who are happy to walk in the Biblical paths their fathers trod exhibit an altogether different approach. The author has reached these conclusions after reading and reviewing more than twenty-five volumes produced by the promoters of change.

Professors who are driving the juggernaut of change, view the church through the cold, disinterested eyes of the sociologist, historian or theologian. They are scientists at work, examining a spiritual body to which they have little or no sense of love, obligation or duty. They see her flaws, note her failures, compare her with other spiritual bodies. They find few if any thing commendable about her. They excise that which they deem unimportant, modify this or that and graft in whatever their postmodern minds wish her to have. They eagerly try their experiments on the church with no fear of damage which may occur. They tremble not to put their profane hands on her sacred things and dare to change any that displease them. They discount her value and count her as nothing more than a denomination created by sinful men. While these professionals are few in number, because of the positions they hold, their influence is great.

Then there are the other Christians who love the church of Christ. As a result of her teaching and influence, they decided to follow Christ. Through her good influence their souls were saved. The parents and grandparents of many of them were members of church in days past. They have spent their lives working in her service, investing in her endeavors. In her they have grown to spiritual maturity. In her fellowship they have raised their children. To them the church is their family (I Tim. 3:15). She is their spiritual mother (Gal. 4:26). She is the kingdom of their citizenship (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). She is Christ's sacred body (Eph. 1:22). They look upon her with wonder, amazement and adoration. She is the manifestation of perfection of her Creator and designer. Her worth is immeasurable (Acts 20:28). They dare not add too nor take from her worship, faith or practices. They too see her human side and understand that given the flaws of humanity, how can she be otherwise so long as she is earth-bound. Rather than condemn the church, they work to ameliorate the shortcomings of her members. In spite of the failures of her followers, they love her with all their hearts. They stand in reverence before her and thank God for the privilege of being a part of his church. They honor her as the one and only church of Christ, their Savior's bride (Eph. 5:23).

I ask you dear readers, How do you view the church of Christ? JHW

## **APPLAUDING IN WORSHIP**

Dear Bro. Waddey: Since our new youth minister came here our young people have begun the practice of applauding when a person is baptized. This upsets and distracts me. Am I just too old fashioned, or am I right? Larry

Dear Bro. Larry: Thanks for your note. I have experienced the same sensation as you when I have seen a group, usually led by young people applauding at a baptism. Once they get used to applauding for that, they begin applauding for cute sayings, or zinger statements by the preacher or any other good excuse.

As to the lame excuse that a baptism is not a worship service, many, many baptisms are conducted in the worship assembly when the sinner responds to the gospel invitation.

I attribute this practice not so much to malice as to ignorance and being led down the wrong path by youth workers and college teachers who crave something new and different for their religious experience.

One way to respond to those trying to justify their practice. Is to ask if they would applaud at their mother's funeral? If not why. Would they have applauded at Christ's death and burial? Why not? A baptism is a symbolic re-enactment of the death and burial of Christ. Is that an appropriate time for applause?

Again, you might ask "Just what is appropriate applause? Does it includes screaming, shouting, hooting, stomping the feet, whistling?" If they say no, then ask just where do we find scriptural guidelines for appropriate applauding?

Applauding for such spiritual experiences is part and parcel of the thinking of those who crave entertainment in place of sacred worship. It fits with the entertaining soloists, duets and choirs. It is natural for a performance of a band or an interpretative dance. It is the normal thing to do after a comedian gives his performance. But it is out of place in the worship of the Creator, Benefactor and Judge of humanity and at occasions sacred to the memory of Christ's death. Paul's exhortation is, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). If ever there was a time and place for our conduct to be decent and orderly it is when we are in the presence of our God.

Don't give up. Don't give in. Be faithful. Talk with your elders and preacher. Talk with the youth minister. Be calm, keep your cool, but do let them intimidate you into compliance. JHW

## THE REAL QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED

Those brethren clamoring for changes in the faith, worship and practice of our congregations have a long list of grievances against the church. Their criticisms are many and bitter and are often spoken with great sarcasm. These complaints serve as a smoke-screen to hide their real agenda for the church. To achieve their goals for radical, unscriptural changes, they must first create discontent and dissatisfaction in the hearts of unwitting brethren. Having read some 20 of their most caustic books, I am impressed with the following points.

- \* The question is not, have some brethren behaved badly? Yes, some have. But so did Peter and Barnabas in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). So did brethren in Jerusalem and Corinth. But that did not invalidate the message the apostles preached.
- \* The question is not, have some brethren incorrectly understood some portions of Scripture? Haven't we all at some point in time done so? Even the agitators for change have done so.
- \* The question is not, have we quarreled too much? Of course there has been too much quarreling between brethren. Even one quarrel is one too much. But that some have failed to manifest the spirit of Christ is no indictment of the faith revealed in the New Testament of Christ.
- \* The question is not, have we divided too much? Yes, we have. Just one case of division is too many. But there were divisions among Christians in the time of the Apostles. Paul had to deal with such at Corinth (I Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-9). Those who cause divisions sin. But that in no way discredits the faith we hold.
- \* The question is not, have some been proud in their ignorance. No doubt some have, but they certainly are not in the majority. Most of the men I have known are humble searchers for truth. They are diligent students of God's Word.
- \* The question is not have some been hard on fellow-Christians. Some indeed have been so. But a multitude of others have been kind, considerate and patient with those who are struggling or who have slipped and fallen into sin. It is fair to say that more have erred on the side of being too lenient with erring brethren than have been too hard on them

There are genuine questions that must be resolved in this contest between those demanding change and those who wish to remain simple Bible Christian. Consider the following:

- \* Is the New Testament of Christ to be our final and absolute authority in all matters of faith, worship and practice of the church? If not we are left as a ship without a rudder.
- \* Does God tell us that the Scripture is to serve as our pattern? Just read II Tim. 1:13 and Heb. 5:5 and then decide.
- \* Is the attempt to restore the original faith, worship and practice of Christianity a worthy, attainable goal? If not all of those brethren who went before us were mistaken and misguided. Our entire movement is built upon a foundation of sand...including those churches pursuing change!
- \* Should we abandon our long held goal of restoration of the ancient faith? Change agents say yes. What say ye?
- \* Will Christians be held accountable if they refuse to obey and conform to the plainly stated will of Christ? Jesus has one answer (Matt. 7:21). Change agents seem to have another.
- \* Is the church that Jesus built in existence today?
- \* Are all denominations a part of that church? Which are a part of it and how can we tell which are legitimate?
- \* Is it possible for us to be the true church of Christ today? If not has Christ failed to provide us the necessary tools to reach that goal? Are we that church?
- \* Is the church obliged to alter its faith and practice to fit every new philosophical system that men devise and promote?
- \* Should we treat preachers, congregations and schools as faithful Christians when they refuse to honor Christ by abiding in his Word? Is apostasy from Christ possible today?
- \* Should a preacher or professor be honored if his work is detrimental to the welfare of the church of Christ?
- \* If churches of Christ are only a humanly founded denomination, do we have a legitimate right to exist?

- \* If we follow the leadership of the agents of change will we lose our identity and cease to exist as a people?
- \* Were our forefathers of last century wrong when they refused to follow the change agents of their day and embrace the use of instrumental music, missionary societies, women preachers, and denominationalism? Do we want to be refashioned into the image of the Disciples of Christ denomination?
- \* Are congregations that have embraced the change agenda more submissive to Christ, more dedicated to his work, more effective in bringing the lost to salvation, more united and at peace, more pleasing to God now than before?

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the great philosopher Socrates found that he could best help his students find truth by asking them pointed questions and eliciting their responses. Perhaps the questions listed above will help some of our brethren see just what is at stake in the controversy that now engulfs us. JHW

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## **PARABLE OF THE BIRDS**

This morning while out for my bike ride, I came upon a fascinating scene. A group of ten or so black birds were in hot pursuit of a barn owl. The owl was as large as all ten of his pursuers. Taking them one at a time he could easily overpower, defeat and devour anyone of them. But when faced with ten determined black birds, he could only flee, and that he did. Owls are carnivores. They like to raid the nests of other, weaker birds. Left unchallenged, the nestlings will be his meal. Parent birds have a natural instinct to protect their nest and its precious contents. Those who do not, lose their little ones to the predator.

So it is in the kingdom of Christ. Satan is the great predator. Like a roaring lion he walks about seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8). Look as you may, you won't see an actual lion or the typical artist's image of Satan. Peter uses a simile (*as* a roaring lion). Today Satan is sending his agents into congregations of God's people across the land to capture them or at least to snatch out those they can (Matt. 7:15).

The preachers of the change movement are like the big birds that prey on the nestlings. Many of them occupy stations in large, wealthy and influential churches. They use this advantage to influence and lead away those who are young, immature and untaught in the fundamentals of the faith. Also professors in those Christian universities that have embraced the change agenda are like the predator birds. They capture the hearts and minds of young students whom unsuspecting parents send their way. They send them home to spread the change message in the churches.

The little birds are the hundreds of ordinary preachers who spend their days toiling in the vineyard of their local congregation. They have neither wealth, power nor high credentials but they love the church and God's people. They cannot sit idle and watch while the predators sweep in and snatch their brethren away from the simplicity and purity of the gospel (II Cor. 11:3). Alone, one small preacher might not be able to accomplish much, but working together with others, they can have enough force and influence to put to flight those who would harm the church.

I urge every man among us, be he young or old, whether he be plain or polished, to rise up to defend the church of the Lord Jesus. If we do nothing, great harm will surely follow. If we choose to act alone, we will find the odds insurmountable. But working together with and with God's help we can put an army of aliens to flight (Heb. 11:34).

"Dear Lord in heaven, please help us to be as wise as the lowly blackbirds which you have made. Give us the courage to resist those who would harm the bride of your Son. In Jesus' name." JHW



## TWO KINDS OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

After several years of struggle, following the Civil War, it became evident to even outsiders that division had occurred within the ranks of the restoration brotherhood. In 1906, S. N. D. North of the U. S. Census Bureau inquired of David Lipscomb if his perception was correct. With a heavy heart Bro. Lipscomb confirmed that such was true. Two quite different kinds of churches now existed, both with roots in the work of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell's call for a restoration of New Testament Christianity. Bro. J. W. Shepherd was appointed to contact the churches and determine which were committed to staying with the old paths of Bible Christianity. The results he found were sad indeed. The churches who had abandoned the restoration plea for a denominational approach to Christianity numbered 8,203 with 982,701 members. Those who were content to stay with the Bible numbered 649 with 149,658 members. The digressives were known as Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches.

Today observant people must concede that our history had repeated itself. Within the brotherhood of Churches of Christ, who were once serving God by seeking to restore the primitive faith and practice of Christianity, we now can identify two distinct kinds of churches. Consider the distinctions:

\* **There are two views of the church of Christ.** One says the church of Christ was established by Jesus. The other says it was founded by B. W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. The one says that the church is non-denominational. The other says we are a denomination. The one says the church, being God's family of saved people, all who are saved will be within her fellowship. The other says, that folks are saved in all sorts of denominational churches. The one sees the church as sacred and holy and they dare not tamper with her faith or worship. The other sees no harm in changing any or all of her divine ordinances.

\* **Two views of the Bible.** The one says that the Bible is inspired of God and without mistake or error in its original manuscripts. The other sees flaws, mistakes and contradictions in the Bible. The one rightly divides the word by marking a distinction between the Old Testament which was the guidebook of Judaism and the New Testament which is Christ's will for his church. The one takes the Bible as her final and complete authority in all matters of faith and practice. The other feels that changing world views, mores and standards must be accommodated and that the Bible should not be viewed as a set of rules to be followed. The one accepts the Bible as the divine, God-given pattern for the church (Heb. 8:5), the other flatly rejects the idea of it being a pattern. The one fears to teach or practice anything not authorized by the Bible. The other argues they can do anything the Bible does not forbid. The one honors the New Testament as the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2, John 12:48), the other denies it is a law.

\* **Two views of communion.** The one takes Christ and Paul's words quite literally that they should take the bread and fruit of the vine "in memory" of his body and blood shed on the cross. They dare not mix it with common meals which are no part of that event (I Cor. 11:20-22). The other see it as a festive celebration which can be mixed with a common meal. The one follows the example of the early church and commune of the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection (Acts 20:7). The other wants to commune at other times that suit them.

\* **Two views of music in the worship of God.** The one follows the ancient practice of praising God with their voices alone. They make melody in their hearts. They base their practice on scripture such as Eph. 5:19. The other wants musical instruments for their worship. Performance is mixed with their praise. The one group speaks one to another in their psalms hymns and spiritual songs as they lift up their voices in congregational singing. The other prefers praise teams, solos, duets and choirs.

\* **Two views of the atmosphere of worship.** The one prefer to worship in a more solemn way with their emphasis on offering up their worship to God. They come to fill their minds and hearts with saving truth. They worship as God has directed them to do. The other prefers a more emotional and exciting type of worship. They crave performance and entertainment. They find the practices of the charismatic churches appealing. Such things as lifting their hands to heaven, swaying with the music and applauding the performers attracts them.

\* **Two views of the mission of the church.** The one sees the church as God's unique and only kingdom on earth with a simple divine mission. She is to glorify God and his Son (Eph. 3:21). She is to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). She is to minister to the poor and unfortunate. She is to educate and edify her members and strive to keep all safe unto the day of redemption. The other sees the church more as a social service club. She has a social gospel to preach. Entertainment is one of her duties. She is to provide for the felt needs of her community and those who worship with her. To them such things need no authorization from Scripture.

\* **Two views of about the church's relation to the larger religious world.** The one sees the church as God's Cause

and the various denominations in competition and conflict with it. The other sees the church as a sister to other denominations, all equally pleasing to God. The one sees the denominations as good people seeking God in a mistaken way. Hence it is their duty to teach them the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18: 26) and bring them into Christ's church and fellowship. The other sees no serious problem with the unscriptural beliefs and practices of denominations and is willing to accept them as they are. The one feels they cannot be part of denominational spiritual and evangelistic projects where error is propagated. The other is eager to participate with their religious neighbors, regardless of what is taught.

**\* Two views of the role of women in the church.** The one is content to respect and abide by the restrictions placed on women by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 14:33-34; I Tim. 2:11-12). The other follows the demands of the Feminist Movement. They ignore the divine restrictions and allow women to fill forbidden leadership roles in the church, including in some cases, preaching.

**\* Two views of what it means to restore the ancient faith.** The one believes that this commitment means to go back to the Bible and identify the faith, worship and practice of the earliest Christians and then reproduce those very things in our worship and service today. The other says, such is not necessary, even foolish. They feel the church is free to adapt herself to the demands of modern society. The one is willing to be as old-fashioned and different from the world today as the church was in first century Roman society. The other wants the church to conformed to the world's standards. The one believes that restoration is a worthy goal that every generation must pursue. The other thinks that such efforts are misguided and mistaken. The one takes the commitment to restoration to mean being governed by the Bible in all matters. The other only talks about their roots and heritage in the Stone-Campbell Movement but does not see that as binding them to a specific Biblical pattern. The one clings to the Scripture and their commitment to restore the ancient faith, even if all others abandon it. The other is casting it aside as embarrassing baggage from the past.

With commissioner North, those with eyes to see can discern that indeed two different kinds of churches are now functioning side by side. Sooner or later the differences will be so pronounced that every member will have to decide, "Of which do I wish to be a member? Of which would God have me be a part?" JHW

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## PARABLE OF THE LOST LIMB

A small sore appeared on Mrs. Smith lower leg. An incompetent doctor treated it as inconsequential. When he finally realized that the lady had a problem, his treatments were inadequate and too late. After a few months at his ineffective hands, the poor lady sought another doctor who immediately saw the wound was morbid. In spite of his best efforts, gangrene spread and the leg had to be amputated at the knee. The doctor she had trusted to care for her had miserably failed in his duty. His patient suffered serious loss.

The body of Christ has wounds that must be tended or else they too will cause great harm. These wounds have been inflicted by those who should be her friends (Zech. 13:6). Some brethren, among them preachers, youth ministers and campus workers, have taken it upon themselves to change many of her essential features. Each unscriptural change is a wound inflicted on the body. Left unattended these wounds will fester and grow. Gangrene will result (II Tim. 2:17).

Elders and preachers are God's appointed physicians to tend to and maintain the health of his church. Tragically in hundreds of cases they are behaving like the careless physician. They are unaware of her wounds, or unconcerned about them. They fail to realize the danger. They are loath to treat the problem. Because of their incompetence or their neglect, the wounds are daily worsening and unless given immediate attention will result in tragic loss. Members will be lost, even entire congregations will be corrupted and lost.

Just as that Ms. Smith's doctor was guilty of malpractice for his neglect of his patient's wound, so are those preachers and elders who fail to treat the wounds on the body of Christ before the condition becomes critical. Let all who accept the privilege of leading Christ's people understand their responsibility to care for his church as good physicians. JHW

## **BIBLE 101 FOR NOVICES IN THE FAITH**

Beginning college course are often numbered 101. A novice is a beginner in a church or profession. Paul reminds us that the man chosen to serve as an elder must not be a novice (I Tim. 3:6). We all were novices when we first entered the kingdom. The young man just beginning his career as a gospel preacher is a novice. Years of study, learning and practice will pass before he reaches full maturity. It used to be that the aspiring young preacher who attended one of our Christian Colleges received solid grounding in the fundamentals of the faith. Experience demonstrates that in many instances such is no longer the case. Schools of Preaching generally do better in this respect. For those who are novices in the faith or in their preaching career, we offer the following fundamentals that should be memorized and made a part of their spiritual bank of knowledge.

- \* God in heaven designed the church of Christ exactly as he wanted it (Eph. 3:10-11).
- \* He revealed his plan for his church in the New Testament of Christ and expects his children in every generation to build according to the pattern he has revealed (Heb. 8:5).
- \* He planned only one church and it was purchased and established by His Son, Jesus (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:13,20; Acts 20:28; Matt. 16:18). No provision was made for many different kinds of denominational churches.
- \* He appointed Jesus head over all things to his one church (Eph. 1:22) and invested him with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).
- \* Those who are disciples of Jesus must obey all things that he has commanded regarding the church, the faith and the practice of Christianity (Matt. 28:20).
- \* The will of Jesus is found only in his New Testament. No man nor group has any reliable information or teaching regarding how to worship and serve God other than that revealed therein. Public opinion, tradition, culture or consensus of a group are not authoritative or acceptable.
- \* The books written by the apostles and prophets have the same value and authority as the words of Jesus. Christ send his Holy Spirit to direct them in writing all the 27 books of his Testament (John 16:12-15). Paul claimed that the words he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Hence we cannot attribute greater value or authority to the gospels than to the epistles.
- \* The entire Bible is of divine origin and thus perfect in its content and message (II Tim. 3:16-17), free from errors and contradictions when properly understood (Ps. 19:7).
- \* Being divine in origin, the Bible is unchanging and everlasting (Matt. 24:35). It does not need to be renovated and updated to fit the need of 21<sup>st</sup> century sinners.
- \* The words of Scripture are the standard by which all of humanity will be judged in the last day (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-12).
- \* The gospel which is only revealed in Scripture, is God's power to save lost humanity. Hence to save the lost we must preach the gospel to them (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16-17). Gimmicks and programs cannot be allowed to supplant gospel teaching.
- \* God saves sinners by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). However his grace is conditional. It is bestowed only upon them that believe (I Tim. 4:10) and them that obey the gospel (II Thess. 1:8). Otherwise we would have universal salvation which is clearly rejected in Scripture (Matt. 25:46).
- \* We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). But only obedient faith will save sinners (Gal. 5:6; Heb. 5:9).
- \* Christ has bound immersion in water as a condition of salvation (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16)
- \* Baptism is a commandment of the Lord to which sinners must submit (Acts 10:48).
- \* God expects faithfulness of his disciples if they hope to be saved in eternity (Rev. 2:10). While faithfulness does not mean perfection (Rom. 3:23), it does mean that we seek to abide in his word (II John 9) in all that we do in our personal and congregational lives.

Hopefully these basic truths will become part and parcel of your understanding of the religion of Jesus. May they guide you in your worship and service in the kingdom of Christ and be reflected in the message you share with others. JHW

## BIBLE 101, LESSON # 2

There are fundamentals of the religion of Christ that are essential to true discipleship. Mature Christians who desire to offer worship and service that is acceptable to God respect the fundamentals listed below.

- \* The church of Christ is his kingdom on earth (Matt. 16:18). It existed in the days of the apostles (Col. 1:16) and that first generation of Christians were in it (Rev. 1:9). We do not look for a future coming of an earthly political kingdom.
- \* Although the church cannot save us, Christ, the savior adds those he redeems to his church (Acts 2:47).
- \* All the saved on earth have been translated into the kingdom of Christ which is his church (Col. 1:13).
- \* While no one specific name is attached to Christ's church, inspired writers used names such as "churches of Christ," "church of God" and "church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28) to describe and identify Jesus' disciples. All of these names are biblical and give recognition and glory to Christ and the Father.
- \* As head of the church, Christ has told us how to worship the Father in an acceptable way. Worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It is not left up to us to decide what we will do in worship (John 8:31).
- \* He tells us to remember his death with a memorial feast of bread and fruit of the vine (Matt. 26:26-29). The early disciples observed this feast on the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection (Acts 20:7). It was the purpose for their weekly assemblies.
- \* He tells us to bring our gifts and offerings to God on the first day (I Cor. 16:1-2). These gifts were to be free-will offerings (II Cor. 9:7), and generous in nature (II Cor. 9:6). They were to be used to support the preaching of the gospel (I Cor. 9:14) and for the needs of the poor (Jas. 1:27).
- \* He teaches us to pray (Matt. 6:9-14) like the early church did (Acts 12:12). All prayers are offered to God through Christ our only mediator (I Tim. 2:5).
- \* He instructs us to sing and make melody in our hearts unto God (Eph. 5:19). Although they were commonly used in Jewish worship, no provision was made for instrumental music in Christian worship.
- \* The Master has ordered teaching for his church that consists of instruction in "all things... he commanded" (Matt. 28:20). His message which he calls "the gospel" is to be preached to all people (Mark 16:15). He rejects those who impose the traditions and commandments of men on his disciples (Matt. 15:6,9).
- \* Christ has given his church a four-fold mission. We must go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them (Matt. 28:19); we must remember the poor and assist them as we are able (Gal. 2:10; 6:10). We must serve others on behalf of Christ (Matt. 25:34-40). We must edify those who are members of his church (I Cor. 14:26) that they may grow to Christian maturity (Eph. 4:15).
- \* Christ has placed the leadership of his church in the hands of mature, godly men who are variously called elders, pastors, bishops, shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28-29) Among the qualifications he gave for those serving as elders is that they be the husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:2). Men are instructed to lead the church in prayer (I Tim. 2:8). The preaching of the gospel is entrusted to "faithful men" (II Tim. 2:2).
- \* He specifically forbids women to teach or have authority over men in his church (I Tim. 2:11-12). Changing cultural norms must not be used as an excuse to ignore these guidelines.
- \* Only those who hear and obey the words of Christ will be blest in eternity (Matt. 7:24).

As Jesus said to the churches of Asia, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 2:29).  
JHW

## THE BIBLE MUST BE RIGHTLY DIVIDED

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15 KJV). Bible study can be the richest experience of one's life, or it can prove to be extremely frustrating. One reason some have difficulty in understanding God's message is that they fail to make the proper distinctions in Scripture. The following thoughts will help the sincere Bible student attain the knowledge he desires.

1. The Bible is a library of 66 books, written by some 40 men over a period of 1600 years. While each book must be read and studied for its own unique message, we must never neglect to note the interrelations of the books with each other. Moses wrote the first five books of our Old Testament. **Genesis** tells the origin of the Hebrew nation and how they got into Egypt. **Exodus** tells how they became enslaved and then were delivered. **Leviticus** tells how their national religion came to exist. **Numbers** relates how they spent 40 years wandering toward Canaan, their new homeland. **Deuteronomy** rehearses the exodus from Egypt and the 40 years of wilderness wandering. The historical background for the various psalms can be found in the books of **Samuel, Kings and Chronicles**. **Paul's epistles** must be studied in light of the history of the **Acts of the Apostles**.

2. Within the Scripture are words of both inspired and uninspired men. Care must be taken to ascertain who is speaking and if he is directed by the Holy Spirit or not. For example in Genesis 3:4-5, we read the words of Satan as he tempted Eve. Surely one would not treat these as he would the words of God or an inspired prophet. Inspiration guarantees that we have a true record of what was said. It does not guarantee that every person quoted was telling the whole truth.

3. The Bible is written in various literary styles. Books like **Genesis** and **Joshua** are history. Their message is expressed in simple prose. **Psalms** and **Proverbs** are poetic in nature and abound in figurative language. For example, David writes: "My heart is like wax; it is melted within me" (Psalms 22:14). Surely no one could view these words as literal. So it is with thousands of other expressions. A good rule to remember is "All words of Scripture are to be understood in the normal literal sense unless the context (the setting in which they are found) forbid such." Then we look for a figurative meaning. This lesson is extremely valuable when you study the prophets such as **Ezekiel** or **Revelation**. Another case in point is history and prophecy. Is the writer relating events past or present (history) or is he predicting things yet to come? Jeremiah relates the historical facts of Jerusalem's capture by Babylon (Jeremiah 52:1-30). But he also predicted the overthrow and destruction of Babylon in 50:21-28 which occurred 50 years later.

4. The Bible consists of an Old and New Covenant. In Hebrews the apostle speaks of "the first covenant" and then the "second covenant." The first covenant was the Old Testament law that God made with the Hebrew nation when he brought them out of Egypt (Hebrews 8:9). The new covenant was made by Jesus (Hebrews 8:6-8). The first covenant is now old and longer binding upon us (Hebrews 8:13). All men today are subject to the new covenant of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-19, John 12:48). Thus you do not need to build an ark, even though Noah was commanded to do so (Genesis 6:14). You need not offer a lamb for sacrifice even though the Hebrews were so obligated (Leviticus 1:10). You must, however, obey Jesus and his New Covenant if you would please God. Christ asked, "why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Of what value then is the Old Testament? Much in every way. It is the history of God's scheme of redemption. It tells us our origin and how things came to be as they are. It is of immeasurable value as a background for our New Testament study. Paul writes that things "written afore time were written for our learning..." (Romans 15:4). What great lessons we learn from its study. But if we wish to learn what to do to be saved, we must look to Jesus and his New Testament (Matthew 17:305). The same is true for instruction about the church or worship today.

What is the practical application of all this? This concept of the two covenants properly understood will keep you from serious religious error. We do not observe the seventh day Sabbath (Exodus 20:8) because it is an Old Testament ordinance given to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). We worship on the first day (Sunday) because it is the day of Christ's resurrection (John 20:1-9); the day the Holy Spirit came to begin his ministry (Acts 2:1-4, compare Leviticus 23:15-21); the day the church began (Acts 2:1-47); and the day early Christians worshipped (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2). The thief on the cross could be saved by Christ without baptism because he was yet under the Old Covenant which lasted till Christ died (Hebrews 9:16-17; Colossians 2:14-16). Under Christ's covenant we must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:48).

May each of us study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). JHW

## DIMENSIONS OF WORSHIP

The Bible has a great deal to say about worship. We are told to “worship God” (Rev. 22:9). We are warned to have no gods before Jehovah nor graven images (Ex. 20:3-5). We are to be true or genuine worshipers (John 4:23). We are to worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). He expects us to worship him in the beauty of holiness (Ps. 96:9). We know that early Christians sang, prayed, communed, presented their offerings to God and received instruction as worship to God (Acts 20:7). They worshiped in their assemblies and they worshiped privately as well. Worship is something one does intentionally and purposefully. That is one doesn't worship by accident or as a by-product of doing something else. Abraham saddled his ass, clave wood for a burnt-offering and traveled from his home in the land of the Philistines to Mount Moriah. As he and his servants drew near to the mountain, he said, “I and the land will go yonder; and we will worship...” (Gen. 22:5). The other things were preparation for worship. The worship was a distinct act he would engage in. In acceptable worship man must be consciously approaching God with the intention of giving him praise and homage according to his will. Private worship can be personal, silent and within the heart of the worshiper. Public worship of a congregation necessarily involves actions of mind, body and spirit of those participating (I Cor. 14:15).

In recent years those who are promoting changes for our churches have come up with the idea that every thing a Christian does is worship. This is usually a precursor to saying, “therefore it should not matter if we take certain liberties with our congregational worship”.

While there is both corporate and private worship, that does not equal the premise that everything one does is worship. While much of what a Christian does in daily life could be described as serving God; such as being a good husband, wife, parent, employee, etc. (Col. 3:24), neither does that equal “all things are worship.” To see the absurdity of this assertion, image Bro. John Doe's weekly activities. He goes hunting on Saturday and kills a deer, not to feed a hungry family, but as a sporting/recreational activity. Having bagged his game, he guts it. Is this worship? On Monday night he goes to a football game. With the crowd, he cheers his team and roars when a touchdown is scored. Is that Worship? He eats a hotdog and downs a soft drink. Is that an act of worship? He goes home and goes to sleep. Is that worship? On his lunch hour he plays a game of solitaire on his computer, could that be worship? During his vacation he works on restoring his antique car. He sands and paints it. Is that worship? He and his wife have a warm disagreement about how much he has spent on his hobby. Is that worship? That night he sits before the TV, watching Jay Leno, eating popcorn. Is that worship? There are numerous other things, too personal, too private and even too gross to mention that surely are not worship.

We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, (Rom. 12:1-2). This does not mean that every action of life is an act of worship. It means that we should abstain from doing anything we know to be sinful or wrong and we strive to please God in all things we think, say or do. The faithful child of God will strive to live soberly, righteously and godly in his daily life (Tit. 2:12) and he will also be present when the saints assemble to worship and partake of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20). JHW

## **A PLEA TO ADMINISTRATORS AND TRUSTEES OF OUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

Churches of Christ across America are experiencing conflict and turmoil because of a flood of unscriptural changes that are being promoted to the point of division. The well-spring of this "progressive" change teaching can be traced to several of our Christian Universities. Faculty members are issuing a stream of books promoting change and students are being filled with their new ideas about the faith and worship of the church. They then come home and sow the seeds of change in their home congregations. Young preachers are being educated and sent forth who do not understand or appreciate the concept of restoring the original faith and practice of the church. This article is an appeal to those responsible for the direction of those schools associated with us.

\* As a matter of integrity, consider and respect the intents and purpose of your founders. Not a single one of our schools was started by brethren who believed that one could be saved before his baptism. Not one of them believed that instrumental music was acceptable in Christian worship. Not one of them believed that women could fill leadership roles in the church. None of them thought the church of Christ was a denomination. They sacrificed to establish and build up your school in order to advance the cause of Christ, to provide an educational setting so that young Christians could be trained in an environment that would sustain and strengthen their faith, not undermine it.

\* Love, honor and respect the church which you exist to serve. Your school was not founded nor financed to promote denominational teachings and practices. It was never intended to take upon itself to impose changes to the faith and practice of the Lord's church.

\* Do not allow teachers to fill posts in your school who are not faithful members of the church of Christ. In days past, virtually all of our schools had that proviso in employment requirements.

\* Do not keep on your payroll those who have departed from the faith of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. A man who prefers Baptist doctrine should be teaching in a Baptist school.

\* Feel a deep sense of personal responsibility to the parents who have entrusted their children to you for their education, trusting that you would help make them stronger Christians, and useful members of the church of Christ.

\* Respect all of those saints who have given their hard-earned money to keep your school afloat in days past. They bequeathed to you their estates, firmly believing the faith they held would be perpetuated to future generations by your teachers.

\* If you no longer believe in or respect those basic fundamentals of New Testament Christianity, held and preached by past generations of the churches of Christ, then do the honorable thing and resign your post and allow others who still believe to carry on.

\* Weigh your decisions carefully against the Christian virtues of fidelity, honor, justice, respect and loyalty (Phil. 4:8). Our schools have been entrusted to you for a few short years. When you have finished your term of office they should be better than when you started, certainly not worse. They should in every case be a blessing to Christ's church and never a hindrance. JHW

## THE BROTHERHOOD AND YOU

When a believer is clothed with Christ in baptism he becomes a member of Christ's church (I Cor. 12;13). He is thus a member of God's universal family of saved people throughout the world. He is also a member of a local congregation where he will worship and serve (I Cor. 1:1-2). It is easy to love and be concerned with those with whom we are in immediate contact. It is more difficult to care about folks we do not know. Yet it is part of our Christian duty to "love the brotherhood" (I Pet. 2:17). Wherever there is a true child of God, he or she is my spiritual kinsman and I must be concerned for his well-being.

**I. We must see ourselves as members of the brotherhood.** This brings us both privileges and responsibilities. Paul likens the brotherhood to a great body. Each member has a distinct role to fill and contribution to make for the benefit of the whole (Rom. 12:4-5). No man is an island to himself. We must feel compassion when brethren in India are hungry. We must pray for oppressed brethren in China. We must help brethren when natural disasters strike their homes. We must rejoice when their work prospers and weep when it languishes. We may never see their faces, but they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We owe them our concern.

**II. We must love the brotherhood** (I Pet. 2:17). To those we love, we are kind, considerate and solicitous. Such should be our attitude toward fellow Christians. We should prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). Never would we knowingly hurt or harm those we love. Responsible brethren will not slander the name of their kinsmen. They will always give them the benefit of the doubt when some evil charge is raised. Their love will cover a multitude of sins (I Pet. 4:8). They would rather restore fallen brethren than kick them (Gal. 6:1-2). Because we love the brotherhood we do not despise those brethren who differ with us. Rather, we "have great sorrow and unceasing pain in (our) heart" when discord and divisions arise (Rom. 9:1-2).

**III. We need to keep informed about our brotherhood.** It is sad to see folks who care nothing for their families and their well-being. Christians must be concerned about their spiritual family. Read several brotherhood journals so as to have a broad, balanced view of what is happening. Go to our lectureships and workshops. Get to know your family. Rejoice in the fellowship. Gospel preachers should attend their local preacher's meetings and area-wide fellowship activities. It's hard to love someone we do not know!

**IV. It is important to participate in brotherhood activities.** There are good works that are too big for a single congregation to accomplish. Always try to be involved when area-wide or brotherhood projects are undertaken. Do so as a matter of policy because you are part of the body. Be "zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14). Of course there is a limit to what we can do. Participation is always on the basis of "as much as in you lieth" (Rom. 12:18). Also you should not engage in activities unless you can do so in good conscience (Rom. 14:22-23). If there is a project about which you will have scriptural doubts you should abstain from helping.

**V. Be concerned with brotherhood problems and problem children.** Be assured that your work will be affected by them. Satan never lets us rest. Each wave of controversy is always followed by another. So keep your eyes and ears always open. Ignorance is a most dreaded disease, frequently fatal. Many preachers have been caught in the net of false teachers because they were not aware of danger beforehand. Congregations who refused to listen to early warnings of trouble have found themselves affected thereby.

While we want to know "what's going on in the brotherhood," we do not want to be encouragers of idle gossip, prejudicial comments or jealous criticism. Some folks try to win battles by pinning labels on those with whom they disagree. If they can't answer a man's arguments they just call him a liberal or an anti. Such is dishonest and must be rejected.



**VI. Always be prepared to defend the brotherhood against its enemies** whether within or without. Paul was set “for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16).

**VII. Work for the peace of the brotherhood.** We are plagued with a multitude of men who love strife and controversy. Jesus placed his blessing on the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). Pray for the peace of our heavenly Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6). Never let a day pass lest you pray for the brotherhood. Pray not just for your friends and home congregation, but for all of God’s children; even those you don’t like. Great is the need for prayers of righteous people for the church (Jas. 5:16).

**VIII. Do not allow folks to pressure you into brotherhood cliques or factions.** Love all of your brothers and sisters. This is good advice for your congregation but also for your relationship to the brotherhood. Do not let powerful men dominate you, your thinking or your work. You have liberty in Christ (Gal. 5:1). Do not surrender it to any man (Gal. 2:4-5). When we start pleasing men, we loose our standing with Christ (Gal. 1:10). Diotrephes is yet with us. In nearly any area there will be at least one such domineering brother. Avoid him and his overtures (III John 9).

**IX. Do not be negative and despondent about the brotherhood.** Some brethren are prophets of doom and hangers of crepe. To hear their story, the church is on her last legs, with all hope gone. The Lord’s cause is tougher than they recognize. She will stand forever (Dan. 2:44). The church is bigger than any one man or group of preachers. If they should die, the bride of Christ will yet live and flourish. Sometimes, she actually prospers when they are removed from the scene.

Never represent the church as bad, rotten and vile. If that is the case, why should any sinner leave his present camp and come into such a sorry institution. Tragically, I hear some irresponsible preachers do just this. Please don’t air our internal problems to a scorning world. As a new convert I heard preachers viciously attacking fellow-Christians on the public airwaves. What sad, warped minds they had to do this. Treat the brotherhood with the same consideration you would your mother or sister.

**IX. Don’t try to regulate the brotherhood.** Numerous preachers delight in so doing. They ignore the Bible teaching of autonomy for each congregation. If elders are only authorized to “tend the flock of God which is among” them (I Pet. 5:2), by what authority do these preachers inject themselves into affairs of congregations in distant places? They are meddlers in other men’s matters (I Pet. 4:15). Most of us have all we can handle just dealing with our congregation’s problems. Most brotherhood mote hunters have unfinished work to do on their own houses (Matt. 7:3-5).

What a precious privilege it is to be part of the family of God on earth. Let us love and cherish the brotherhood. Let us work for the well-being of Christ’s holy cause. May we never cause harm to the body.

“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” JHW

## A PARABLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Some years back Joe and Mary Christian scraped and saved and finally got enough money to fulfill their dream and make a down payment on a dairy farm. By hard work and sacrifice they made a success of their investment, the farm prospered. They were able to build a lovely home, with barn and outbuildings on their property and their dairy herd grew. God truly blessed their labors.

Joe and Mary were blest with four sons and a daughter. When they grew up, the kids went off to college and studied agriculture and business. Upon graduation they came home to help Joe run the farm. But while at school they picked up some new ideas about farming. They saw no future in dairy farming. They preferred a diversified approach. They wanted to plant some of the land in corn, some in soy beans and raise pigs and chickens instead of dairy cattle. When they could not convince Joe of the need to change to their program, they grew restless and fretful. They became critical of their father's efforts and predicted he would soon go out of business. The situation became intolerable. Since the young folks had married and had children, they now numbered 15 to the two parents. They turned their attention to Mary and persuaded her that they were right and that Joe was just being stubborn. After a while the situation grew ugly and the children told their dad that they were going to farm the way they learn in school and if he did not like it he could leave. The question is who should leave and go else where? Poor Joe, who by sacrifice and hard work bought and developed the farm, or the children who had not put a penny into the operation? I think I know what you would say. Well, consider the following scenario:

If a congregation was established, its property purchased and meeting house built and paid for by members of the Church of Christ who firmly believed:

- \* That Christ established and recognizes only one church (Matt. 16:18-19);
- \* That in the church, worshipful praise should be offered with voices alone, with no instrument other than the heart (Eph. 5:19);
- \* That the Lord's Supper is a sacred memorial of the death of Christ and not part of a fellowship meal with meat and vegetables (I Cor. 11:20-22);
- \* That women are forbidden by God to fill public leadership roles in the church, specifically that they are forbidden to teach and have authority over the men (I Tim. 2:11-12);
- \* That the Bible is the infallible inerrant will of God (Ps. 19:7) and that it is a divinely given pattern for us follow (Heb. 8:5; II Tim. 1:13);
- \* That God saves sinners by grace through faith when their faith leads them to obey Christ; in particular in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

If that congregation has worshipped and served God according to these standards for years then a new preacher, new elders, and/or younger members decide that they wish to introduce serious changes into the faith, worship, practice of that congregation that conflict with their past beliefs and practices, what shall the older members do? The two approaches are certainly incompatible. There is no way the two can worship together in peace and harmony unless those who hold to the original standards go contrary to their consciences. Amos said it well, "Can two walk together except they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3). A separation is bound to occur. The question is who should be the ones to leave and go elsewhere?

- \* Honesty says that those who built and paid for the facility should not be expected to leave!
- \* Those who hold to the faith of the founders and past leaders of that congregation should not be expected to surrender their property.
- \* Even if the majority have been seduced into the camp of the change agents, they have no right to the property that was built and paid for by brethren who obviously did not share their new found faith.
- \* The interlopers need to leave. If they want to worship like their neighbors in the Christian Churches, they should go there. If they want to be an independent Community Church they should start their own. They have no right to wrest away the property of those whose faith they have rejected. Honest people would do this. But it seems when people abandon the doctrine of Christ they prefer to take someone else's meeting place rather than go and build their own. This is yet another reason why such should be rejected (Tit. 3:10-11). JHW

## CASUAL RELIGION

We live in a casual age. This is reflected in many ways. We see casual dress in public; casual manners while dining; casual grooming when going out in public; casual conduct when in public places. Most would agree that a degree of casualness is harmless, even good. The stiff formality of the past was sometimes oppressive and even pretentious. Yet most mature observers will agree that many people take their casualness too far. Especially is it disturbing and distressing to see some extreme cases of casualness in the life of the church.

\* Some are casual about the salvation of sinners. They do not take seriously the conditions God has set for receiving sinners into his family. In no uncertain terms he has told us that confession of faith, repentance and baptism are prerequisites for salvation (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38). These conditions are stated not once but in many places. Yet casual preachers are leaving the impression that one can be saved before and maybe even without baptism.

\* Some are casual about the purpose of baptism. Many churches immerse, but few immerse for the reasons given by God. For most it is to join a denominational body. One is baptized for remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Casual preachers imply that some might be saved even if they don't understand the proper reason for their baptism.

\* Some are casual about their worship. The worship of God in many congregations cannot in any way be described as reverent. There is little or no solemnity. Such is manifested in preachers who treat their position in a casual way; with little serious study and preparation; with sermons that are more entertainment than reflections on the sacred things of God. Jokes, earthy stories and entertainment crowd out the study of the Holy Words of heaven.

\* Some preachers are casual in their handling of the Scriptures. In place of "The Bible says," their sermons ring with, "I believe" or "Dr. So and So says," or "the majority believe." None of these have any currency with God, nor should they with Christians.

\* Some are casual in their singing. They confuse fun songs and entertaining songs with worship to God. Others see no problem in replacing congregational singing, which the church from earliest times has practiced, with the performance of solists, duos, trios, quartets and choirs, all of which have no divine authority.

\* Some are casual in the observance of the Lord's Supper. It is manifested in the demeanor and conduct of those presiding and serving. It is seen in the behavior of those in the pews. Many commune with little preparation of heart and mind, with an inclination to hurry through the observance; with a lack of somber thought and reflection. All of these reflect a casualness that is not wholesome.

\* Even public prayer can be offered in a casual manner. Men who pray without forethought as to what they will say; men who talk to God of Creation as though he were their next-door neighbor do not reflect the proper reverence for God and his worship.

\* A casual attitude toward worship can be seen in the way some folks dress. If you were invited to visit the president or some notable dignitary you would dress "up" for the occasion. For the funeral of a loved one, you would dress up. How do you dress to when you come to honor your Lord's death?

\* Many moderns are casual in their daily discipleship. Jesus calls all men to be his disciples (Matt. 11:28-29). Those who accept the call are expected to take up their cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24). He expects us to love him above all others, even our closest kin (Matt. 10:37). We are to let our manner of life be worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). We are to discern the signs of the times (Matt. 16:3). All of these and many other scriptures remind us of the seriousness of our life in Christ. For the forgiveness, the blessings and the salvation he gives us, in return he expects our lives, genuinely committed, not as a casual game of pretense!

Casualness is a common mark of those who feel empowered to change the faith, worship and practice of the Lord's church. Since Christ, our salvation, the church and God's word are the most important things in the world, let every child of God treat them with the reverence and respect they deserve. JHW

## AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE PATTERN

When God wanted the Hebrews to build him a house of worship, he provided them specific instructions on how it should be built. He specified even the kinds of materials to be used. The exact dimensions were given for the tent, and the furnishings thereof. Nothing was left to the creative minds of the craftsmen. The wood was to be acacia, the cloth was to be linen. The metals used were gold, silver and brass, each used in the object specified. The details were written down for the workers and are preserved to this day in the Book of Exodus chapters 35-38. God straitly instructed Moses, and he those who did the work, that they make the tent and its fixtures "after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25:40). They wrought according to the pattern and God blessed and accepted their efforts. He placed his glorious shekinah in the most holy place of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

Ponder the question, what if the tabernacle had been destroyed, by fire, storm or war? What would the Hebrews have done? The answer is simple, so long as they had the Book of Exodus in their possession they had the pattern and could have rebuilt it just as it was in the beginning.

Christ built his church and recorded his will for us in his New Testament (Matt. 28:20). He specifically tells us it is to be regarded as his pattern for his disciples and his church (II Tim. 1:13). Borrowing the very words God spoke to Moses, the Holy Spirit led the writer of Hebrews to say, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee..." (Heb. 8:5). By the third century men were openly ignoring the divine pattern for the church. One by one, over a period of time, virtually every doctrine and practice ordained by the Master was changed. Eventually the Bible itself was effectively removed from the reach of the common man. It was locked in a dead language (Latin) which none but clerics spoke. It was declared to be the exclusive property of the priesthood of the corrupted church of Rome. Penalties were attached for possessing a Bible. Men were forbidden to translate it into the vernacular of the people.

The great gift of the Protestant Reformation was that the power of the pope to keep the Bible from the masses of humanity was broken. In virtually every country of Europe brave men set about to put the sacred book into the language of the people. Gutenberg's printing press made it possible to produce Bibles in large numbers and at prices many people could afford. Although the church that Christ built had long be corrupted and obscured, the people now had the divine pattern in hand. By carefully studying it, they were able to rebuild that which had been lost. Using a slightly different figure, the author of The Revelation was given "a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar and them that worship therein..." (Rev. 11:1). The divine measuring rod was the Scripture. To be acceptable to God the church must meet the divine standard given in God's Word.

Two centuries ago, with the heavenly pattern in hand, our fathers set about to restore the church, her faith and worship, as they were in the beginning. Today we still possess the pattern. Those who want God's acceptance and blessing will be diligent to see that all things are done according to the pattern. One last question: How do you think God would have dealt with Bezalel and Oholiab, if the master craftsmen had taken it upon themselves to change various aspects of the tabernacle to make them more pleasing to themselves and the people? JHW

## BETRAYED

David was betrayed by Ahithophel (II Sam. 15:31). Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:48). "Betray" is one of the ugly words of our language. No one who betrays his friend, his loved ones or his nation is ever counted a hero. It is a dastardly action loaded with shame. How much more shameful is it to betray the Cause for which Christ suffered and died?

Today churches of Christ are facing a nation-wide movement led by a band of young intellectuals who are determined to impose major changes on every aspect of our faith, worship and practice. If successful, they will wreck and destroy our noble movement to restore the religion of Christ revealed in the New Testament. Whether they realize it or not, those activists driving this disruptive movement are traitors!

**Promoters of change are betraying Christ** who founded the church. In his death, he purchased the church (Acts 20:28). He did not build a single denomination or cult. Nor did he leave us without guidelines and directions. He did not grant us the privilege to alter and change his church, her faith and worship. Christ's church is no democracy! Christ alone is king and ruler. We are his subjects. Our duty is to obey his instructions (John 15:14). When any disciple lays his profane hands on the sacred things of the Founder, taking unwarranted liberties, he betrays the Master!

**Agents of change are betraying the church of Christ.** The church is 2,000 years old. Her faith and worship were ordained by Christ and fixed for the duration of time (Jude 3). For 20 centuries, her emissaries have called men to Christ. Upon conversion, they were added to the church (Acts 2:47). Those who become part of the heavenly body must accept her divine standards and pattern for faith, worship and service (II Tim. 1:13), submitting their wills to that of her head. Those who have taken it upon themselves to reshape or revise the church have only succeeded in corrupting and harming her. God styles them "false prophets" (I John 4:1); "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matt. 7:15); enemies of the cause of Christ (Phil. 3:18). Our change agents came into the church just as the rest of us did. But along the way they concluded she was not pleasing to them. Her faith and practice were judged to be inadequate and distasteful. So they set about to change her, even if it results in division and loss.

**Agitators for of change are betraying those noble saints who went before them.** For some 200 years, godly men and women have sacrificially labored, planting and building up congregations here and abroad. With zeal and diligence they sought out, taught and won multitudes of lost souls. Many of those converts were formerly members of denominational bodies. They were shown the more excellent way of New Testament Christianity. Schools were built, homes to care for the unfortunate were established and maintained. Mission outposts were planted. As youngsters or as sinners of the world our change agents were taught by members of the church and brought to salvation. Now that they have grown to leadership positions, they look with disdain on those who went before them. They ridicule their faith and accomplishments. They view the church with a critical eye and speak disparagingly of her. They quietly gain control of schools and congregations and turn them into something quiet foreign to the original intent of those who planted them.

**Change agents betray those who built and sustained the congregation they now seek to commandeer.** From across the nation we hear tragic stories of Christians who have labored with and supported their home congregation for years, only to discover that their preacher is working to change the church into something totally different. Commonly they are told if they cannot accept the changes and go along with the program they should leave. If they protest they are branded as troublemakers. These brothers and sisters have been betrayed.

**Those preaching the gospel of change are betraying the lost souls they recruit into their churches.** Many of them teach sinners they can be saved by grace through faith, before and even without obeying Christ's command to be baptized to wash away their sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16). They teach them that they are not under the law of Christ. They tell them that the New Testament is not a pattern we are to conform to. They teach them that they are free to do anything Christ has not specifically forbidden in their worship and practice (Matt. 28:20). They teach them that folks can be saved in denominational churches Christ did not build; that the church of Christ is of no more worth or value than churches men have created. Such faulty teaching is a flagrant affront to Christ and the Holy Spirit who gave us the church and the New Testament, it is a disservice to those who while seeking salvation in Christ, fall under its evil influence.

Of Judas who betrayed him, Jesus said, "good were it for (him) if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24). What will he say of those who have betrayed him and his holy Cause? JHW

## IS TRUTH RELATIVE OR ABSOLUTE?

Modern thinking says, "What is right depends on the situation." Many believe "there is no body of eternal unchanging truth;" that "truth is relative and may vary from group to group or from time to time, having no objective standard." Is this right or wrong?

There are two standards of morality; man's and God's. History demonstrates that man's morality is governed by a changing code of relative values. This is because every code of human law falls short of absolute justice and equity. Whatever human intelligence designs regulates must fall into the class of relative values. No human authority can tell us how to act so that the greatest good will come to the race.

God's laws are absolutely perfect. As creator of all, He knows what is best for the whole of mankind. Being all wise, He knows without experimentation what will work for the best. He sees the end from the beginning. His laws are not relative. They need no revising.

God has two kinds of laws. Natural laws and spiritual, moral laws. The laws of nature are absolute, and unchanging. The law of gravity is as true now as in the beginning, in America as in China.

God's spiritual laws are as absolute and unchanging as the laws of nature. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). "The word of the Lord abideth forever" (I Peter 1:24-25). "Every scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). "The faith... was once for all (times) delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). God's "word is truth" (John 17:17). His word is final and complete. We are warned, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).

Today, conduct once considered wrong is excused. Every one and everything is blamed except the offender. This is the new morality.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). God's absolute standard of right and wrong must be accepted if our nation survives.

All lying is wrong (Revelation 21:8). Stealing is wrong (Ephesians 4:28). Sexual relations out of marriage are wrong (Hebrews 13:4). Taking God's name in vain is sin (Exodus 20:7). Modern morality is really a system of immorality.

You ask, "How can I know right and wrong?" God's voice is the absolute authority. Jesus is the example of perfection. The Bible is the absolute Code of Truth. Read it. Believe it. Obey it. Be Saved! JHW

## **ENABLERS: GOOD PEOPLE WHO HELP OTHERS DO BAD THINGS**

Once again the Lord's people are facing the problem of liberal false teachers working to change the faith and practice of the church. From many quarters we hear of preachers and others set on bringing about unscriptural changes they wish to see implemented. They would change the way we worship in song, the role of our women in public worship, the way people receive salvation, our relationship with the denominational world, the way we interpret and apply Scripture, even the way we view God's Word. If they are successful, they will bring chaos and division to the church as their predecessors have done in the past.

There are determined false teaches who have a mission and goal of subverting and gaining control over congregations and eventually the whole church. There are others who **enable** the church-wreckers to succeed. These brethren love the church. They would not intentionally harm her. In their naivete they operate very much as the family member who enables the alcoholic to continue his destructive behavior. The writer of Hebrew speaks of some who entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:2), so also some entertain liberals unaware.

- \* Some enablers have had such faulty Bible training that they truly feel it would be rude and unchristian on their part to speak up against a teacher of error.
- \* Some are novices in the faith or in leadership. Thus they allow unsound teachers to enter in and influence the congregation they lead. They are hesitant to challenge the false teacher, even though they are uncomfortable with his message or proposals.
- \* Some are clearly deceived. They would not knowingly be party to harming the Cause of Christ. False teachers always depend on smooth and fair speech to deceive the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:18). They use cunningly devised fables (II Pet. 1:16) when spinning their web.
- \* Some lack adequate knowledge to discern the error being propagated. Now as always people and churches are destroyed by lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6).
- \* Some mistakenly think that unity at any price is preferable to maintaining a pure Biblical faith and church. Unity is precious. We must work to maintain it (Eph. 4:3) but Christ never intended that we sacrifice truth and faithful obedience to have unity with those who promote a false way.

Innocent of evil intent these brethren may be, but they nevertheless enable the enemies of the church to gain an entrance and commence their destructive work. Some folks by their failure to protect the flock of God are unconscious enemies of the cause of Christ. JHW

## A VISIT TO A CHANGED CHURCH

Recently I visited the websites of **Jeff Jenkins and the Shannon Oaks Church of Sulphur Springs, Texas**. I was greatly impressed. Since for many, "Seeing is believing," I share with you my readers some of what I learned. (For those unfamiliar with the change movement, I offer a few observations and explanations, in italics, to focus the picture).

On the church's page I read:

\* About the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit is present in the world, continually making men aware of their need for God" "He (the Spirit) provides the Christian with...understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right." (*This is the Calvinistic doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the human mind, convicting sinners, enlightening Bible readers. The problem is, those who claim this enlightenment end up with different understandings of the Bible and guided into hundreds of different kinds of churches*).

\* About Salvation: "This Salvation is available for all who turn to Christ in faith and make Him Lord of their life...and baptism is our confession of the sufficiency of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to Save us from Sin." (*Their doctrine is salvation by faith, before baptism and baptism to declare one's salvation. Both borrowed from the Baptists*).

\* About the Church. "The church is the entire body of Christ on earth. Regardless of denominational titles there is one body; and, though it is diverse, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit..." (*This is an affirmation that all denominations are of equal standing before God, and that their church is also a denomination*).

\* Their "Core Values." "Shannon Oaks Church is an autonomously led, non-denominational Christian Fellowship. We value and operate in the freedom to be flexible in areas that are not considered to be **permanent-core doctrine** (i.e. doctrines that are explicitly stated and are not understood to be bound to a particular time in history or culture...) Our non-negotiable doctrines lie solely in the matters directly related to a person's salvation...In matters regarding gender roles, church structure and organization...as long as our actions do not directly violate the clear and permanent core doctrines and expressed will of God, we will operate freely..." (*"Core doctrine" is a major teaching of the change movement. It seeks to limit the essentials of Christianity to a few chosen items leaving all the rest open to change. Any doctrine or practice not directly related to salvation (by believing in Jesus) they feel free to change if they desire. Gender roles is the code term for women in leadership roles, church structure and organization has to do with the government of the church*).

\* Their "Vision." "God is envisioning us to be a church that is open to change and emerge as God leads us." (*Notice they attribute to God their desire to change the pattern of the church, her doctrine and worship. It does not matter to them that He has provided instruction for all of these in his divine Word*).

\* Don Shannon came for the church's Memorial Day worship service and played Amazing Grace on his Bagpipes.

\* Note that they no longer identify themselves as a church of Christ. (*This is a proper decision since they no long are a church of Christ in name, worship or doctrine*).

On **Jeff Jenkins'** personal page ([www.jeffjenkins.blogspot.com](http://www.jeffjenkins.blogspot.com)) for Monday June 28, 04 we read:

\* "Yesterday morning was powerful as one of my friends shared his heart about how much he has struggled with the changes at Shannon Oaks in regards to the style of worship and instruments in worship." (*They have already embraced the use of instrumental music in worship, although such did not enter Christian history until 600 years after Christ*).

\* At a special gathering of the church, one brother commented "there are many people hurting over the people who have left Shannon Oaks in the last year because of the changes that have been made and some because of the way the changes were made." (*As in virtually every congregation, when the change agents move in with their agenda, faithful Christians are forced out because they cannot accept the errors being introduced. When such separations happen in a "traditional" congregation, they brand it as division. When it happens to them it is "a few folks left"*).

\* The preacher observed, "There is nothing we can do about people who disagree with processes and issues...but from this point forward we have to love everyone and keep on moving toward the mission of doing whatever it takes to honor God..." He closed with the strong affirmation, "No turning back!" (*Brethren may be forced out, but he will not be deterred from is goal of changing the church into a non-denominational denominational body. This spirit will eventually*



*drive a wedge into the very heart of the church throughout the world).*

\* The preacher's site offers lots of links to help his readers get on the fast track to change: There are links to **Wineskins Magazine** (*chief organ of the change movement*), Willow Creek Association (*Role model for those wishing to build a mega church*); Rick Warren and Saddleback Church (*Chief architect of the philosophy driving the change movement*) and under Restoration Ministries he links to Farmer's Branch Church, Richland Hills Church, (*Prominent Changed Churches*) and John York, Rubel Shelly and John Mark Hicks (*Among the most daring promoters of change*). JHW

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## STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS

Churches of Christ are standing at a critical crossroads. It is the same one our ancestors faced and it is one most of our religious neighbors have had to deal with.

At the turn of the last century our fathers arrived at this same crossroads. The road to the right led to ultra-conservatism and extremism. Led by Daniel Sommer of Indianapolis, a handful of disciples chose that path. As they traveled, their road grew ever more constricted. They continually tightened their circle of fellowship. Again and again they quarreled and broke fellowship with each other. Today, a half dozen or more small bodies still trudge this dreary path.

The vast majority of our fathers paused and pondered the future and chose the path to the left. They had grown weary of the straitened and narrow road which they and their predecessors had traveled for a hundred long years. The road to the left was broad and smooth. It was thoroughly modern. Vast multitudes of other religious folks were choosing it. It was not a lonely road. That road abounded in things exciting, entertaining and popular. All who chose it were applauded and welcomed by the crowd along the way. Bold leaders like W. K. Pendleton, Isaac Errett, J. H. Garrison and Herbert Willett challenged the masses to reject the old narrow road and follow them down the new broad road of spiritual adventure. Fully 85 percent rushed after them. Today they are known as the Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches denomination.

The remnant that was left, cast their eyes about. They consulted again their road map to eternity and studied it carefully. They besought God's will and guidance in prayer. Convinced that the way straight before them was the Savior's Way, their leaders challenged them to go forward. They were bound for New Jerusalem and were not going to be diverted. There was only one way to go. God-fearing men like David Lipscomb, F. D. Srygley, Austin McGary and J. D. Tant exhorted and encouraged their fellow pilgrims. They shepherded the stragglers and urged them to keep their eyes upon the goal. As the journey proceeded, others took note and joined their caravan. Individuals and families, even congregations realized that theirs was the glory land way and fell in beside them. Their numbers swelled until well more than a million joyful souls streamed along the upward path. Men and women of every tribe and nation were invited to join them and multitudes did. They were trudging the old paths that led to the Father's home.

Now a century has past. We have come to yet another crossroads. Three options are before us. A noisy throng is trying to convince us to take the road to the right. Ultra-conservatism always leads to radicalism and faction. A larger crowd is already streaming down the road on the left. They are following their Protestant neighbors on that broad road. Again the emotion, excitement and popularity of the left are drawing them onward. Learned professors keep telling them it is the way to go. They ridicule the old paths as obsolete and boring. The majority have yet to decide. Shall we follow the old paths our fathers trod or shall we turn aside to the right or the left? If the pilgrims are to be encouraged to stay on the highway of holiness, strong and faithful preachers and elders will have to step forth and lead the way. Congregations tend to follow their leaders. May God raise up such leaders. The future of His Son's church hangs in the balance. JHW

## THE LAW OF SILENCE

Total respect for God's word demands more than many are willing to give. We must recognize and accept the authority of God's silence. He does not have to say "thou shalt not" in order to prohibit a thing. Failure to recognize or accept this principle has been one of the fundamental, underlying causes of our religious differences. Some of those who went before us recognize the importance of this principle.

Church historian, J. M. D'Aubigne, wrote, "Luther was desirous of retaining in the church all that was not expressly contradicted by Scripture, while Zwingle was intent on abolishing all that could not be proved by Scripture" (**History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century**, pg. 342).

Dirk Phillips, Anabaptist preacher, wrote: "It is evident that whatever God has not commanded and has not instituted by express commands of Scripture, He does not want observed nor does He want to be served therewith, nor will He have His Word set aside nor made to suit the pleasure of men." (This was written by Phillips in the 16th century in his book **Vindication**, quoted by J.D. Murch, **Christian Only**, pg. 15.)

That there is such a principle is clearly stated in I Corinthians 4:6 where Paul writes "that ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written." We see it applied in at least four instances.

In Acts 15:1 we read of certain brethren who taught circumcision as a Christian doctrine and insisted on its observance. The apostles and elders wrote the brethren concerning this practice: "we have heard that certain (men) who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; **to whom we gave no commandment**" (Acts 15:24). They proceeded to repudiate the actions of these certain men. Even though circumcision had been commanded under the Old Covenant, it could not be bound upon the church since no commandment concerning it had been given.

In establishing the superiority of Christ over angels, the author writes, "having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For **unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou are my son...**" (Hebrews 1:4-5). The very fact that **God had not said** to one of the angels these words which He spoke of the Son is proof of their inferiority to Christ.

While explaining the need for the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, the writer says, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity to change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah: **as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests** (Hebrews 7:12-14).

When the Passover feast was instituted, God ordained that it be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month (Numbers 9:1-5). When some men were unable to observe the feast for reasons beyond their control, they asked Moses if they could do so at a later date (vss. 6-7). No Scripture said "thou shalt not observe the feast at a different time." Yet even the great lawgiver Moses dared not to authorize such an exception without a commandment from Jehovah (vs. 8). When divine permission was given, only then did he allow the exception (vss. 9-11). Moses respected the law of silence.

### The Application of the Law of Silence for Us Today

We are limited in our Christian faith and practice to that which God has authorized in his Word. Jesus said, teach "them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Paul warns that we must not go beyond the things which are written (I Corinthians 4:6 ASV). John reminds us that only those who abide in the teaching of Christ enjoy the blessings of the Father and Son (II John 9). We do not ask "where does the Bible forbid a thing?" rather we ask, "where is it authorized?"

A thing may be authorized generally or specifically. The command to "Go preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15), is a **general command** that authorizes any and all modes of travel. "**Preach the gospel**" specifies what must be taught, thus forbids the teaching of human opinions, traditions, and philosophy.

We must never presume a thing is acceptable simply by the fact that it is not specifically forbidden. God did not specifically forbid carrying the ark of the covenant on an ox cart, yet doing so cost a man his life (I Chronicles 13:6-10; 15:2, 13).

Even the world recognizes this principle. The pharmacist who fills a doctor's prescription is not at liberty to substitute another substance simply because the doctor did not say "thou shalt not" do so. He is bound to obey the law of silence!

If we do not respect the sacred silence of God's Word, then no one can object to infant baptism or sprinkling, counting beads, burning of incense, and a thousand other things that God did not specifically forbid being introduced into the faith and worship of the church. The concept that "I can do anything God does not forbid" in Christian worship lets in an avalanche that few are ready to accept. Nadab and Abihu violated this law by offering strange fire in worship which Jehovah "had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1-3). God had not **specifically** forbidden the use of their fire by direct command. However, it was forbidden since he had specified that for incense they were to use the fire from the perpetual fire on the great altar before the tabernacle (Leviticus 16:12-13).

It is the silence of the New Testament on instrumental music in worship that leads us to reject that practice and other like additions to our faith and worship. J.D. Murch comments on this theme:

"Within the last generation the Church of Christ has made a phenomenal growth. This is due to two things:

1. Its people have stood like a rock of Gibraltar for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a "peculiar" people teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life.
2. **They have come to realize that the silence of the Scriptures must be respected** as well as the commandments of Scripture, but that obedience to its silences permits freedom of judgment and action (**Christians Only**, pg. 313).

Sadly, few Christians understand the "silence of the Scriptures" today. Every leader and teacher should familiarize himself with this important concept not only that his own faith might be strong, but that he might also teach others. When a generation grows up that does not know this principle of truth, they may well reason like Martin Luther, "I can do anything the Bible does not specifically forbid." Woe to the church when that day comes. JHW

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## PARABLE OF THE DAMAGED KINGDOM

Once there was a king of a fair and prosperous kingdom. When he was away on a long journey his kingdom was undermined by rebels who wished to capture his domain and impose their will upon his citizens.

In his employ were a multitude of men whose responsibility it was to protect his citizens and guard his kingdom. As the rebels did their destructive work, the king's defenders behaved in the strangest way. Some were busy playing games, hunting and fishing. Others spent endless hours with their eyes closed in repose. Some busied themselves by endlessly going to school, "ever learning" but too busy to tend their Master's affairs. Some had projects of their own that left them little or no time for the king's business. Some kept assuring themselves and others that all was well, that those who appeared to be enemies were really friends of their Lord. When a few valiant men sought to block the advance of the invading rebels, others actually threw stones at them and heaped curses and insults upon them as trouble-makers.

One day the king unexpectedly returned home and found his kingdom in shambles. His people were scattered and many cities were occupied by rebels. Calling his guardians together, he inquired why they had allowed this disaster to occur. One by one they came before him. Ashamed and afraid for their neglect, they offered their excuses: "I was fishing." "I was busy pursuing my degree." "I don't like controversy." "I did not think they were all that bad." "I preferred to do positive things." "I tried to understand their point of view."

The king said to them "You careless and irresponsible guardians. It trusted you to watch my kingdom. You ate at my table. You failed me and those I entrusted to your care. Now depart from me you worthless servants. He ordered them cast out with the rebels whose cause they aided by their neglect. He that hath ears, let him hear and learn. JHW

## COMMUNITY CHURCHES AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

We all understand that God did not assign a specific name to his church. Rather, several different names are used to designate his people: church of God, church of the Lord, churches of Christ and the church. When there was but one body of people in the world that honored Christ as their founder, head and Lord there was no need for any further identification. We, however, live in a society where there are upwards of 1500 different kinds of churches. This situation creates a state of confusion as to which body of people one is referring to when he speaks of or asks about "the church." This situation necessitates that we have some way of identifying ourselves so we can communicate, find each other and point others to a body of brethren in a given place.

In the early days of the Restoration Movement three different streams of people came together to unite on the Bible and restore the faith and practice of the original church. Those led by Alexander Campbell most often referred to themselves as Disciples of Christ. Those led by Barton Stone most often used the name Church of Christ. Those coming from the James O'Kelly, Elias Smith and Abner Jones movement preferred the name Christian Church. There was not a strict adherence to any particular one of these names and all the brethren recognized each other as fellow-Christians serving God in one body. When schism occurred at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, those preferring to have instrumental music, missionary societies, women in positions of church leadership, etc., generally identified themselves as Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ. Our brethren distinguished themselves by the biblical name Churches of Christ, found in Rom. 16:16. Over a period of 25 years this distinction of names became virtually complete. Our brethren continued to hold and use the name Church of Christ, not because it was the exclusive Bible cognomen for the church but because it was biblical and was helpful in identifying our people, wherever they might be.

Over the last 40 years, as liberalism slowly eroded the Biblical foundations of many of our younger preachers and they in turn failed to properly instruct and indoctrinate our people, a new generation of leaders arose who seemed to be ashamed of their association with the brotherhood of people known as Churches of Christ. They craved acceptance with their neighbors of the Evangelical churches. They did not want to bear the stigma of being exclusive and different from the worldly churches around them. Since they no longer believed the exclusive message of salvation and the one church of Scripture, they did not want to be publicly identified with those who still held to such exclusive beliefs. Hence they began to cast around for a name that would do two things:

- \* It would mask from the people of their community that they were affiliated with other Churches of Christ.
- \* It would make them appear like other "Community Churches" that were experiencing phenomenal growth. We know that many of those who have taken this route have chosen as their models, "Non-denominational Community Churches" such as the Saddleback Community Church of Orange County California and Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois and Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral. Of course those churches are thoroughly denominational in their faith and practice since they prefer the doctrines and commandments of men rather than the authority of the New Testament of Christ as their standard. Numerous Baptist, Methodist, Reformed and other denominational congregations have also taken this same moniker of "Community Church." It seems that some of our brethren prefer to be identified with such groups rather than with their brethren of the Churches of Christ.
- \* Another probable motive is that under the name of Community Church, the typical congregation places little or no emphasis on doctrinal loyalty. Thus a typical Community Church might employ a Methodist minister this year and a Disciples of Christ man the next, and a female Presbyterian the following. Indicators are that some of our brethren who have chosen this route have a similar laxness about doctrinal standards. Church for them is all about fellowship, fun, doing good and feeling good. Such things as abiding in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11) are given little emphasis.

Those of our people who have chosen to identify themselves as Community churches seem to have a commonality about them. They all have embraced the agenda of the change movement which seeks to transform our people into the likeness of our denominational neighbors. Such things as salvation by grace through faith before immersion, a de-emphasis on the importance of baptism, a willingness to tolerate the use of instrumental music in worship, a willingness to allow women to assume leadership roles in the life of the church, acceptance of denominational churches as in good standing with God and other related issues seem to be part and parcel of those wishing to be known as "Community Churches." Several of our Universities and Colleges have given encouragement to the Community Church movement: among them Abilene Christian University, Pepperdine University and Harding Graduate School of Religion.

It would be as scriptural to identify ones congregation as the Community Church of Christ as the State Street Church of

Christ. But for most of these folks, they want the "Community Church" without the "of Christ" designation. As Jesus said we can only judge them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16-21). The direction of this movement is away from New Testament Christianity and from obedience to the message of Christ. It is away from the brotherhood of Churches of Christ of which they once were a part. In my judgment it would be a mistake for a congregation to take such a name as it creates confusion as to who they are. It also identifies them with those who are abandoning the Bible as their standard of faith and practice. It reflects on their part a sense of shame to be identified with the gospel and the body of Christ. Paul was not ashamed of the message he preached (Rom. 1:16) With Jesus, he gladly endured the shame of the cross (Heb. 12:2; Gal. 5:11) and so should we. If the world despises us for what we believe and stand for, so be it. They hated Jesus for his faith and convictions (John 15:17-20). JHW

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## I HAVE CHANGED

Observing the band of men who are feverishly working to change the church of Christ into a denominational body, I am reminded that I too have changed.

- \* When I began preaching I weighed 130 lbs. I now weigh 180.
- \* Then I was a babe in Christ with a thimble full of Bible knowledge, now I am a teacher of babes.
- \* Back then I had blonde hair, now I am bald with a fringe of gray.
- \* Then I wore reading glasses, now I am in trifocals
- \* When I started preaching I was a recent highschool graduate, now I have a college degree.
- \* Then I was a novice in the faith now I operate on 50 years of experience and learning in Christ.
- \* When I was baptized I had never read a religious book, now I have read some 2200 of them.
- \* Back then I had never been far from Davidson County Tennessee, the place of my birth. Now I have preached in some 35 states, traveled in some 20 foreign nations and lived in four states.
- \* There was a time when I was a newly wed, now I am a grandfather with six grandchildren.

This list could be expanded but it demonstrates that which is true of all Christians. We change and hopefully it is for the better.

There are however some things that are unchanging. Christ's will for me has not changed (Matt. 24:35). The church built by Christ has not changed (Matt. 16:18). The pattern given by Christ for his church is the same now as then (II Tim. 1:13). God's appointed way of worshiping him has not changed. The way of salvation has not changed (Mk. 16:16). These are eternal verities.

However, some of our brethren have changed for the worse. They have grown weary of walking in the old paths. They crave something new and different. They are trying to change the church of Christ into a human denomination. They want to change the way we praise God in song from speaking one to another in songs (Eph. 5:19), to performances by gifted singers and/or the use of instrumental music with our praise. They want to change the observance of the Lord's Supper from a sacred memorial (I Cor. 11:25-26) to a joyful celebratory feast. From a Lord's Day observance (Acts 20:7), they would observe it at times of their own choosing. They would change the divinely appointed male leadership of the church (I Tim. 3:1; I Tim. 2:8) by allowing women to fill these roles (I Tim. 2:12). Even the Bible's role they would change. From being the pattern God gave us (II Tim. 2:13), they would change the way we view it to a love letter or story book from God.

Yes there are areas in which I have changed. I have grown in my faith, in my understanding of God's Word, in wisdom and experience, in my ability to serve him but I will never outgrow those fundamentals of Christianity set forth by the Savior and his apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:11-12). When I have finished my course and am laid to rest, those great principles will be the same as when they were intrusted to me 48 years ago. JHW

## VOLUNTEERS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHURCH

This is a plea to all those who love and respect the church of Christ to launch their own personal campaign for her preservation. Across the nation people and communities organize and diligently work to preserve historic buildings, archeological ruins and natural sites of unique beauty and worth. They do this for themselves but also for the benefit of those who will come after them. Today the church of Christ is facing a wide-spread assault from the hands of preachers and educators in our midst. Just as thoughtless and reckless citizens neglect and destroy priceless historic sites, the change agents working among us are destroying the precious things of Christ's church.

We desperately need devout Christians who love the historic church, her faith and worship, to come forward volunteering to help protect and preserve her from those who would destroy her. We speak not of buildings of wood or stone, but of the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:21-23); his bride (Eph. 5:22-32); his kingdom (Matt. 16:18).

\* We need Christians to speak up and speak out in defense of the church and her foundational doctrines and practices.

\* We need preachers who will invest the necessary time and energy to inform themselves about those who are calling for change and the errors they are promoting. We need them to use that information to educate and inform their fellow-Christians; both in their home congregations and the brotherhood at large.

\* We need strong, well-informed preachers and elders who can and will stand up to and confute the false teachers of change (Acts 18:28); publicly if necessary!

\* We need strong and faithful elders who will take the responsibility of making sure their preachers are not involved in the change movement. We need men who will inform their preachers, youth ministers and other teachers that the views and promotions of the change agents will not be tolerated in their midst. Elders are needed that in interviewing incoming workers will carefully question them and make it crystal clear that no one favoring this destructive movement will be employed by them.

\* We need devoted disciples who will speak to their elders and preachers, expressing their concern for the welfare of the church; that sound doctrine be sounded forth in their pulpits and classrooms; who will let it be known they will not abide the change movement being brought into their congregation.

\* We need strong Christians who will work with us to inform other Christians of the dangers of the pernicious movement.

\* We need people who will assist us in getting the monthly print edition of **Christianity Then and Now** to the leaders of every congregation in the country.

\* To send it to every congregation in Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

\* To send it to all foreign missionaries of the church.

\* To help us send bundles of CTN to all Schools of Preaching and Bible departments of Christian Schools.

\* We need assistance in disseminating the paper to as many individual Christian families as possible. Folks are needed who will duplicate their monthly copies of the CTN and share them with others of their congregation and acquaintance.

\* Internet users are needed who will work with us by forwarding our weekly lessons addressing the change movement to all the Christians on their email list.

\* Christians are needed to help underwrite the cost of publishing tracts and books written by competent brethren refuting various components of the change heresy.

\* We need disciples who will not compromise their faith and salvation by staying with a church that has abandoned the New Testament pattern of faith and worship for the denominationalism of the change movement.

Your state or community likely has a historical preservation society that is serving a useful purpose. The Lord's church likewise needs dedicated friends who will work to protect her in the same fashion. JHW

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION

The wisdom of man seeks to unite all things under one blanket, making no distinction between good and bad, right or wrong. But God calls for separation in many areas of life.

\* **God the Creator is separate from his creation.** Pantheism teaches that the creation is the body of God, that they are inseparable. Following Hinduism, New Age cults espouse this view. But God existed before the cosmos. Moses wrote, "Before... thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2). The creation will eventually be destroyed (II Pet. 3:7) and God will continue to exist. When the first heavens and earth are passed away, the saints will dwell with God in his eternal home (Rev. 21:1-3).

\* **When God chose Abraham to be the father of the Hebrew race, he separated him** from his pagan surroundings in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1). Later, when he brought the Hebrews into Canaan he told them, "I am Jehovah... who hath separated you from the peoples" (Lev. 20:22-24). Most of their national troubles resulted from their forgetting this fact!

\* **When Jesus came into the world, he was "separate from sinners"** (Heb. 7:26). He did not align himself with any of the religious sects of Judaism. Apart from all others, He set about to establish his kingdom on this earth.

\* **Christianity is separate from all other religions.** Christ made it clear that he alone is "the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by (him)" (John 14:6). Liberal scholars pretend that all the great religions are of equal value. The **atheistic type** pronounce them all equally worthless, the **religious type** see all leading to God. But such "pluralism" is unknown to the Lord. Paul wrote that it was God's plan to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to himself "in one body" (Eph. 2:16). The same could be said for the Buddhist, Hindoo, Muslim and Taoist.

\* **Jesus is separate from and superior to all other founders and leaders of the various world religions.** He was God's only begotten son (John 3:16). He is God incarnate (John 1:1-3,14). The others are all sinners like us. They died and are unable to escape death's grip. His way is that of truth and righteousness theirs are ways of confusion and error.

\* **Christ's church is separate from all churches founded by men.** It is heavenly in origin and design (Eph. 3:9-10). It was founded by the Son of God (Matt. 16:18). It is prior to and superior to all other churches created by men. Christ will save *his* church (Eph. 5:23). The difference is that of the genuine and the counterfeit. The church of Christ is not part of the ecumenical movement. We cannot be, for it seeks to unite Christ's church with those founded by men. We do not unite our efforts to evangelize the world with other religious organizations. They have neither part nor lot in what we are commissioned to do (Mk. 16:15).

\* **Christians must be separate from the sinful world.** Paul instructed the Corinthian saints, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity?... Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:14-18). Jesus reminds us that while we live in the world, we "are not of the world" (John 17:14,16). Followers of Christ are to separate themselves from sinful thoughts and deeds of the world (Jas. 1:21).

\* **Truth is separate from error.** Only truth can set us free (John 8:32). Error enslaves. Enemies of Christ will separate (isolate) us from their society. Jesus predicted, "...men shall hate you, and ... they shall separate you from their company..." (Luke 6:22). There are times when we ourselves have to do the separating. When the Jews became hardened and disobedient, Paul "departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9).

\* **The church must separate herself from those who are unfaithful disciples.** When men depart from the teaching of Christ we are not to receive them or encourage them (II John 9-11). We must turn away from those who cause divisions in the church (Rom. 16:17-18). Impenitent sinners are to be separated from the church (I Cor. 5:13) as are those who are disorderly in conduct (II Thess. 3:6).

\* **There are some areas in which Christ brings us together.** All Christians are united with him when baptized (Rom. 6:5). In Christ we are not longer alienated from God, but reconciled (Col. 1:21-22). All faithful disciples are united with each other in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Paul assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ (Rom. 8:35, 39).

\* **There is yet to be one great and final separation.** One the day of judgement, Jesus will separate humanity as a

shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and those who are righteous will go away into eternal life, but the wicked into eternal punishment (Matt. 25:32, 46). JHW

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## THE CONVICTION IT TAKES TO WIN

Before this generation passes one of two things will have occurred:

- 1). The change agents will have been met, defeated and routed, or
- 2). They will have prevailed and the church we love will be left a broken and scattered remnant.

The victory will not be easily won, nor will the conflict be won by armchair soldiers. It will only be gained if a courageous and dedicated band of Christian soldiers commit themselves, without reservation, to their Lord and the welfare of his kingdom.

When the patriot fathers launched the revolution that gave birth to this nation, they pledged their sacred honor, wealth and lives" to that cause (Declaration of Independence). It will take that same degree of dedication and commitment to save the church from the juggernaut of error that now threatens to destroy her.

Paul was willing to spend and be spent for the Cause he loved (II Cor. 12:15). Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it (Eph. 5:25). To win this battle that spirit must take hold of our hearts.

\* Truth must take precedence over error, no matter how popular the error may be.

\* Loyalty to Christ must take priority over loyalty to men and institutions, no matter how strong the bands of friendship and affection may be.

\* The authority of Scriptures must preempt the will of men in all matters relating to our faith, worship and practice (Gal. 1:10). To preach, to accept, to tolerate another gospel is more than a simple choice it is to be alienated from and anathema to God (Gal. 1:8).

\* The kingdom of Christ must be cherished more than jobs, brotherhood recognition, popularity and worldly success. If we are "striving to please men (we) should not be servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

\* "The old paths" of Scripture must be valued more than the new paths of the "change agents" (Jer. 6:16). The old came from Christ; they are plainly set forth in Scripture. They can be followed in full confidence. The new paths of the professors of change have as their authority the uninspired assertions of men who aren't sure about the inerrancy of God's Word (See **God's Holy Fire**, By K. L. Cukrowski, M. W. Hamilton and J. W. Thompson of Abilene Christian University, pub. By ACU Press, pp. 39-44). Nor are they sure of the primacy of the new Covenant of Christ over the Old Covenant of Moses.

The battle being thrust upon us will be intense. It will result in the rise and fall of many in the Israel of God. False teachers who have already attained positions of power and influence are not likely to meekly surrender and walk away. It will require spiritual warfare on a large scale to dislodge them. As in Gideon's day, many will have no stomach for the conflict. The outcome will depend on a Gideon's band of 300 brave men to meet and rout them. The most pressing question of the day is where will you be found in the day of battle? JHW



## CONCERN FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH

Churches of Christ of the 21st century are faced with a movement which, if left unchallenged, will surely destroy them as a unique body of people. Known as the **change movement**, its promoters seek to undermine and change the faith, worship and practices of our churches. To survive this onslaught there are things we must do.

\* We must somehow, convince our people that the danger is real and imminent. Many evidently do not think such is the case.

\* We must find a way to educate brethren of the true nature and extent of the changes being proposed and promoted.

\* We must convince concerned preachers and elders that **their duty extends beyond their local congregations**. True, our first duty is to teach, indoctrinate and inoculate our own congregation against the errors being promoted. But we are also members of the brotherhood of Churches of Christ (I Pet. 2:17), the body of Christ that extends around the world and embraces every disciple of Christ on this planet. Being a member of that universal church, I have duties to it as well. I am duty bound to promote that greater Cause, to work for the growth and prosperity of the universal church. I must be concerned when she is threatened or when she is not prospering. I must come to her defense when she is being attacked by her enemies. Paul wrote that "anxiety for all the churches" pressed upon him daily (II Cor. 11:28). We should have no less concern for the Lord's kingdom.

The application of these points means that even if my local church is sound in the faith, spiritually united and happy, and unaffected by the change heresy, I still have concern and a duty to those churches not so blessed. I have an obligation to see that others are warned, assisted, and defended when they are endangered.

Concern for the brotherhood is in our own self-interest. Even though there may be no immediate problem in our home congregation, we cannot avoid being affected by trends and movements that sweep over the brotherhood. Ours is a mobile society. Each year thousands of Christians move to new locations. If by chance a person moves to your community who has been infected with the change virus, you will suddenly have the problem. It can creep in via your Bible Class literature. It may enter by way of your young people who become infected at a youth camp. A family might bring it back from an encampment. A member may read a book promoting change and be attracted to it. An incoming minister or youth worker may be a carrier of this spiritual malady. What happens in and to the brotherhood does affect the local church. Hence each of us must be concerned to inform ourselves of what is occurring even in distant places. We must do our part to promote sound teaching and practices and to oppose error even though it is presently far away. To do otherwise is to be derelict in our duty and leave our congregations open to danger.

We ought to be concerned and eager to help because the universal church is the body of Christ, his beloved bride, his kingdom (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23-25; Col. 1:13). To be unconcerned and indifferent to threats and harm to the church is a shameful neglect of our duty to our Savior.

When you sing "**I Love Thy Kingdom Lord**," remember that it is not just your local congregation of which you sing, but the whole of God's people around the world. JHW

# THE AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY

Without an established code of law and authority, a kingdom cannot long exist. If its subject refuse to submit to the established authority, a nation will soon collapse. A kingdom whose citizens are divided in their allegiance to conflicting sources of authority is doomed to failure. These points are conceded by all, yet there is utter confusion as to the established law and authority in Christianity. Folks are trying to serve God, when they have not learned or accepted the authority established by God.

## CONTEMPORARY THEORIES ABOUT RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

\* In Roman Catholicism it is argued that **the church, with its pope and his cardinals**, has the authority to interpret the Bible and to legislate law for the church. The history of Catholicism reveals the fallacy of this approach to authority. Churches are composed of fallible, often sinful, men. God made Christ to be the head of his Church (Eph. 1:22). That authority he has not surrendered to anyone.

\* The larger Protestant churches look to their **creedal statements** as authoritative. Yet they find it necessary to revise them every few years. Yesterday's sins are today's privileges.

\* **Traditions from the past** are revered as authoritative by some. Yet Jesus waned against traditions that make "void the word of God" (Matt. 15:8-9).

\* **The founding fathers of a denomination** may be looked to as the voice of authority. But no man has the right to start his own church or to legislate for the people of God. It is just such men who are responsible for the mass confusion in the Christendom today.

\* Most denominational bodies have **conventions where church leaders** decide what they will believe and do.

\* Many moderns view **human reason** as the final authority in their religion. God reminded the Hebrews "...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55:8-9). Reason subjected to the Revelation of God is man's most valuable asset. But when exalted beyond its proper realm, reason is the cause of his alienation.

\* **Multitudes see conscience as their authority** in religion. Solomon said, "There is a way that seemeth right to a man but the ends thereof is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25). The conscience must be trained in truth before it can safely lead us; and God's Word is that truth (John 17:17). Feelings are not a safe guide.

## WHERE DID GOD PLACE THE AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY?

All authority has been given unto the victorious Christ (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). His word will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Jesus delegated his authority to his apostles, saying, Go teach all nations, baptizing them and "teaching them to observe all things... I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Their writings, our New Testament, is the only authority we possess. Those who seek to please God, speak and act only as Scripture authorizes. Peter wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). Thus the early church continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching" (Acts 2:42). John warns, "Whosoever abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching the same hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). The New Testament of Jesus is the absolute and only authority for Christ's church and those who wish to please Him will look to it for direction in every matter of faith, worship and practice. Such is a distinguishing mark of a body of people who are truly and only, a church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). JHW

## THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

In the early part of last century our denominational neighbors were busy absorbing the liberal theology flowing from their seminaries. One prominent aspect of that approach to Christianity was the "Social Gospel." This concept was based on the belief that "man was to be perfected through change in society" "That...belief lead some to engage in active social work as a means of Christian witness" (**New International Dict. Of the Christian Church**, Revised by J. D. Douglas). It blossomed in churches, "most of which were influenced by liberal theology and progressive social thought." (**Dict. Of Christianity in America** by D.C. Reid *et al.*). "the Social Gospel is often identified with theological liberalism..." Although, as a movement, the Social Gospel has disappeared, "its influence remains both in the more liberal mainline denominations and in ...American evangelicals since the 1960s" (**New Dict. Of Theology**, S. B. Ferguson, *et al.*). The last sentence tells where we enter the picture. As some of our schools, preachers and churches have become more liberal in their theology, they have embraced the ideas of the Social Gospel in their local work and in their foreign mission endeavors.

One sure indicator of this approach is when a church puts more emphasis on providing social services to people than it does to teaching them the gospel and bringing them into the kingdom of Christ. One need only look at the large number of our churches who are stagnant in terms of evangelism, with no outreach and ingathering of souls. Yet they console themselves by pointing to the contributions they make to the many social-service organizations operated by our brethren. Look at our church newspapers and notice the missionary reports. One missionary team has a well-drilling ministry, another offers lengthy studies in disease and first-aid. There are AIDS ministries and drug rehab programs. We read of literary programs and job-training programs. Educational projects are springing up as well as medical clinics. A few years back there was a dairy cattle breeding program. Another was providing sewing machines. We see the same problem here at home when misguided folks insist that the church's benevolence in no way be tied to teaching the recipient the gospel and urging them to turn to the Savior. In one case a discussion was in progress about providing prenatal care for poor mothers. When reminded that no provisions had been made to teach them the gospel one deacon responded that "You know, you can't teach those people." This is flawed thinking.

Lest I be thought an ogre for questioning these benevolent works, let me hasten to add that all of them are good and beneficial. But any or all of them, alone, will not save the souls of those who benefit by them. Only the gospel of Jesus is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). If we send missionaries and money to a distant land and dig the people a well, educate them and bring them good health and fail to teach them the gospel they will live longer, more healthy and enjoyable lives and then die lost. They will be facing an eternity separated from God. **The issue is one of priority.** Christ commissioned his church to send missionaries to lost souls, first and foremost, to teach them about the Lord and his will for their lives (Matt. 28:19-20). We go to bring them into a saving relationship with him through faith and obedience to His will. Ancillary to that we assist them in other ways by ministering to their poverty and illness and sharing with them the knowledge we have that will improve their lives.

We should learn from the mistakes of our neighbors. Those churches that embraced the Social Gospel eventually lost all interest in teaching the gospel and converting the lost to Christ. In many cases their mission endeavors folded for loss of faith and lack of interest. Their churches are now in serious decline. Remember, our marching orders are "Go preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:16). JHW

## WHAT IT IS WE ARE ABOUT?

We are a restoration movement. We have found the current state of Christianity, misshapen and out of harmony with God's Word and thus we strive to restore our congregations to the original pattern set forth by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. From articles published and sermons heard, we observe that some among us do not have a clear vision of what restoration is all about.

Some seem to want to restore the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the pattern and standards of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. They remember the glory days of the 1930s through the 1950s and yearn for a return to such times. Most everyone used the King James Version back then. Preachers could preach an hour or longer and no one complained. They could boldly scold the various denominations by name and still people would come to hear them. Churches were filled primarily with folks from the lower and middle classes and their meeting places reflected that economic status. Those were the days when lots of people would come out for gospel meetings. There were few organized sports, no television to compete with services and wives and mothers generally did not work out of the home. Even schools would not schedule activities on Wednesday evenings. Unfortunately we do not live in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. As our culture and society have changed, we must find new strategies and ways of reaching the lost with the gospel...or we will be so out of touch that we will be considered irrelevant and thus left to wither away and die.

Some have in mind the restoration of a Southern, Bible-belt version of Christianity. The religion Christ gave us will grow and flourish in any society if those with good and honest hearts accept it. Those who have never traveled beyond their own small province sometimes think that all Christians and congregations should look just like theirs in every detail. The fact is that Christians in Asia and Africa dress differently than Christians in Georgia. Meeting places in other nations are notably different than we are use to. The songs they sing, the length of their services, their times of meeting and a hundred other non-essential things can be different without interfering with their quest to be simple Bible Christians. The same is true to a lesser degree here at home. One might find a different accent in those externals between churches in Alabama, Vermont and California. They need not conform in such matters.

Others evidently wish to restore an "American version" of Christianity. True the church has flourished here in America and from us it has gone forth around the globe to all the nations of the world. Congregations of God's people now assemble in some 110 nations of the earth. A few missionaries and some of those who travel among these churches are tempted to insist that they be fashioned like the churches "back home." We speak not of fundamentals of the faith, but of nonessentials, methods and externals. In such environs one might see Christians assembled with bare feet, mothers nursing their babies, women with heads wrapped in scarves, men in robes, a single cup for communion, people seated on the floor or on backless benches, or greeting one another with a holy kiss. Songs are often sung with different tempos than we are accustomed to. Saints might meet only once per week, they might continue their services for two or three hours. Some have separate classes, others do not. Preachers are often not college-trained nor as well read as we expect here at home. Sermons often address topics that we seldom here at home...but they are biblical and relevant to their situation.

We are about restoring the faith, worship and practice of the early Christians revealed in the New Testament of Christ. These essential fundamentals will of necessity be clothed in the garments of the culture and age in which a band of disciples live. Just as we differ from the congregation of Jews in Jerusalem, so might others differ from us and still be God's children. Failure to make the distinctions noted above has crippled us and has been the root cause of many cases of faction and division. Change agents at work among us cite examples such as these (those dealing with non-essentials) and then proceed to promote changes in the very essence of our faith. They would change the way we worship God in song, they would tamper with the Lord's Supper, they would change the way of salvation, they would change the essential nature of the church. The changes they proposed must be rejected forthrightly. To tolerate such changes is to embrace presumptuous error and false religion.

"Lord give us eyes to see the true essence of your Cause and to understand what it is we are about. Help us to extend freedom and liberty to every brother and sister, (wherever they may be), who like us are committed to honoring the faith, worship and practice you have ordained. In Jesus name." JHW

## SOME THINGS THAT DO NOT BELONG IN CHRIST'S CHURCH

The Church of Christ is a divine institution composed of human beings. This last factor means that all the weaknesses of humanity have the potential of showing up in a congregation of people. To offset the possibility of sinful human thinking adversely affecting the church, Christ put his Holy Word in our hands to regulate and control our faith, service and behavior. We are expected to "observe all things whatsoever he commanded" (Matt. 28:20). To make sure that disciples follow that Word, he gave us preachers to teach us (II Tim. 4:2) and elders to guide and oversee us (Acts 20:28).

In Christ's church there is no royalty. We are all brothers and sisters (Matt. 23:8) or "one man (Gal. 3:28). Rather than rule as lords, we are to serve as servants if we would please our Lord (Matt. 20:26). Conversely, there are no serfs, waifs or peons in His church. All share the dignity and honor of being children of the King (Gal. 3:26), thus deserving of respect and equitable treatment. Education, wealth, status and worldly honor are left at the door of the church just as the Oriental leaves his shoes at the door of his temple.

There are no CEOs, executives, presidents or board chairmen in the Church of Christ. The church is a monarchy, with Christ as king (I Tim. 6:14-15) and its only head (Eph. 1:22). He has all authority and is fully capable of directing the affairs of his people (Matt. 28:18). He has recorded that will for us in his Testament and he expects us to follow it. That one has been successful in the world of business, finance or education does not guarantee him a place of leadership in the church. He stands on equal footing with the farmer, the carpenter, the factory worker. Pride of office must also be left at the door, exchanged for a robe of humility that counts others better than self (Phil. 2:3). Over the ages those who sought to follow Christ have been scorned by worldly folks as "levelers" because they would not give deference to those whom the world considered important. Paul reminds us that not many of the world's wise, mighty and noble people are called into the kingdom (I Cor. 1:26) and those that are must come in as servants bowing before their Master (Phil. 2:10-11).

There is no special place in the Lord's church for beauty queens, or popularity contest winners. In school there are those whose beauty, handsomeness or popularity bring them special recognition, honor and privileges. But schools are of this world and those who garner those trophies may or not be Christians. Beauty is a gift from God as is athletic skill or a charming personality, but those things have no redeeming value. Paul counted all such worldly prizes as dung (Phil. 3:8 KJV). In fact they sometime cause their recipients to be vain and arrogant (Prov. 11:22). All of these worldly trophies must also be left at the door. Physical beauty counts nothing in Christ's kingdom, it is the inner beauty of the soul that counts (I Pet. 3:4-5). In Christ, the disfigured leper is as lovely as the beauty queen. Those who despise the poor, or unfortunate in life prove themselves unqualified for the heavenly realm (Jas. 2:1-6).

In the Savior's church there are no second class citizens with limited privileges. God has no step-children who like Cinderella must sit in the corner and do the chore work. The most miserable sinner can be washed clean by the blood of Jesus and made to sit with him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6). Those who by their raising or good circumstances have never tasted the bitter dregs of sin, must not be proud or act superior to those who have not been so blest. The father greeted with a joyful heart his prodigal son and gave him a homecoming feast without recrimination. The clean-living elder brother revealed the littleness of his heart by refusing to joy the celebration (Luke 15:20-32). There is a great lesson for Christians in this story.

To be the Christians God expects us to be and the church he wants us to be, let's all remember just what it means to be a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. It is faith and service that counts. JHW

## OUR GOAL

The spring, high in the mountain valley, sends forth its waters, crystal clear. As they cascade down the mountain, filth and pollution gradually find their way into the stream. By the time its reaches the plain in the lower valley, it is thoroughly polluted and unsafe to drink, untreated. So it is with Christianity. When the Lord established his church in Jerusalem it was exactly what he wanted it to be. But over the centuries, men have laid unholy hands upon Christ's precious church. Virtually every aspect of Christianity has suffered unauthorized change.

Time and again God has raised up holy men to call people back to the Bible, the original source of pure Christianity. Churches of Christ had their beginning in America in the early 19th century when James O'Kelly, Abner Jones, Elias Smith, Barton Stone, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell broke out of their respective denominations and resolved to restore the original faith and practice of the New Testament.

As the heirs of those noble men, we are committed to continuing that goal:

1. We honor Christ as the only founder and head of the church (Matt. 16:16-18).
2. We call ourselves only by Bible names. Collectively, we are churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16); individually, we are Christians, nothing more or less (I Pet. 4:16).
3. We teach people to be saved just as did Christ and his apostles, i.e., by faith, repentance, confession and immersion (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38).
4. We worship in the simple fashion of the first Christians, with weekly communion (Acts 20:7); prayers, vocal music (Eph. 5:19) sacrificial giving (I Cor. 16:1-2) and faithful teaching of the gospel (II Tim. 4:2).
5. We organize our churches with elders and deacons as prescribed by the apostles (I Tim. 3:1-13).
6. We pledge ourselves to do the work of Christ by doing those things he authorized us to do: evangelize the world, edify the church and care for the needy.
6. We strive to be holy in life by following Jesus in thought, word and deed (I Pet. 2:21).

Let us never forget our goal to be Christians, in the same manner as were the apostles and that courageous band of believers who risked their all to be the first disciples of Jesus. JHW

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## COME TO WORSHIP, NOT TO PLAY

When you go to a play ground you expect to play. When you go to church you should expect to worship. We are blessed to live in an age when we have plenty of time and money for recreation. It is good for our minds and our bodies. It is a mistake however to think of worship in terms of recreation and entertainment.

Many modern churches have evolved from centers for the worship of Jehovah into recreational centers with worship available for those who might be possibly be interested. This has come about, in part, to attract attendees who are not particularly interested in worship and Bible study. We see churches advertising their gyms, ball teams, exercise classes and other recreational type programs. They are very proud of these things, even though no authority is found for them in Scripture. God expects his church to abide within the teaching of Christ, if she is to have his approval (II John 9).

Be assured that ball games and exercise programs are good and useful in their place. Christians can enjoy them along with their neighbors. Its is not however the mission and business of the church to provide these activities. When serving God, we should be happy to devote our time and energy to those activities that Christ has ordained for his church. Preaching the gospel, worshiping God in spirit and in truth, educating and strengthening the members of the body and caring for the needy are the things God has charged us to do (Mark 16:15; Ephesians 4:12; James 1:27). God did not see fit to include recreation in his plan for his church. We should be content to be and do what He expects of us. As servants under the authority of Christ our Lord (Matthew 28:18), we must be content to do what he has outlined and authorized (Matthew 28:20). JHW

## A DOG IS NOT A DINOSAUR

Recently I saw a dog dressed in a dinosaur costume. The color and outward appearance resembled a dinosaur, but underneath the costume it was still a dog. When the creature uttered a sound it was obviously that of a canine, not a reptile. While one could pretend that it was a prehistoric creature, sooner or later the costume had to come off and the true nature of the beast was revealed.

Among churches of Christ today there are numerous men who present themselves as **gospel preachers** but their true identity is otherwise. True, they have diplomas from Christian schools, and they carry Bibles into their pulpits. They claim membership in the church of Christ. To the untrained eye they appear to be gospel preachers doing the work God gave preachers to do. But like the dog described above these men are only wearing the outer costume of a gospel preacher. Beneath the outer facade they are something altogether different. Their doctrine of salvation is that of the Baptist Church or some other denominational body. The worship they promote resembles that of Pentecostals. Their view of Bible authority is that of Protestantism. Their concept of the church is that of a denominational body. The churches they lead soon bear little resemblance to the church revealed in the Scripture and to the vast majority of churches of Christ around them. In fact, observing their conduct and considering their teaching, one must conclude that they are only pretending to be gospel preachers of churches of Christ. Beneath the outer cloak, they are just denominational teachers who by accident of birth, marriage or education have found themselves in the fellowship of churches of Christ. When they open their mouth and speak one hears a message such as he would expect to hear in a Christian Church, a Baptist Church or some other similar body.

It was downright funny to see that dog prancing about, pretending to be a dinosaur. It is downright disgusting to see men standing before congregations of God's people pretending to be faithful gospel preachers and members of the Lord's church when in reality they are not. They are sent among us by the great enemy of truth to disrupt and destroy the church for which Jesus died. JHW

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## MUST I BE IN THE CHURCH?

Christ saves the lost (Luke 19:10). But is the church essential to our salvation? Many feel the church is good but not essential. If one is speaking of membership in church which men have founded, he is right; you need not be a member of any of them. In fact, membership in such religious groups will jeopardize one's hope of heaven. Jesus said speaking of such religious bodies, "Every planting which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up (Matt. 15:13). If one contemplates the church Jesus established (Matt. 16:18), he will get a different answer.

You cannot be saved outside of Christ's one true church! The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). Christ is savior of the body (Eph. 5:23), which is the church (Eph. 1:22). Jesus purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28). If one can be saved without the church, he can be saved without the blood of Christ.

Saul persecuted the church (I Corinthians 15:9). Jesus said to him, "Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). The church is so related to Christ that to harm it is to hurt Him.

"Salvation is in Christ" (II Tim. 2:10). But one is "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Baptism also puts one into the one body or church (I Cor. 12:13). Therefore, when one is baptized into Christ, he is saved and added to the church.

The church is not a building, institution or organization in the usual meaning of those words. The church is God's saved people. The word "church" is a translation of the Greek word, *ekklesia*. It means "a called out people." Its New Testament meaning is, Christians are called out of a life of sin into a life of fellowship with Christ. Those who are not members of the called out church are not among the saved! Are you a member of that one true church you can read of in your Bible? JHW

## THOSE WHO CRITICIZE THE CHURCH

As the church of sails the stormy waters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, she is subjected to criticism from many quarters.

\* Skeptics and unbelievers hate God, Christ, the Bible and the church. They never miss an opportunity to hurl their insults and criticisms at the Lord's people. The church stands for all that they oppose. She is an obstacle to their ambitions to impose their secular views and values on our society and bring all into their tow.

\* More criticisms comes from the spokesmen of the many churches founded by men. Imposters hate the true bride of Christ because she teaches and practices pure and undefiled religion. They are offended and embarrassed by her faithfulness to her Master and his revealed will.

\* There are times when the church is criticized by her friends. Being composed of fallible souls, the church never measures up one hundred percent to her Lord's expectations. Like the church in Ephesus, some forget their first love (Rev. 2:4). Like the church in Pergamum some tolerate false teaches in their midst (Rev. 2:14). Like the church in Laodicea, some grow lukewarm in their love and zeal for Christ (Rev. 3:15-16). When such failures are evident, faithful servants of God will "reprove, rebuke and exhort" the church to mend her ways (II Tim. 4:2). Solomon wrote, "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). Friends of Christ do not relish the job of criticizing the church. They do so "even weeping" (Phil. 3:18). They do so gently as a nurse would correct her ward; as a loving parent would their beloved child (I Thess. 2:7,11). Their criticism are tempered and measured. They are spoken in love (Eph. 4:15). They are constructive and given with the intention of helping the church, building her up (I Cor. 14:26), saving those who have gone astray (Jude 21-22) Because their criticisms are presented in this constructive way and spoken in love, the church will prosper and be better for it.

\* There is yet another kind of critic in our midst. These are disillusioned brethren who have made shipwreck of the faith (I Tim. 1:19-20). They have disdain for all who do not share their denominational view of religion. They are embarrassed by those brethren who went before them and built the schools and congregations wherein they now earn their living. They have no sense of pride of membership in the church. In fact they find nothing about her to be proud of save themselves and the few disciples that follow their lead. Like hostile enemies, they stand aloof and cast their stones of criticism against the church they claim to be members of. Many are the blows they have inflicted upon her. Other enemies of the church rejoice to see the fratricidal attacks they make under the guise of "reforming, renewing or changing" the church. They would destroy her by making her into yet another ignoble human denomination.

The church can expect the criticisms of those without. She can be benefitted by the constructive criticisms of her friends. But she suffers most from the treasonous blows of those who appear as sheep in her midst but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15). JHW



## HOW AN AGENT OF CHANGE VIEWS CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Dr. Richard Hughes of Pepperdine and formerly of Abilene Christian University has recently given us his interpretation of our history in a volume entitled **"The Churches of Christ."** In this book one gets a clear picture of how an intellectual of the change movement views us. Although Bro. Hughes is a life-long member of the Church of Christ, that in no way engenders any sympathy or respect for those of that church. The following observations are gleaned from his book.

\* Churches of Christ are a denomination that originated with Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell. We must look to them to know what we believe and how we arrived at our faith (pp. 5-8). He is comfortable identifying us as "Stoneites" (p. 76) and Campbellites (p. 82) although he knows that both Campbell and Stone and all of his brethren, prior to the current change movement, repudiated such misnomers.

\* Our fathers misunderstood and perverted their movement, turning it into a narrow, hollow sect that has grown progressively away from the noble ideals of the founders. "...among Churches of Christ, the restoration vision shriveled into a hard and legal shell, a parody of its former self" (p. 7). "To him our fathers suffered from an "all pervading naivete regarding the power of history and culture; and a radically sectarian perspective by virtue of which they commonly claimed that the church of Christ to which they belonged was the one true church apart from which there could be no salvation" (p. 57).

\* We were wrong in objecting to the introduction of Missionary Societies and instrumental music in the worship of the church. "(T)he origins of the instrumental music debate appear to lie in a struggle over social class..." (P. 57).

\* We splintered away from the real Camp-Stone Restoration Movement. "The authentic followers of Campbell (i.e. Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches jhw), therefore eventually shifted their commitments from the restoration of the ancient church to the unity of all Christians, separate and apart from any concern with primitive Christianity" (p. 7).

\* We emerged as a separate denominational body in 1906. "In 1906 the first federal religious census lists 'Churches of Christ' as a new denomination whose most visible characteristic was their adamant refusal to use instrumental music in their worship" (p. 57). According to Hughes ours was "a radically sectarian perspective" (*Ibid.*). "By the middle of the nineteenth century, Churches of Christ were emerging as a sect in their own right" (*Ibid.*).

\* We mistreated Robert Boll the true heir of Barton Stone's view of Christianity (p. 10). He and his premillennial followers who were the last vestige of Stone's influence. They were persecuted and unfairly treated by us. To Hughes, "The real issue, of course, was not premillennialism but rather, the apocalyptic world view and the counter cultural ethic it sustained..." (p. 10).

\* We also mistreated those who sought to forbid the support of Benevolent Homes and Church Cooperation in Evangelism and Missions. He sees them as the true heirs of the fathers of the movement. They "remained loyal to the nineteenth century agenda of Church of Christ" (p. 12).

\* W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garret were true apostles of the faith that saved us from self-destruction by sowing the seeds of the modern change movement. "(I)t is difficult to overestimate the influence that these two men exerted among Churches of Christ...At the very least they helped create a theological climate that would prove favorable to the progressive tradition that emerged among Churches of Christ in the 1960s" (p. 139).

\* We have been and continue to be hopelessly racist since we did not actively support Martin Luther King's "Freedom Movement" (p. 127-130), and only a few giants such as Royce Money have had the courage to go to a Black School and confess his sins and ask forgiveness (p. 138)..

\* To change agents, the most radical and legalistic conservative best represents the traditional Churches of Christ. While the most intelligent, benevolent and moderate liberals best represent the progressives (p. 153).

\* He conveniently overlooks the scores of conservative men holding earned doctor's degrees who have and are serving the "traditional" churches, while enumerating the heroes of the change movement who hold the terminal degree (pp. 140-141).

\* We are not equipped to survive in the post modern age. "The pressing question for Churches of Christ, therefore, was this: how could a modern (i.e., Enlightenment -based religious tradition like Churches of Christ survive in a postmodern world?) (p. 152).

\* We don't know how to interpret the Bible. "Indeed it is fair to ask how such a rigorously scientific approach to the biblical text (such as all brethren used prior to the 1980s jhw) could survive in the post-modern world" (p. 154). According to him we have been trying to figure out, "What kind of book (is) the Bible...? Was it a constitution? A pattern? A blueprint? Or (is) it a theological treatise, describing the relationship God seeks with human kind and the kind of relationships humans should therefore sustain with one another? Increasingly, leaders in mainstream Churches of Christ (i.e. change leaders jhw) defined the Bible in these later terms" (p. 154).

\* We have been wrong in denying women a leadership role in the public leadership of the church (p. 157). "The classic position of Churches of Christ on the role of women in church affairs surely reflected the values of a patriarchal American South" It was a mistaken hermeneutic that made us misapply Paul's prohibitions against women in leadership positions. "If the Bible was a theological document, not a legal document then there were passages that seemed to reflect the core of the biblical message and for that reason, some felt, might well take precedence over texts like I Cor. 14 and I Tim. 2" (p. 157).

\* To Dr. Hughes, the liberals who espouse postmodern philosophy are right (p. 153). We are narrow reactionaries to resist them. "Churches of Christ, by the late twentieth century, were in the process of rethinking their other major theological support—the restoration vision. Indeed, many congregations had embraced the process of renewal and even redefinition of their tradition" (p. 158).

If the learned doctor is a friend of Churches of Christ, I pray that he will never become our enemy. JHW

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## CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTMAS

Two currents swirl about us at this time of the year. Churches are celebrating the birth of Christ. Businesses are exploiting the season for its tremendous economic value. Many people are caught up in these currents, spending themselves broke while thinking they are honoring Christ with religious greeting cards and a nativity scene. Some who talk loudly about keeping Christ in Christmas will celebrate the day in a most unchristian fashion with gluttony and drunkenness.

Neither Scripture nor history record the date of Christ's birth. "The Christian fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity." It was in 354 A.D. that churches began to celebrate the day by decree of Liberious, bishop of Rome. The date chosen was that of the pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia holidays. That pagan tradition set the tone of the celebration (**Schaff-Herzog Ency. of Rel. Knowledge**).

Early Christians felt obligated to observe only those things that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20). They feared to "go beyond the things which are written" (I Cor. 4:6). They took seriously Christ's condemnation of "vain worship" based upon the precepts of men (Matt. 15:9).

God gave his church only one special day, the first day of every week. That is the day of Christ's resurrection and the day the church began (Mk. 16:1-2; Acts 2). Paul said of those who observed days and months and seasons and years, "I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11).

Rather than one day of the year to remember and celebrate the coming of Christ, Christians should dedicate every day of their lives to remembering and serving their Lord...including the faithful worship with his church each Lord's day. That spirit of generosity and goodwill peculiar to Christmas should radiate in their lives 365 days of the year. JHW

## DESTROYING OUR HISTORY

When the barbaric Taliban ordered the demolition of Afghanistan's gigantic statues of Buddha, the world was aghast and outraged. But many members of Churches of Christ are standing by in virtual silence as a hostile band of liberal scholars labor to distort and destroy the history of our noble movement to restore New Testament Christianity.

Professors from some of our Christian Universities have issued a number of books that are carefully contrived distortions of the history of our people. Historical revisionism is common in both the secular and the religious world. The Japanese have revised their history books to lessen the guilt and shame of their brutal aggressions in World War II. Marxist academics are promoting a revisionist statement of our nation's history. They eliminate many things honorable and noble and replace them with sordid, ignoble insinuations and innuendoes. Every aspect of the past is interpreted in the darkest light. Every failure is magnified. Every noble deed and accomplishment is discounted or discredited. Special attempts are made to delete the influence of Christianity in the founding and shaping of the nation. It is clear that such revisionist historians hate America, her institutions and heroes.

We have revisionists among us, operating primarily in our Christian Universities.

- \* They tell the unknowing that Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone were the founders of Churches of Christ.
- \* They tell us that the goal of the early pioneers was simply a unity movement with denominational churches such as today's ecumenical movement.
- \* They say that Churches of Christ actually began in 1906 as a breakaway splinter group from the Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches.
- \* They imply that our fathers were in the wrong a century ago for objecting to the use of instrumental music and missionary societies,
- \* They play down the great growth and victories of our brethren over the last century.
- \* They cannot see any progress in racial relations in the church, preferring to dwell on the failures of the past; failures typical of most churches of that era.
- \* They denigrate and dismiss great brotherhood heroes of the past, implying that they were unlearned and ignorant men who distorted the gospel and led us into the morass of legalism.
- \* They glorify liberal false teachers such as W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. They paint them as having credibility and influence among the mainstream churches which they never had.
- \* They use selected quotes and experiences from the lives and writings of early restoration preachers, ignoring the larger picture, and use them to rewrite the record of what actually happened.
- \* All of this is done under the guise of scholarship and a pious pretense of loving the church of Christ and just wanting to tell the story of our past.
- \* If they are left unchallenged, the church as she once existed, will eventually cease to be. In her place will be a another Protestant denomination bearing the image of their revised story of the Churches of Christ.

Our revisionist historians bear the same disdain for the church that the Marxist historians bear for our great nation. The message of both should be rejected and they should be ejected from their teaching posts. If the Marxists professors so dislike America and love Cuba, let them go teach in Cuba's university. If our historians have such a low appreciation for the church and such a glowing view of the Christian Churches/ Disciples of Christ, let them seek employment there.

It is tragic that such revisionists harbor such dislike for the church of their fathers. It is more tragic that so many Christians are watching in shameful silence while the destruction transpires.

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Examples of our historical revisionism can be seen in **Reclaiming a Heritage** and **The Churches of Christ** by Dr. Richard Hughes, **Renewing God's People** by Drs. Garry Holloway and Douglass Foster and **The Crux of the Matter** by Jeff Childers, Douglas Foster and Jack Reese. All of these professors are associated with either Abilene Christian or Pepperdine Universities. JHW

## INTELLECTUALISM OF THE CHANGE MOVEMENT

The careful student of the change movement that is currently troubling our churches will notice that virtually all the prominent leaders of the movement are men who have attained the doctoral level in their education. Many of them are involved in our Christian universities. He will also discover that there is a prevailing air of condescension that views average preachers as inferiors. Without the guidance of the gifted ones the commoners will surely never amount to anything in the work they are attempting for the Lord.

William Barclay, author of the great **Daily Study Bible**, penned words that so describe and fit these intellectual giants that one is tempted to think a higher hand arranged it: "There is always a certain danger in knowledge. It tends to make a man arrogant and feel superior and look down unsympathetically on the man who is not as far advanced as himself. Knowledge that does that is not true knowledge" (**Daily Bible Study**, Corinthians, p. 76).

It is also the case that the bulk of the promoters of change are men associated with our Christian Universities. V. I. Lenin rightly observed that "Whenever the cause of the people is entrusted to professors, it is lost." Wrong as Lenin was about most things, his words are appropriate for our situation.

Archibald MacLeish saw and clearly described the flaw of intellectualism that is currently creating confusion among our people and wrecking churches. "...that peculiar disease of intellectuals, *that infatuation with ideas at the expense of experience, that compels experience to conform to bookish preconceptions.*"

Those who blindly follow the intellectuals of the change movement will eventually find themselves alienated from the brotherhood of churches of Christ. They will be shipwrecked in faith (I Tim. 1:19), and left stranded in some denominational camp. In worse case scenarios, without compass or anchor, some of them will eventually abandon any semblance of allegiance to Christ. Jesus put it this way, "If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14). JHW

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## THOSE NEGATIVE FIREFIGHTERS

Have you ever considered just how negative the life and work of firefighters is. Their entire work day is spent waiting for and looking for bad news...for fires. Their job exists to fight against something evil. They prevent destructive people from having their way. They spoil the fun of arsonists. Their job is dangerous and dirty. Even though all of the above is obviously true, no one other than arsonists is critical of firefighters. None think they are unneeded. They serve a useful and beneficial role in every community. Thinking people thank God for them and the work they do.

In the kingdom of Christ there is also a need for firefighters. The tongues of some folks are set on fire of hell (Jas. 3:6). Such is true of false prophets (I John 4:1) and factious souls who are able to bring destruction upon a congregation (Tit. 3:10-11). Thus the Holy Spirit charges preachers to "Preach the word, reprove, rebuke and exhort" (II Tim. 4:1-2). They are to "put the brethren in mind of these things" (I Tim. 4:6). Some must be rebuked sharply (Tit. 1:13). Warnings must be issued when dangerous men are threatening the welfare of congregations (Acts 20:28-30). Spiritual fires are just as destructive as house fires. Those who have lived long have witnessed both individual Christians and even congregations lost in such fires. Some have been fortunate enough that when the fire of error broke out, a seasoned, experienced gospel preacher was able to come to the rescue and douse the flames of error and save those who were endangered. Others, not so fortunate suffered great harm or even perished.

No godly preacher enjoys having to fight against the fires of error. It is unpleasant and generally an unappreciated task. Yet if no one steps forward to do so, great and often irreparable damage is done to the Cause of Christ. Just as you appreciate your local firemen, you should appreciate the man of God who is vigilant in spotting devil-inspired fires and extinguishing them. Be grateful for him and thank the Lord for his ability to douse the flames of error and save those threatened thereby. This lesson is especially timely as arsonists promoting destructive changes circulate among our churches. The man who warns and works to put out the flames is not the enemy, he is your friend and benefactor. Lend him your support and encouragement. JHW

## ARE CHURCHES OF CHRIST EVANGELICAL?

“Evangelical” is an adjective that came into use in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to describe a certain kind of church or denomination. An Evangelical person or church is Protestant, not Catholic. They are conservative, not liberal. Their identity is with the great Protestant reformers rather than with modern cults. Evangelicals emphasize salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the inspiration and authority of Scripture and the importance of preaching in contrast to ritual. They believe in the miracles recorded in Scripture, including the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ. The most visible Evangelicals are the Southern Baptists, Missouri Synod Lutherans, Reformed Churches and Assemblies of God.

Churches of Christ have much in common with Evangelicals. We are not associated with the Catholic church and do not follow the pope of that church. We are certainly not a cult and we agree with much that was preached by the great reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingle and Knox. We emphasize salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ and the necessity of personal conversion to the faith. We hold a high view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. We too believe in all the miracles recorded in Scripture including those of Christ’s birth and resurrection. We also emphasize preaching and a non-ritualistic approach to worship. In this sense and to this degree we would be classed in the general category of Evangelical religious bodies.

On the other hand there are factors that separate us from those of the Evangelical world.

- \* The church of Christ is not a “Protestant” body in the usual definition of that term. It is Christ’s church, the one he purchased with his blood, the one he established in Jerusalem on the Pentecost following his resurrection.
- \* The church of Christ is not a denomination, not one of several divisions or parts of the body of Christ. If we are that we have no right to exist. Christ has not authorized the existence of denominations. He prayed that his people would be one (John 17:20-21). Paul condemned the spirit of denominationalism that had arisen in the church at Corinth (I Cor. 1:10-15; 3:1-5). Evangelicals do embrace the concept of denominationalism.
- \* While we believe in salvation by faith in Christ, we do not believe in salvation by faith alone which is a fundamental teaching of all Evangelical denominations (James 2:18-26).
- \* We accept the Bible as the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word of God, but we reject the many traditions and human speculations that flourish in the various Evangelical bodies.
- \* We emphasize preaching of the gospel while many Evangelical churches include a rich mixture of human opinions with their preaching.
- \* Evangelicals constitute a conservative, **ecumenical brotherhood** in contrast to the liberal Protestant ecumenicals. We cannot share in that Evangelical ecumenical brotherhood. Because of our many differences in faith and practice, we cannot and do not accept or endorse them as our brethren in Christ.
- \* Most evangelical preachers do not extend a kindly hand to the average preacher of the church of Christ. They reject and resent our commitment to follow the Bible in all things and our refusal to compromise with our religious neighbors. As a general rule where you find Evangelicals warmly embracing preachers of the church of Christ it is those men who have lost their respect for the authority of God’s Word and taken a compromise position with their religious neighbors.
- \* No Evangelical body would accept the Bible premise that baptism is by immersion only and that only those properly immersed are saved (Mark 16:16). Yet this is a non-negotiable article for us.
- \* No Evangelical preacher would take the position that God has only one church in the world today, yet this is fundamental to members of the church of Christ (Eph. 4:4).

We admire and profit from the scholarship and writings of many Evangelical teachers. We share with them the great truths of the Christian faith. We appreciate the good they might do and the positive moral impact they have on our society. Yet we can never be full partners with them in their associations and endeavors and at the same time remain faithful to Christ and his Word. We must by all means remain loyal to our Lord. JHW

## IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

As Jeremiah looked upon the ruins of his beloved Jerusalem, ravaged and destroyed by the victorious Babylonians, he cried out to his surviving neighbors, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lam. 1:12). Survivors were busy scavenging among the ruins and thinking of what they must do to recover their lost fortunes, but none seemed to express concern for the devastated holy city and Jehovah's ruined temple. The prophet's heart was broken and he could not contain his emotions; thus his stinging words of rebuke.

As we witness the brotherhood of churches of Christ being ravaged by false teachers promoting their agenda of change, the tragedy is compounded as multitudes of our brethren go about their daily business as though nothing at all was wrong. They show little or no interest in the problems besetting us, the damage being inflicted or the prospect of horrific losses. Others claim they are too busy to be bothered. Some declare that they are above such carnal tasks as opposing proponents of error. To defend God's truth or the kingdom would in some way defile them. Some are concerned for their own congregation, but show little or no interest in what is happening to others and exhibit no inclination to help protect the larger borders of the kingdom.

I can't help but ask these brethren, "Is it nothing to you?" Do you not love the church? Are you not stirred to anger when you see her molested by her enemies? Do you not feel a surge of spiritual patriotism, courage and conviction that makes you want to protect her from those who would destroy her?

Please take a minute and consider the following facts. The church of Christ is your spiritual family and home? Her teachers taught you the way of salvation. One of her members baptized you into Christ. In her fellowship you likely grew up and were nourished in the faith. In her Bible classes you learned your spiritual ABCs. In her fellowship your parents, grandparents may have worshipped before you were born. In her chapel, you might have been said your wedding vows. Perhaps in her assembly your children confessed Christ and were baptized. It may have been in her midst your parents' funerals were conducted. If she is destroyed who will teach your children and grandchildren? Only her faithful members will be with Christ in eternity (I Cor. 15:24; Rev. 21:2-3).

How can you stand mute and idle while her sacred precincts are being battered and broken down? Surely conscience and all that's right demand that you do what you can to help. When the Canaanites invaded Israel, Deborah and Barak led the troops in defense of the nation. But the people of Meroz refused to assist them in the conflict. God's response was, "Curse ye Meroz...because they came not to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah against the mighty" (Judg. 5:23). Let this not be your fate! By all means pray for the welfare and safety of the church, but also reach out and join hands with those who are standing in the gaps fending off the invading promoters of corrupting change (Ezek. 22:30). For suggestions on how you can help in the battle for the future of the church, please write or call. JHW

## LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATISM: THE MORTAL STRUGGLE

There was a time (ca. 1945-1965) when the church heard lessons warning of encroaching liberalism and looked about, trying to find such a problem. Liberals were scarce and unwelcomed intruders among us. Generally they left our ranks for the friendly fields of the Disciples of Christ and other denominational bodies.

There was a time (ca. 1965-1984) when liberals were able to bother the church only with occasional skirmishes on our borders. A withering line of scriptural missals kept the liberals from making overt inroads. During that period the strategy of these malcontents preceded in two directions.

1. Unable to boldly reach their goals, they were contented to keep a relatively low profile. They stayed in our midst and gradually won the hearts and confidence of their congregations.
2. They surfaced as professors in Christian colleges. They quietly circulated their thoughts and ideas through books and the pages of a few willing journals. They devoted themselves to influencing young and unsuspecting disciples with their errant views. They delighted in scoffing at every conservative brother, paper or school. They championed every brother that challenged long-held views of the faith. They successfully convinced many that advanced education was essential to true usefulness in the church. Those without it were stereotyped as inferior and reactionary.

There came a time (ca. 1984-present) when the forces of liberalism were prepared to make a bold thrust. This was seen in the formation of a new journal (**Image**) which provided a forum for writers whose trumpets gave uncertain sounds and to spokesmen of the Christian Churches. Following **Image** came **Wineskins** whose writers grew ever bolder. Their new boldness was further manifested in the new unity movement with the Christian Churches and the speeches and literature produced in support of that cause.

It is seen in the acceptance given to apostate brethren and splinter groups that entertain themselves by their slashing attacks against the "mainstream" church. The more bizarre and damaging their attack, the more newsworthy are such men and groups. They are given prominence, recognition and respectability on some college lectureships, soul-winning workshops and journals. Soundness just does not matter to the liberal soul.

It is seen in speeches at lectureships which pronounce the old conservatism dead and declare that a new generation of younger men have now taken the leadership. Past preachers are discredited as not understanding the Restoration Plea and it is asserted that a new wave of young preachers are correctly articulating the message. Past preaching is condemned as flawed since men relied upon the Bible for proof of their propositions. They are scorned as "proof-text" preachers. Liberals insist that "expository preaching" based on historical/literary criticism is the only valid and beneficial method of preaching. While it is no surprise that liberals hold such views, it is noteworthy that they now feel safe in publicly articulating them.

Fifteen years ago the first round of a major assault upon those who yet hold a strong conservative loyalty to God's book was launched. Today a full frontal attack is underway. Their real objective is hidden behind a call for "change." The survival of the Lord's church in America will depend on how we respond to this and other barrages that will surely follow.

For twenty years we read of the intestine struggles within the Southern Baptist Church as liberals and conservatives fought for control of that organization. We are now experiencing the same internal struggle within our own brotherhood. A major difference being that we have no convention to conduct business and set policy and no delegates to elect. The battle will be fought in the pages of our journals, in the pulpits of local churches, the governing boards of our Christian Schools and in our mission outposts. Having no central government to capture, ten thousand battles will be fought for the hearts and loyalties of brethren around the world. Whether or not the Churches of Christ will move into the ranks of the Protestant denominations depends upon which of the two contending armies has the most conviction and staying power.

At this point in time liberalism already controls a sizeable number of the large congregations of the major cities of our country. Conservatives find their strength mainly in the small towns and rural congregations.

### What Must We Do?

Survival depends on intelligent and courageous response on the part of every faithful brother.

1. We must renew our efforts to indoctrinate the members of our flocks in the sound doctrine of God's word (Titus 2:1).

We must preach the word of God (II Timothy 4:2). We must preach on the fundamentals of the faith. They must be taught in our classes. We must supply our brethren with good tracts that set forth God's word on vital spiritual themes and urge them to read them and share them.

2. Preachers must deliver lessons that educate and inform the brethren of the problems we face. Knowledge afore hand helps us avoid a thousand mistakes. Lack of knowledge is disastrous (Hosea 4:6).

3. Preachers need to sit down and discuss current situations with their elders and the men of the congregation. Each must have a strategy for arming, defending and saving his congregation from the invading enemy of liberalism.

4. Leaders must inform themselves regarding this great contest. Preachers and elders need to read a broad sampling of gospel papers, and attend lectureships, both of conservative and liberal variety. Painful as this may be, we must know what is going on, lest we lose the battle by default.

5. We must read the history of the Restoration Movement in America. From Earl West's **Search for the Ancient Order**, Homer Hailey's **Attitudes and Consequences of the Restoration Movement**, and J.D. Murch's **Christian Only**, we will be able to see how the mistakes made a century ago are being repeated in our day. The apostasy that devastated us then is bound to follow today if we do not turn the tide.

6. We absolutely must close ranks and stand as one man against this onslaught. We cannot afford the luxury of shooting at each other. No fellow conservative is perfect, neither are you. If in matters of faith we agree, then let there be unity. In matters of opinion and judgment we must exhibit liberty and charity. Too long the conservation voice has been muffled by discord and infighting. We need to rally around journals, colleges and schools of preaching that hold fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9). Should we sink or abandon every vessel that has a little rust or barnacles, we will find ourselves undone in the day of battle.

7. We need to patiently reach out to fellow preachers who are wavering in commitment and pull them back to solid ground. There is the temptation to shoot them. Far better it is to salvage them. Talk to them. Pray for them. Encourage them. Help them to find the courage to fight the good fight (I Timothy 6:12).

8. We need to take a special interest in young people in general and young preachers in particular. First, the church of the future rests with them, for good or bad. Secondly, the liberals are definitely courting the young adults of the church. The young are by nature more receptive to voices of change that challenge the leaders and thoughts of the past. When thoughtless conservatives pounce on the young preacher who makes a mistake, the shrewd liberal extends a sympathetic hand. Another soldier who might have been brought into useful services is lost to the cunning enemy.

9. We must add some works to our faith (James 2:26). A chief criticism of conservatives by the liberals is that they are not evangelistic, not mission minded. We fail our Lord if we allow all of our energies to be expended in only defensive action. Our commission still says go preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). Let us get on with training, sending forth and supporting faithful men for the mission fields of the world. Other good works likewise need our attention.

10. We must move beyond a negative, rear-guard defensive action and boldly provide the spiritual leadership for God's people in these troublesome times. "A strong offense is the best defense" in the fight of faith as well as in carnal war.

11. Let us one and all devote ourselves to penitence and prayer that God will smile on us and help us overcome our problems and rally our scattered troops for a successful battle. Pride, arrogance and indifference have made it possible for Satan to gain the advantage over us (II Corinthians 2:11). God can do little with a proud people, but he gives grace to the humble (I Peter 5:5). When we draw near to God he will draw near to us (James 4:8) and righteous men will more readily follow our leadership. He that ruleth nations and raiseth up kings, can surely give victory to his saints. If not a sparrow can fall to the earth without his divine attention, surely he will aid his people if they call upon him.

12. We must never surrender, never give up. The most precious cause in the world is at stake. Souls hang in the balance (I Timothy 4:16); ours and those of our brethren, our children and grandchildren and a lost world whose hope of hearing the saving gospel hinges on the survival of a faithful church. JHW



## THINGS MOST COMMONLY BELIEVED AND NOW DISBELIEVED AMONG US

Luke tells the readers of his gospel that there were things "most surely believed among us. He then proceeds to restate those great, foundational truths (Lk. 1:1). Allow me to remind you of things most surely believed among members of churches of Christ; things believed because they are derived from the clear message of the New Testament. These fundamental truths have been held by Christians here in America since the beginning of the movement to restore the faith and practice of the early church that began at the opening of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the last 15 or so years a band of dissident preachers and teachers have arisen among us who no longer hold these truths and are diligently working to undermine them in the hearts of our people. We all believed:

- \* That the Bible is verbally inspired of God; that it is from his all-wise and infallible mind (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- \* Hence the autographs of the various books of the Bible were without error or flaw as they were issued from the inspired writers (John 10:35; Ps. 19:7).
- \* That the New Testament of Christ claims to be and is in fact a divinely given pattern by which we must model all aspects of our congregational life (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5).
- \* That to be acceptable to God, we must accept the Scripture as the sole, absolute and binding authority for our faith and practice (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12).
- \* That the essential message of the Bible can be read and understood by the common man without the intervention of professional scholars (Eph. 3:4).
- \* That salvation by grace is conditioned on obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 5:9).
- \* That salvation requires both faith and obedience on the part of man (Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:22-26).
- \* That baptism by immersion, for remission of sins is essential to salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4).
- \* That Christ established, purchased and saved only one church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23; Eph. 4:4).
- \* Hence denominationalism is sinful and unacceptable (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4).
- \* That Christ expects his people to be united and that unity is to be found only in Christ and upon his word (John 17:17-21; II John 9).
- \* That Christ's church is his kingdom here on the earth (Matt. 16:18-19, Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28).
- \* That either churches of Christ are in fact his true church or else they have no worth or value; no right to exist.
- \* That early Christians sang praises to God without instrumental accompaniment. They did so because they had authority to sing and make melody in their hearts but none to use instruments (Eph. 5:19).
- \* That the early church partook of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, as a memorial to the death and suffering of the Savior (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-26).
- \* That they gave their gifts to God as an act of worship authorized by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 8:5).
- \* That God placed the leadership of the church and all public teaching of mixed audiences in the hands of faithful men and that women are not allowed to teach nor have authority over men in the church (I Tim. 2:12; I Tim. 3:1-2; I Cor. 14:33-34).
- \* That miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given in the first century to certify the apostles and prophets as true representatives of Christ and to confirm their message as from God (II Cor. 12:12; Mk. 16:20). That those miracles ceased with the completion of the New Testament of Christ (I Cor. 13:8-10).
- \* That our preaching should indeed be *gospel preaching*; that all who stand up to preach should speak as the oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11).

It is a shameful fact that every man promoting the change movement among us has rejected part or all of these things most surely believed by our American brethren for over 200 years. Paul predicted that some would fall away from the faith

(I Tim. 4:1). Today it is our misfortune to be witnesses to such apostasy. May God have mercy on his people and save his church from those who would corrupt and destroy her. If those who no longer believe are unwilling to repent, may they follow their hearts to some denominational body that shares their unbelief. JHW

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## TRUE AND UNTRUE FRIENDS OF CHRIST

Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:13). What if the disciple of Christ does not wish to do His will? Is he still His friend? Consider the following cases and decide if the persons described are friends of the Master.

\* What of the man who reads that baptism is a command (Acts 10:48); that it is "for remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); but he does not accept that? He preaches that one receives salvation solely by faith (Jas. 2:24). Is he Christ's friend?

\* What of the man who reads that we are to obey all things whatsoever Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20); that only those who do the will of the Father will be saved (Matt. 7:21); yet he rejects such an idea and insists that there are no commands to be obeyed in order to please God. He prefers to teach that we need only love God and our neighbor to please Him? Is he Christ's friend?

\* What of the man who reads that Christ died for, purchased, established and saves his church (Acts 20:7; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23); yet he cannot accept that Christ's one true church exists today, so he teaches that all the different churches men have created are of equal value? Is he Christ's friend?

\* What about the man who reads Christ's prayer that all his disciples be one (John 17:20-21) and that there "be no division among" his people (I Cor. 1:10); yet he argues that God accepts and blesses all kinds of denominational bodies regardless of their divisiveness? Is he Jesus' friend?

\* What of the man who reads that women are to keep silent in the church (I Cor. 14:33-34); that they are not permitted to teach or have authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12); yet he is more impressed with the demands of feminists. He teaches that these verses do not mean what they say; that really they authorize women to teach and have authority over men? Is he the Master's friend?

\* What of the brother who reads Paul's exhortation to speak to one another in songs, hymns and spiritual songs, to sing and make melody in our hearts unto God (Eph. 5:19), but concludes that it really means that a soloist or choir can do the speaking; that singing and making melody with the heart really means playing a mechanical instrument? He substitutes the kind of music he prefers for that which Christ's Word specified. Is he the Lord's friend?

\* What about the man who reads the warning not to add to or take from Christ's word (Rev. 22:18-19), and yet he feels no obligation to obey that. He changes anything in the Savior's religion that does not suit his taste, that is not in step with modern culture? Is he a friend of Jesus?

Such disciples may talk much about being friends of Jesus. They may sing the old hymn by that name, but since they refuse to keep his commandments, to do what he says, they demonstrate that they are not true friends to our King. JHW

## MISTAKES THAT PEOPLE MAKE

All of us are prone to mistakes. Some mistakes are of little consequence, others are costly and painful. The less we know about a subject, an issue, a thing, the more likely we are to make mistakes concerning it. The way that seemeth right may in fact be the way of death (Prov. 14:12).

Cain, the eldest son of Adam and Even thought he could substitute his own ideas about sacrificial offerings when worshiping God. His story is found in Gen. 4:1-7. "By faith Able offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). But faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). God asked for an animal sacrifice. We are told that without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22). Cain presumed that he could offer a sacrifice of produce instead and God refused it. Each week, around the world, multitudes offer to God worship that consists of things different from those specified by God. Like Cain their substitutes will be rejected.

Nadab and Abihu assumed they could offer "strange," i.e., unauthorized, fire when burning incense before God (Lev. 10:1). God had specified that the fire used should be taken from the great altar before the tabernacle of worship (Lev. 16:12). For some reason, on their inaugural day of service they used coals from a different fire in offering incense. Without warning, fire from God devoured them (Lev. 10:2). They had mistakenly presumed that God's command did not have to be strictly observed.

Uzzah mistakenly thought he was doing God a favor when he put out his hands to keep the ark of God from falling (I Chron. 13:6-10). It cost him his life. When David's men researched the matter they found that the first mistake was their failure to use staves and carry the ark on the shoulders of priests (Ex. 25:13-14; I Chron. 15:14-15). The second was failure to note that none but Levites should put their hands on it (I Chron. 15:2). Those mistakes were fatal to Uzzah.

Uzziah, king of Judah, mistakenly assumed that since he was king he had the authority and right to fill the priestly office and burn incense before Jehovah in the temple. God smote him with leprosy from which he never recovered (II Chron. 26:16-21).

All of the men mentioned above suffered because they failed to respect God's instructions and restrictions. They failed to understand that when God tells us what he wants, all other options are excluded.

It is a shame that a band of change agents, many of them with extensive education, have not understood this divine principle. In fact, many scoff at the idea and pronounce it mistaken. When they lay profane hands upon the sacred things of God, even if they preach for our largest churches or are professors in our universities, they make the same mistake these Biblical characters made and are likewise in danger of the judgment of a righteous God. JHW

## PITIFUL, PASSIVE CHRISTIANS

The portrait God paints of his people is that of a militant army of soldiers marching forth on a campaign with Christ their king (Rev. 19:11-14). We are to “**go make disciples** of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). We are to **fight the good fight** of the faith” (I Tim. 6:12). We must reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). We are to be “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil 1:16).

In contrast to this picture of militant warriors, we see a vast number of American Christians passively observing while false teachers, **promoting unscriptural changes**, ravage congregations of Christ’s people. Rather than militant, they are best described as timid, fearful, reticent, powerless, unconcerned, indifferent, malleable, perhaps even cowardly. This unflattering picture encompasses not only vast numbers of those in the pews, but large numbers of preachers and elders as well. Excuses are many but all are equally unacceptable. Perhaps you have heard one or more of the following excuses for inaction:

- \* We just want peace.
- \* It’s just a fad, it will soon go away.
- \* We are interested in other things.
- \* We’ve had too much fighting already.
- \* The Lord can solve these things without us.
- \* Yes, these folks are misguided but they mean well.
- \* We have to be open to change if we are going to keep our young people.
- \* We’ve been too narrow too long.
- \* We don’t have the problem where I worship.
- \* It is none of our business what others are doing.
- \* These changes are just cosmetic; they haven’t really changed the important things.
- \* Opposing them does more harm than good.
- \* Who am I too say they are wrong?
- \* Look at all the good they are doing.
- \* But look how they are growing.
- \* I know our elders would not allow anything wrong to be done here.
- \* Too many preachers are jealous of the success of these younger preachers.

No matter what the excuse is, it can never justify Christians who shirk their duty in a day of crisis and danger to the Master’s church. Christ expects every child of his to contend earnestly for the ancient faith (Jude 3). All are equally obligated to defend the gospel (Phil 1:16). All are “soldiers on service” (II Tim. 2:4). All are to arm themselves with the armor God provides and take the sword and shield in hand to do battle with the hosts of darkness (Eph. 6:10-18).

Christ condemned the church in Thyatira for tolerating false teachers in their midst (Rev. 2:20). Satan’s fondest wish is that all of God’s people were passive observers, willing to sit in idleness while he does his destructive work. The agents of change are neither idle nor passive. They are aggressively pursuing their agenda. Their goal is to sweep the field and impose their new agenda on the brotherhood of churches of Christ.

Every Christian should well note that the crown of life is laid up for those who have fought the good fight (II Tim. 4:7). Only those who are faithful unto death will receive the crown (Rev. 2:10). Pity those soldiers who have cowered in the trenches while the battle was being fought, or stood on the sidelines. They will be sorely disappointed when the king rewards his faithful servants. JHW

## LOST AND MUST BE FOUND

If Churches of Christ are going to survive this period of stress and attack and flourish as in days past, there are things we must recover.

\* We must recover and cultivate in the heart of every member a profound respect for God's Word as the final and complete authority in all things relating to our faith and practice. Our brethren must have the spirit of Samuel who said, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:9). They must be convinced that the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" (Ps. 19:7). Not just the preacher, but all must believe and conduct themselves on the basis that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), that he is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22), and that his word will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

\* We must find and restore a sense of responsibility in the heart of every preacher to proclaim the whole counsel of God, withholding nothing needful for the church (Acts 20:20, 26).

\* Our churches must recover an understanding of our mission, our reason for existing: to preach the gospel to all of humanity (Matt. 28:19). Christ did not die to purchase a church that would serve only affluent Americans.

\* We must recover the urgency of evangelism as the duty of every disciple, every day, publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20).

\* We must find a lost sense of brotherhood (I Pet. 2:17). We are members of a world-wide fellowship of saved people. We are related in Christ to all who have gone before us in his church and all who will come later. We must be interested and concerned about the welfare of all the congregations of God's people (II Cor. 11:28). When one part of the body suffers we all suffer (I Cor. 12:26).

\* We must discover again an appreciation for the uniqueness of the church which Christ built. He promised to build one church, no more (Matt. 16:18). He purchased but one church with his blood (Acts 20:28). He loves and saved but one church which is his bride (Eph. 5:23-26). Though there be a thousand other religious organizations that call themselves a church, there is but one divine church of Christ (I Cor. 12:20). All others are counterfeits in competition with the one true and genuine church for the souls of lost humanity.

\* We must recover a sense of outrage when we observe sinful, irreverent men mishandling the Word of Truth and leading souls astray (Phil. 3:18-19; II Tim. 2:17).

\* We must feel that same kind of indignation when we see or hear anyone inflicting harm on the Lord's church and a sense of duty to protect the church from those who would damage her. No one can be a good citizen of the kingdom of Christ who can stand and watch it be destroyed feel no

sense of anger! JHW

## **WHY WE HAVE PROBLEMS THAT OTHERS CHURCHES DO NOT**

Those familiar with our brotherhood history and those widely traveled among our churches know that we had have had a number of divisions among our brethren. Enemies of Christ often cite this problem to discredit our plea. While all division involves sin on the part of one or both parties involved, there are some significant factors that contribute to our struggle with this problem (Rom. 16:17).

I. Satan hates Christ's true church and makes continual warfare against her (Rev. 12:13-17). She is the one church founded by the Redeemer (Matt. 16:18). It is to her the Savior adds the saved (Acts 2:47). She alone is charged with seeking and saving the lost. She is the kingdom that Christ will deliver up to the Father in the last day (I Cor. 15:24). All other churches are man-made facsimiles, counterfeits with no spiritual worth or standing. Satan has no interest in wrecking them. They are unwitting supporters of his cause. But the church of Christ he is determined to destroy. Persecution failed, but division has done its destructive work (Matt. 12:25).

II. Members of churches of Christ strongly believe that what one believes and how he worships and serves God is important. For most denominationalists, what one believes is of little consequence, just so long as he loves Jesus. They have little reason to quarrel over doctrine or practice, since such does not matter in their church. John taught that whosoever abandons the doctrine of Christ also leaves God and the Son (II John 9). Paul urges us to "speak...the things that befit the sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1). Because of our love for Christ and his will we cannot stand by idly when someone seeks to corrupt the faith we hold.

III. Churches of Christ have no pope, president or primate to rule over them and declare the terms of their faith. Jesus in heaven is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). His will is expressed in the New Testament. When our religious neighbors disagree they look to their human head for answers. We look to the New Covenant and try to understand it. Being fallible, we sometimes see matters differently.

IV. Other churches have their faith and practice spelled out in a creedal statement or denominational manual. The individual is not to question the creed. We have no such book, only our Bibles. We must rely on our human intelligence and judgement to understand it.

V. Many churches claim God speaks directly to their preachers so that when their clergyman tells them what to believe or not to believe it is to be taken as the final word from heaven. We reject such unfounded claims and know that God only speaks to us through his written word (Rev. 2:29). Again we must depend on our finite knowledge and ability to correctly interpret that message.

VI. The church of Christ is not a democracy where beliefs and practices are determined by majority vote. The church is a monarchy. Christ has all the authority (Matt. 28:18). He is king (I Tim. 6:15). Our job is to listen to and obey the divine King (Matt. 17: 5; Heb. 5:9). Other churches simply take a vote and live with the decision.

VII. God has made every Christian a member of his royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:5,9). To each of us he has given intelligence, volition and autonomy. We are all responsible to search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). We all must give account for our personal faith and conduct as Christians (Rom. 14:12). For this and the other reasons listed above, we sometimes find ourselves in disagreement with other brethren. We in no way excuse division, we simply point out reasons why the problem might be more frequently seen among us than some other groups.

When we reach the point that what we believe and how we worship and serve God does not matter, then we might as well disband, close our doors and hand a sign up saying "Gone Out of Business." JHW

## RETURN O BACKSLIDING ISRAEL

As we are confronted with the sweeping waves of apostasy that we call the "change movement," we find ourselves locked in a battle for the survival of the church. We must never forget that those who are arrayed in the army of the change movement are our own brethren. They are God's children, even though they are alienated, estranged and hostile to the family of their spiritual birth. While we must oppose their destructive efforts and protect the church from their incursions, we still have a duty towards them. God "is not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). That certainly includes his own children whom Satan has deceived and turned against their Savior's Way.

\* The prophets of ancient Israel never ceased to appeal to their backsliding brethren to repent and return to God's ways. God sent Jeremiah to say to his brethren, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith Jehovah...return and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:12, 22). With this in mind consider the following thoughts when you pray::

\* We must fervently pray that they will realize the error of their ways. With Elisha we must pray, "Lord open (their) eyes that (they) may see" (II King 6:17). A multitude of young, impressionable preachers have been indoctrinated with the doctrines of the change movement by their Bible professors while attending schools they thought were faithful to Christ. Others have been deceived by the smooth and fair speech of false teachers who can make the good look bad and the bad appear to be good (Rom. 16:17-18). If they can be helped to see the doctrines of change in the clear light of God's Word maybe some of them will be salvaged.

\* We must pray that they will cease from troubling Christ's church. Men who are unhappy with the simple gospel and the simple worship of the New Testament should resign their positions as preachers and see employment elsewhere. If they no longer love the church, they should leave it rather than sow discord and division by trying to impose unapproved changes upon her. God hates those who do this ( Prov. 6:16-19).

\* We must pray that they will renounce their false teaching they have embraced and be content to walk in the old paths of Scripture truth. No matter how glamorous or successful in gaining numbers, if a method or message is contrary to God Will it is deadly and must be renounced.

\* We must pray that they will seek God's mercy and forgiveness for the harm they have done to his family.

\* Pray that they may once again be useful servants in the Master's service. Some of these men have great talent and ability that is needed to build up the kingdom and save the lost. Pray that they will not be lost to a false way.

\* Pray that they will build up that which they have damaged. May they be sorrowful and ashamed for their past behavior and determined to repair the breaches and spend the balance of their days contributing to her well-being.

\* We must pray that if they cannot and will not do the above, they will be honest and honorable enough to leave and go to their own place. To do otherwise is dishonorable.

\* Not only should we pray, but when presented with the opportunity, we should say to these misguided brethren, "Return O backsliding brother to the church you once served, to the kingdom of God's dear Son, to the household of faith, while the opportunity is yours." JHW

## “THINK IT NOT STRANGE”

Some brethren are incredulous when they read or hear our warnings about the apostasy that is upon us. They stand in unbelief when a case is cited of some prominent preacher who has abandoned the ancient faith of Christ for the new doctrines of change. They cannot accept that there are some congregations that are already using instrumental music in their worship and others that have allowed women to fill their pulpits. Some 2,000 years ago, as Peter sought to clarify the thinking of his brethren he wrote, “Think it not strange” that certain things were happening (I Pet. 4:12). So I say to you who read these lines:

**\* Think it not strange that some preachers have abandoned the Bible way for error.** Such has been the case in every generation. Jesus saw Judas walk away and betray him (John 13:26-30). Paul wrote of Hymenaeus and Alexander who had made shipwreck concerning the faith (I Tim. 1:19-20). With heavy heart, the apostle wrote that “Demas forsook me, having loved this present world” (II Tim. 4:10). The aged John wrote of brethren who “went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us...” (I John 2:19). These were but the first of a long line of men who went back and walked with Jesus no more (John 6:66).

**\* Think it not strange to hear that some preacher has allowed pride and personal ambition to drive him to harm the church.** These two vices are among Satan’s most effective tools. With them he can persuade a man to inflict great damage on the church all the while convincing himself he is doing God a favor. The apostle John had to deal with just such a man whose name was Diotrephes (III John 9-10). Paul was up against such men as he worked to spread the kingdom of Christ among the Gentiles (Phil. 1:15-16). There has never been a day when in some quarter of the kingdom such men could not be found!

**\* Think it not strange to learn that false teachers are circulating in our midst.** There are men are going from church to church, trying to seduce young preachers, seeking teaching positions in our Christian schools, sowing error and discord. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus to be alert for such men (Acts 20:29-31). John urged his brethren to “believe not every spirit (preacher), but prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1). In his second epistle he went further and advised them, “If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth no this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting...” (II John 10).

**\* Think it not strange when we warn that the church of Christ as a whole is threatened by an apostasy that bids to sweep across the entire brotherhood.** Paul said, “the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times, some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies...” (I Tim. 4:1-2). A similar warning of wide-spread apostasy was written to the church in Thessalonica. “Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (II Thess. 2:3). That apostasy first began to manifest itself in the latter years of the first century, even before the last apostle died. By the fourth century it had pretty well gained the mastery of the majority of the churches. Only a small remnant of faithful disciples, scattered here and there, survived by going into seclusion. In full flower the apostasy called itself The Holy Roman Catholic Church.

When noble men of God restored the ancient faith here on the North American continent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it flourished for 50 years. Then the weeds of apostasy began to appear. First there was organized a Missionary Society to take charge of the church’s mission of evangelism. Then came instruments of music. Ere long there were those promoting women preachers. Some disliked being a small separatist body and craved to run with their peers of the denominational world. By 1900 the apostasy reached its zenith. Error consumed 85 percent of our churches, most of our schools and most of our mission outposts. Only a poor struggling remnant survived to carry on the original plan of restoring the ancient faith and practice of the Lord’s church.

So today my friend, think it not strange when I tell you that the church is faced with a grave and imminent threat of apostasy driven by those who wish to change the faith, worship and practice of the church. These men are exchanging the old Bible ways for those of modern denominationalism, Don’t shake your head in unbelief, rather open your eyes, behold the danger. Then arm yourselves for the battle. Only those who are informed and properly prepared for the assault will survive. How tragic it will be if all that we and our forebearers have worked for is allowed to be swallowed up by those who have abandoned the standards of our Lord Jesus Christ. JHW



## CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS THEN AND NOW

From the beginning of our movement to restore New Testament Christianity here in America, we have had schools operated by brethren to augment the work preachers and elders were doing. The logic for Christian schools was simple. Schools were needed where young Christians could receive an education as their faith was being strengthened and fortified. They would thus be prepared for useful service in the kingdom. Schools were needed whose teachers were Christians and whose aim was to enhance Christian character. Parents needed schools where God's word was taught without denominational indoctrination and young Christians could be associated with their spiritual peers in the most formative years of their lives. Schools also filled a special need by providing training for young men who wished to preach the gospel. Alexander Campbell had his Buffalo Academy and later his Bethany College. Tolbert Fanning founded Franklin College. Before long a dozen or more schools sprung up across the nation to serve the church.

Satan saw the threat that Christian Schools presented to his program so he went to work to destroy them. Many failed from lack of support. But others he was able to infiltrate and eventually commandeer for his own purposes. Following the Civil War, a schism occurred within the church. There was a liberal element who had grown weary of the old fashioned religion of Christ and yearned for something more appealing to modern man. They were determined to introduce changes into the faith, the worship and work of the church. The schools produced the young preachers who demanded instruments of music, missionary societies to do the work of the church, women to serve as preachers, fellowship with the denominational churches about them. When that break was finished virtually all the schools stood with the digressives, identified as Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches.

David Lipscomb and James A. Harding founded Nashville Bible School, now David Lipscomb University. Then in quick succession came, Freed-Hardeman, Abilene Christian and Harding College. Others soon followed. As the church recovered from her devastating losses, the colleges grew and flourished. At the zenith of our prosperity, here in America there were some 22 schools of higher learning operated by Christians. Missionaries planted similar schools in several foreign lands. The good they did and the role they played in the growth of the kingdom, especially in our expansion to foreign lands cannot be disputed. Unfortunately as was the case in the waning years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so it has been in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Schools that once were bastions of faithfulness to New Testament Christianity gradually fell under the influence of men who no longer shared that commitment. Now we are in the midst of a brotherhood crisis. A large and powerful movement has swept over the church, inflicting serious harm on her. An influential group of brethren are clamoring for unscriptural changes to the faith, worship and practice of the church. The fountain head of this movement can be found in the Bible Departments of several of our schools, the most prominent being Abilene Christian University and Pepperdine University.

It is helpful to consider the relationship of the schools to the church, then and now.

- \* Then, they existed to serve the church. Today, many academics behave as though the church exists to serve the schools.
- \* Then, they felt common cause with the church and stood up to defend her when she was under assault by her enemies. Now some of them are harboring and supporting those who are making war on the church.
- \* Then, they were more interested in pleasing their fellow-Christians than those outside of the body. Now, the great interest seems to be to please their peers in the world of academia and in the denominational world.
- \* Then, they chose as their administrators great men of God who were leaders in the church. Such men often were preachers, respected for their soundness, balance and educational qualifications. Today, many of our schools have leaders who are quality educators but are not preachers. They bear some connection to the church, but not many would be recognized as preachers.
- \* In days past, faculty were selected on the basis of their being strong and faithful members of the church. Today, many are only nominal members and in some cases, not at all.
- \* Then, they felt a keen obligation to parents and congregations to send their sons and daughters back to them, not only well educated, but strong, faithful Christians. Today, the greater emphasis is on being well educated in secular matters.

\* Then, they did not tolerate, on their faculty, teachers who were working and teaching in a way that was antagonistic to the welfare of the church. Today many of our schools harbor men whose main interest is undermining the foundations of churches of Christ.

\* Then, we needed our schools and they helped us tremendously. Today, we must say that some of our schools are hindering rather than helping the Cause we love. Yes we have a few schools that still serve their original intent and purpose. For them we give thanks. But for those who think they have outgrown the church of Christ and their founders' intent to serve the church, we can no longer rejoice in their existence. We pray that the administrators and trustees of these schools will come to their senses and make an about face. But we confess we are not optimistic that such will happen. If they cannot and will not do so, we would be better off with out them.

I remember when the leaders of Wake Forrest, a Baptist University in North Carolina, founded and funded by members of that denomination, declared that they no longer considered themselves answerable to that religious body. To placate those whose money and property they were taking, this assured them they would retain "their historic ties" to the Baptist church. For all practical purposes, the same spirit is now at work in some of our schools. If such is their determination, the quicker the separation comes, the better. Brethren should not be deceived into sending the children or their support to a school that no longer shares the common faith of Christ Jesus. JHW

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## **A PRAYER FOR HELP IN THIS DAY OF DISTRESS**

**Change agents** have much to say about calling us back to the Old Testament. The author happens to be a student of the Old Covenant and finds many valuable lessons therein. In the Psalms he finds many inspirational thoughts for prayers. When the righteous among the Hebrews were confronted with deadly, dangerous enemies, they prayed fervently to God for his help and deliverance and he heard and delivered them. While we must never pray for any physical harm to our enemies, we can properly pray that those who are spiritual enemies of the Cause of Christ will be defeated in their endeavors. You who read this are urged to join the author in daily praying for the safety of the Lord's church from those agents of change who are working to corrupt her faith, worship and practice.

\* Pray that God will confound and confuse them in their schemes and plans (Ps. 35:4 KJV); that He will bring their counsels to nought (Ps. 33:10).

\* Pray that they will be scattered (Ps.68:1), that they will turn and flee from God's righteous servants who oppose them (Ps. 129:5).

\* Ask God to turn them one against the other and render them helpless to harm to his church (Ps. 64:8).

\* Pray that their mischief will return on their own heads (Ps. 7:16).

\* Entreat God to blunt their arrows, break their bows and dull their swords (Ps. 49:9; 76:3).

\* Earnestly pray that they will be defeated and overthrown in the day of conflict (Prov. 22:12).

\* Pray that God's people will be strong and valiant in the day of battle and that Christ will be glorified; that those who love him and his holy church will not be put to shame (Ps. 69:6).

\* Ask God to arise and "plead his own cause" (Ps. 74:22); that He will remember "all the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary" (Ps. 74:3).

\* Pray that every brother and sister in Christ will give heed to the Word of God (Ps. 119:34) and "set their hope in God" (Ps. 78:7) rather than in schemes, promotions and worldly enticements.

\* Let us pray that God will revive the spirits of each of us (Is. 57:15), and his church throughout the world; that every man of God will be a good soldier of Christ Jesus and stand boldly against the enemies of the kingdom (II Tim. 2:3-4).

\* Entreat God that the faithful remnant will rejoice and be glad in God's protection and deliverance of his church (Ps. 70:4)

\* Pray that all the churches of Christ will once again flourish and with devotion and zeal go forth with determination and confidence to win the world for Christ (Matt. 28:19). JHW

## DOES BIGGER EQUAL BETTER?

Many brethren seem to think that bigger equals better. Those who are champions of change seem to operate under the illusion that this is the case. Since they now control many of the larger churches among us they must have the better approach. Since they control our largest universities, they must be wiser, smarter and more in tune with the times.

If it is the case that bigger equals better, then surely Catholicism must be better than any other church, including the Church of Christ; but then Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and even animism all have more adherents than do we. Per this logic, they must be better! If bigger is better then many denominational bodies are larger than us and hundreds of denominational congregations are bigger than our biggest change churches, therefore folks should seek membership in them since bigger means better!

Is an author better or best because he is most popular and a best seller among the general population? Some imply that since Max Lucado is a popular, best selling author, therefore he must be saying and doing things right. But if this were the case, Chairman Mao was the greatest writer of our life-time. His little red book, the **Thoughts of Mao** has circulated many millions of copies.

The fact is, big says nothing about moral or spiritual qualities, whether of a business, a church, a school or an author. In fact, sometimes the ingredients that contribute to worldly success in numbers are deception, compromise; a message that is pleasing to the worldly-minded, rather than to God. The fact is, big only proves that a thing is big. It proves nothing about the rightness or goodness of the thing or those who made it big! Paul wrote, "If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Is a teacher better, wiser, more to be listened to or preferred because he has earned a Ph.D. from Harvard, Princeton or some other elite university? No doubt, in the secular realm, a degree from such a prestigious school is a real plus. In the world of denominationalism, where the Bible is always of secondary consideration, a degree from those top schools demands high respect. We read of "knowledge that is falsely so-called" (I Tim. 6:20). But in God's church, where Christ is the supreme and only head; where Scripture is the absolute and only authority; where loyalty to Jesus, his church and his Word trumps all worldly attainments and knowledge; a Ph.D. from a great university of the world is of minimal consideration (John 12:48). In fact history will reveal that the Lord's church has suffered more from highly educated men than from common folks; from brilliant men filled with arrogance and pride than from the ordinary men, of ordinary educational attainments (I Cor. 1:21; 26-27).

Today it is not those ordinary preachers, toiling away in their local communities, that are giving us grief. The chaos and disruption is primarily flowing out of our Christian Universities and led by those change leaders who are so proud of their advanced degrees. We have had and now have well-educated men in our ranks who are yet humble servants of the Master, who love the church and respect the Word. But we also have a band of intellectuals who are deficient in all these areas. If they have their way the walls of Zion will be undermined and brought crashing to the ground. Big does not equal better nor does sophisticated equal right. At the end of the day, it is loyalty to Christ, love for his church and respect for his Word that makes a man a worthy leader of God's people. JHW

## SECULARIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Perhaps the greatest threat to the church of the twenty-first century is secularization. Many will blink as ask what is that?

Webster defines **secular** as, "a. Of or relating to the worldly or temporal concerns; b. not overtly or specifically religious." **Secularism** is defined as, "indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations." Vergilius Ferm defines **secularization** as, "The taking over of church property by the state for secular purposes..." (Dictionary of Religion). Under secularism, **Baker's Dictionary of Theology** says, "Today secularism is the integration of life around the spirit of a specific age, rather than around God. It is living as if the material order were supreme and as if God did not exist...Secularism places the emphasis on temporal social enjoyment rather than on eternal spiritual values."

Secularization is not being forced upon the church by the state or by any mortal enemy from without. Rather it is a matter of the church gradually absorbing the spirit of the age and forgetting its mission and purpose under Christ.

Given the sinful nature of a world in rebellion to heaven and a church designed to "be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27), God expects his church to be different. We are said to be "a holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9). The word holy is from *hagios*, the basic meaning of which is different (Wm. Barclay). Concerning the sinful world we are commanded to come ye out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:17). While we must live in a wicked world, we must not be "of the world" (John 17:16). The world will "think it strange that (we) run not with them..." (I Pet. 4:4).

Twenty yeas ago, Michael Weed wrote in the **Christian Chronicle** that, "many church leaders are actually cooperating with and even accelerating the process of secularization within the church." He points out five prominent areas where this process is visible.

1. It is seen in the attempt to be up-to-date and effective; infatuation with modern communication; and the use of advertising techniques in their attempt to promote or "sell" Christianity to the world. This often results in "cutting the product to fit the market." They reduce the Christian message to "flashy advertising slogans and catchy cliches...which substitutes for basic Christian beliefs."
2. It is evident in the pursuit of an empty, hollow unity with other bodies of people. In the words of Malcom Muggeridge, "It is the ecumenicity of those who, believing less and less, disagree about very little."
3. It is seen in "the production and sale of Christian literature whose basic quality is not that it is biblical, but that it is innocuous. Bible teaching and traditional Christian views are so diluted that these materials can be marketed to the broadest possible clientele.
4. It is demonstrated in the determined efforts of congregations "to prove (themselves) useful and relevant and to 'meet needs'..." Many of those laboring under this obsession are meeting needs in terms of society's own values and standards rather than God's. Thus this has become a substitute for meeting the spiritual needs of lost men and struggling saints. Health spas and lawyers meet needs but not those the church should be supplying. Some of the needs set forth are trivial and others are no business of the church at all.
5. The education program of some congregations reflects a confusion about the church's mission. When class discussion centers on things of "the world;" when the greater emphasis is on recreation and social activities rather than searching the Scriptures, the progress is at work. Bro. Weed well says, "The education ministry of the church should not be a vestibule through which Christians are comfortably ushered into the secular world views...of modern society.

In this writer's judgement, the trend toward secularism is further seen in the following cases:

1. Declining interest in and emphasis on the public proclamation of the Word.
2. A disproportionate emphasis on social activities and recreation in the life of the church.
3. The trend of congregations towards providing schools for general education, with only token spiritual training.
4. The willingness of our churches and Christian Schools to allow the worldly attitudes and practices of members to go unchallenged, thus lending tacit approval thereof.
5. Loss of interest in evangelism to win souls and the substitution of programs of social service.
7. A movement away from serious study of the Scriptures and doctrinal emphasis, while greatly emphasizing, psychology, counseling, family therapy and self-improvement. While all of the latter things are useful and have a place in our teaching, it is over emphasis of them to the neglect of the gospel that is dangerous. We can have happy, well-adjusted individual and families who will be destroyed for lack of divine knowledge (Hos. 4:6).

7. Virtual silence in the face of the never ending attacks by the promoters of humanism, evolution, and hedonism through our public schools and media. While our people are being corrupted and led away into these errors, their church leaders stand mute, watching them go!

8. Many Christians accept and live by the world's code of dress, conduct and moral behavior while elders and preachers say nothing to call them back to God's standards. Some even seek to defend the way of the world as harmless.

Satan could not destroy the early church by the sword of persecution (Rev. 12:2-11). He was able to swallow up the church by absorbing it into the pagan culture of Rome. This was done in the name of liberty and freedom from persecution, via Constantine's edicts. It occurred in a climate of unprecedented growth in numbers, prestige, recognition, and power for the church. So euphorious were the triumphs of the fourth century that the Christians never realized that the cause they loved and for which their fathers had died was being reshaped into an apostate, counterfeit church, now known as the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Awareness of the problem is not enough. There must be a workable knowledge of the Scripture and unswerving faith and loyalty thereto if we are to survive this modern onslaught against the faith once delivered (Jude 3). May God grant us wisdom to correctly read the signs of the times and to apply the divine remedy to every problem. Let us never forget our charge, "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). One of the major objections to the program of the change movement is that secularizes the Lord's church. JHW

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## **PARABLE OF THE QUARRELSOME SHEPHERDS**

Once there were three shepherds who pastured their flocks in a desolate area. They went their separate ways by day but each evening they sheltered their flocks in a common fold. Although all worked for a common master they did not get along very well. One was naturally cranky, another a jealous sort and the third was very sensitive and his feelings easily hurt. Each night when the sheep were in the fold the men would gather about a common fire, eat their food and talk. Unfortunately their conversations often turned fractious and bitter. One night their quarreling grew intense. As they shouted and threatened one another, wolves were sneaking ever closer to the darkened fold. The men came to blows, it was an awful sight. While they battled each other, the wolves saw their opportunity. They dashed into the fold tearing at the sheep and scattering them. They made off with several of the lambs.

The next morning the owner came to check on his sheep. He was shocked and angry at what he found. His sheep were scattered. Many were wounded, others were dead. The shepherds were battered and bruised but not from protecting their sheep. They had exhausted themselves fighting each other. The owner was furious. They were driven from his presence as unfit to serve him.

And the teacher explained that the sheep are God's people, the shepherds his preachers. The wolves are those who would lead the people into a new kind of faith and worship. He that hath an ear should give heed to the parable. JHW

## PRECURSORS TO APOSTASY

An apostasy is taking place within the ranks of churches of Christ. Marching under the banner of change, those pursuing this course are determined to change the faith worship and practice of our brethren so they will be acceptable to the denominational bodies of Protestantism. The most noticeable changes include willingness to accept the use of instrumental music in worship, the placing of women in public leadership roles in the church, denying the essentiality of baptism for salvation, teaching that the church of Christ is only one of many denominations that are pleasing to God.

Those who have been members of the church for any length of time stand in amazement as they see brethren turn their backs on the gospel of Christ and the church he purchased with his blood and rush to embrace the faulty notions of men. They wonder what in the world would cause folks to make such a foolish choice. The points following seem to be common factors found in those who are looking for changes to the ancient gospel of Christ.

\* The leading preachers in the change movement are men of much education. Many of them have pursued their advanced degrees in either secular or denominational universities. There their faith was undermined and replaced with a denominational point of view. They have brought that home and are trying to impose it on our people.

\* The churches that have embraced the change agenda and those currently sampling it are generally our large, wealthy congregations. Jesus observed, "It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23). Some seem to think that the practice of simple New Testament Christianity is alright for rural folks and the middle and lower classes, but folks of wealth need something more suitable to their tastes.

\* Many of those who have opted for change imagine themselves to be quite sophisticated. This flows out of their worldly educational attainments and their wealth. But they are embarrassed by our simple meeting houses, a cappella congregational singing, and Bible preaching. They need something new and more challenging for folks of their station.

\* The major driving force in this movement has been some of our Christian Universities. Most notable in the promotion of the change agenda are Abilene Christian, Pepperdine and David Lipscomb Universities. These schools have grown large, wealthy and influential in the church and in the world. In their early years their leaders saw their role as servants of the church. Today they fancy themselves spokesmen for the church. In their quest for acceptance and recognition in the world of academia they have embraced the current thinking of worldly denominations and are trying to impose it on the church of Christ. Young preachers coming from those schools are often infected with the virus of change.

\* Those pushing for change in our churches seem to have concluded that the church was going to die if it continued to follow the ancient paths of the Bible. In their misguided judgement they have concluded that prosperity and survival justify replacing the old faith and worship with a new version.

\* Evident in the promoters of change is a dearth of Bible knowledge. Even after 4-6 years of study in our universities many of the students know precious little of God's Word. They have studied much about church growth, contemporary religion, ministry, and theology but their accumulation of Bible knowledge has been minimal. Ignorance of the fundamentals of the faith has made them vulnerable to Satan's lies.

\* Along with the lack of knowledge, we see an evident lack of respect for Bible authority in the champions of change. The demands of society, the will of the people, the theories of the scholars, the pragmatic approach all take precedence over the ancient teaching of Scripture.

\* Those pushing for change exhibit a lack of respect and reverence for the church Jesus established. That she cost Christ his life on Calvary, that she was planned from eternity by God himself, that she is his beloved bride, that she is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16-17) means little to those determined to redesign her. Without blush or shame they lay profane hands on the sacred body of Christ and change her into their own image.

\* A major factor driving the change movement is the desire to be accepted and admired by worldly neighbors, whether religious or secular. They frequently write about what our neighbors think of us. They compare us with our denominational neighbors. They bemoan the fact that we are not counted as members of the Evangelical family of churches. They are embarrassed that we insist on immersion as essential to salvation; that we teach that Christ has only one church; that we refuse to interact with denomination bodies. They are willing to sacrifice those distinctive factors that result from taking the Will of Christ seriously...to gain standing with the world.

\* Those rushing into embrace a new kind of faith and worship evidently have little or no understanding of our history as a people. They have lost, or perhaps never had, any sense of identity with those who went before us, blazing the trail they now travel, who planted the churches and established the schools; who spread the concept of New Testament Christianity

around the world. Without that tie to our history, it pains them not to cast away all that was won at so great a cost.

May God deliver us from those who would destroy the church for which his Son died. JHW

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## THE LIBERAL MIND SET

Having spent upwards of 50 years preaching and teaching the gospel among our churches I have had numerous occasions to observe men who have abandoned the old-time gospel for that of liberalism. Certain characteristics are common to those who embrace this approach to their faith.

- \* They demand absolute freedom for themselves to say and do whatever they wish. If they had their way no one would be able to criticize them. Of course such unbridled liberty soon becomes license.
- \* They rebel against the idea of restrictive law. They deny that the law of Christ (Gal.6:2) is a law.
- \* They are eager to try anything new and different, ready to renounce and cast aside anything older than yesterday.
- \* They are flexible in their faith. They see few things of the Christian religion that are worth defending.
- \* They prefer to blame the innocent for the sins of the guilty. They blame the church for the factious actions of schismatics who have divided the church and formed splinter groups. They blame gospel preachers for not having solved all the many problems of the church and our society. They blame past Christian leaders for failing to understand everything we have learned. They blame Christians for resisting their attempts to impose their agenda on them.
- \* They feel constrained to magnify the failures of the Lord's church, while overlooking or excusing the same failures in other bodies. They fault the church of Christ for the divisions that have occurred among us but warmly embrace, endorse and commend Baptist, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, etc. with their many separate division. We hear them criticize our use of the name church of Christ, but we never hear them fault the various denominations for their human names.
- \* They magnify past problems in race relations and seem blind to the progress that has been made. We do not deny that White brethren allowed the pressures of society to influence their acceptance of Black Christians in generations past, but great progress has been made and to find a disciple or a congregation that will not accept Black Christians in fellowship is now an exception which all would condemn.
- \* They give little credit to those who have gone before them in Christ. Even though they are direct beneficiaries of their success, they can only fault them.
- \* Rather than sacrifice and do the hard work they prefer to gain control of the congregations, schools and good works of other brethren whose faith they do not share.

The main thing wrong with the liberal mind set is that it is contrary to "the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

- \* The Christ-like mind is one of obedience to the Father (Heb. 5:9). It honors the word of God (John 5:45-47).
- \* Those with his mind set love the church and protect her from her enemies (Eph. 5:23-25).
- \* The mind of Christ will have us forget the failures of the past and press on to the prize of the high calling of God (Phil.3:13-14).
- \* His mind set teaches us to accept responsibility for our own personal sins (I John 1:7-10) and to slow to judge others (Matt. 7:1-5).
- \* The mind of Christ holds that the ancient gospel was given once for all times to the saints (Jude 3). Nothing new can be added, nor can anything be extracted from it (Rev. 22:18-19).
- \* It would have us stand for and contend for that ancient faith (Phil. 1:16; Jude 3).

These two mind-sets are miles a part. They lead to two different destinations. The one wrecks congregations and destroys the faith of disciples. The other builds up brethren in the most holy faith (Jude 20). Let every Christian examine himself to be sure he has the mind of Christ. JHW

## WALLS ARE BUILT FOR SAFETY

Ancient peoples built walls to protect their cities from marauding neighbors. The Israelis are building a fence to keep Palestinian terrorists from inflicting harm on their people. Where crime and violence flourish, people find protection in "gated communities." Homeowners build fences to keep thieves and trespassers out. Building codes demand a fire wall between apartments and new additions to buildings to keep some potential fire from spreading. A retaining wall will keep dirt and rocks from sliding down and destroying homes. Sheep are kept safe at night behind the walls of the sheepfold.

There are times when the church must build walls to protect herself from those who would do her harm. Today a numerous band of men are circulating among our churches seeking to convince our brethren that the old ways of gospel truth are obsolete and no longer suitable. They propose changes that will make the church more acceptable to the world. They promise great growth and success to those who will follow their agenda of change. Already numerous congregations have been captured by this movement. In many places churches have been torn asunder when ruthless brethren insist on changing the faith, worship and practice from the Scriptural standard. Meeting places built and paid for by faithful brethren have been commandeered and are now being used in ways offensive to the faith and sensibilities of those who wish to abide in the old paths of God's truth.

Many of the young preachers coming out of our Christian Universities no longer preach the gospel we believed and obeyed in days past. They have a new gospel of salvation by grace alone, or faith alone. They have a baptism that is a declaration of salvation rather than for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They observe holy days, foreign to the New Testament pattern. They spurn the very idea of restoring the original faith worship and practice of the apostolic church. They allow women into leadership roles that God has forbidden. They see no wrong in using instruments of music in worship. They seek the fellowship of denominational believers and declare that the church of Christ is itself a denomination. They prefer to model their congregations after successful denominational Community Churches like the Saddleback Church of Orange County California or the Willow Creek church of Illinois. In the last 15 years this movement has succeeded in gaining a foothold among our churches in virtually every major city of the nation. It spans the continent from East to West and North to South. It has made its way to our mission outposts in foreign lands.

To block the spread of this pernicious system, we must build a wall that will contain the promoters thereof. The likelihood of recovering those congregations already caught up in the movement is remote. But if we build a strong and solid wall between us and them it will stop their momentum. They will not be able to capture other churches if they cannot breach the wall.

This is not a wall of wire or stones. It is a wall of truth. Truth makes men free from ignorance, error and superstition (John 8:32). It also protects us from teachers of error. We began **Christianity Then and Now** for the express purpose of meeting and blocking the advance of the change movement. Our goal is to send it to the preachers and elders of every congregation in the English speaking world; to all our missionaries and preacher students. Each issue sets for a lesson of what we believe and why and one or more that addresses the errors of the promoters of change. Our Website @ [www.christianity-then-and-now.com](http://www.christianity-then-and-now.com) carries the message ever farther, reaching thousands of brethren around the world each month. Our weekly email lesson takes lessons that will fortify the faith of the readers to hundreds more. We need Christian men and women of conviction who will work with us to build this sturdy wall. Time is of the essence. Every day we tarry, the promoters of change move ahead. If you would like to participate in this effort for the kingdom of Christ, we welcome your fellowship. Write us at 12630 W. Foxfire Dr. Sun City West, AZ 85375, email us @ [johnwaddev@aol.com](mailto:johnwaddev@aol.com) or call us at (623) 214-3715. Working together we can make a difference. JHW



## PARABLE OF JOE THE SOLDIER

Joe was a tough, no-nonsense fellow. He grew up in a rough neighborhood and frequently mixed it up with guys who challenged him. Joe was proud to be an American. He did not read the newspaper and only occasionally caught the broadcast news, but he had patriotism in his veins and was ready to defend his nation should an enemy attack her. When war erupted, Joe rushed to the recruitment office and volunteered for the Cause. In boot camp, he had his share of scrapes with other recruits. After he was assigned, he was encouraged to get into the company's boxing program. He put many a man on the canvas and loved doing it. When he was shipped across to the battle zone, he continued to look for challengers to meet in the ring. Man after man fell before his fists and his peers cheered him on and called him their "champion." In fact, so successful was Joe at boxing, that his commanding officers kept him busy in the gym and meeting boxers from other outfits. Before he knew it, his hitch was up and Joe came home. When his buddies asked him about his war experiences, all Joe could tell them was how many G.I.s he had whipped in the ring. While other men fought the enemy, Joe was whipping other Americans. Some men were wounded in combat. Some died. Joe got a broken nose, cauliflower ears and a few scars on his face. He was the champ. As he grew older, and as he thought about his buddies who died in the conflict, Joe felt a little embarrassed and did not care to tell his grandchildren about his years as the company's boxing champion.

When the disciples asked the teacher what this story meant, he explained that Joe was a gospel preacher. The war was a spiritual conflict for the soul of the church. The enemy were those who despised the church and were determined to change her into their own image. Those Joe fought and whipped were fellow preachers, faithful servants of Christ. And the teacher said, the sons of this world are wiser for their own generation than the sons of light. JHW

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## DO YOUR EYES NEED TREATMENT?

The Christians in Laodicea were urged by the Lord to get eye salve so they could anoint their eyes and see (Rev. 3:18). They may have had 20/20 vision but they were blind to their faults and failures, blind to the dangers that threatened their standing before God and blind to their duties and obligations to the Master.

Many contemporary Christians, including numerous elders and preachers evidently have serious vision problems. They can easily see to read the paper or watch television, but they are blind to what is happening to the church. They attend lectureships where promoters of change are selling their wares. They come home reporting, "I saw nothing amiss." We frequently hear of cases where change agents had worked in a congregation for many months, recruiting disciples and preparing for the day when they would assert themselves and wrest control from the elders. When the ax fell, the faithful brethren were completely taken by surprise. They had not seen the disaster coming. They knew nothing of the change movement. They had no idea their preacher was working for their overthrow.

Wise and effective leaders will invest the time and resources to keep abreast of what is happening to the Cause of Christ. They will subscribe to several gospel journals such as the **Gospel Advocate** and the **Firm Foundation**. They will read materials such as **Christianity: Then and Now** provides. They will read books that address the needs of the hour. They will attend occasional lectureships and forums to inform themselves of problems and personalities that are troubling the church. They will bring qualified and capable men to their congregations to teach on these timely topics.

Most of us spend hundreds of dollars for eye exams, glasses or contacts. We do so without complaint because we know the importance of good eyesight. We should have the same care and concern for our spiritual eyesight. Paul prayed for the saints in Ephesus that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened (Eph. 1:18). Occasionally we hear of someone who neglected his eyes and suffered permanent damage. Do let that be the case with your spiritual vision. Read, study, inquire, be informed and alert as you serve the Lord Jesus. JHW

## TAKING THE HIGH GROUND

As we engage those whose mission is to capture, reshape and redirect the church we love, we must beware of certain pitfalls that can keep us from the victory. Anyone can win a war, but not only the noble can win justly and bring about peace.

\* We must not only be against their unauthorized innovations, we must be for those positive aspects of Christianity that are the heart of our faith. Jesus put a high premium on justice, mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23). Those who only know how to oppose something will never succeed to building up the kingdom of God.

\* We must be disciples guided by love (Eph. 5:2): love for the Cause of Christ; love for our fellow-Christians; love for those who are our opponents in this struggle for the heart of the church. Our goal should be to snatch from the fire those who have turned away from the holy Word (Jude 23).

\* We must be kind (Eph. 4:32), considerate and courteous (I Pet. 3:8 KJV) when dealing with those whom we must confront.

\* We must be soldiers of high honor, integrity, honesty and truthfulness in dealing with the proponents of change (Phil. 4:8). We cannot operate on the principle that all is fair in war, nor can we ever assume that the end justifies the means. We want to prevail, but only in an honorable way.

\* We must be strong in faith, prayer, holiness, devotion and good works. Ours is a spiritual war. It will only be won by spiritual men of great faith and piety (Eph. 6:17-18).

\* We must look to God for the victory. It is his church that is under attack; his word being questioned and distorted; his Son being dishonored. Victory will be won, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith Jehovah" (Zech. 4:6). "The battle is Jehovah's" (I Sam. 17:47). "If God is for us who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Victory will not be won because we are smarter, better educated, tougher soldiers, or because we can hit harder. Nor will shouting, bullying or any other expressions of physical strength turn the tide.

\* We must not be consumed with opposing error. Where preachers fall into this trap their congregations wither and die, even as they make war on error. We must be busy in evangelism, reclaiming the fallen and edifying the church, even as we are confronting those who are opposing the way of truth (II Tim. 4:1-2).

\* We must be willing to hear and evaluate the criticisms the change agents raise against our practices. No one with an open and honest mind would argue that we have perfectly restored every aspect of Christianity to its original basis. We have not measured up in zeal, devotion, purity, generosity and outreach. Rather than plugging our ears and taking offense at such criticisms, we must face and acknowledge them where needed and work to right them.

\* We must take the offensive without being offensive. Without doubt, the ugly, harsh, abrasive attitude of many conservative preachers has made the liberal success possible. Brethren have been turned off and some alienated by the way many have chosen to wage their warfare.

If we should succeed in routing the enemy; if we refute their every error and see them gone, what will we have at the end? If we are left a narrow, bitter band of do-nothing but fight church folks, we will have a hollow victory. The survivors will soon bite and destroy one another (Gal. 5:15). Let's fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12), but let's remember to be "good soldiers of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:3) whose code is fidelity, honor and service. JHW

## PATRIOTS AND TRAITORS

In the long history of nations there have always been some who were true patriots to their homeland and there have always been traitors.

In America today we see a band of folks from the far left of the political spectrum who demonstrate naught but hatred and contempt for the land of their nativity. Former Attorney General, Ramsey Clark has made a career of visiting outlaw regimes and publicly denouncing his homeland. Violent mobs of young radicals are every ready to take to the streets for any opportunity to reproach their nation. They sympathize with their nation's enemies, they despise their homeland and all she stands for. They desecrate her flag. They rejoice when she suffers setbacks.

As I watched a TV special of patriotic music, the camera focused on an aged veteran, openly weeping while band played **God Bless America**. Later, all stood in reverence as American flag was unfurled. Patriots are willing to serve their nation, to put their lives on the line to protect her. They honor and obey her laws and respect her sacred institutions, documents and symbols.

We see a similar situation in the church, which is the kingdom of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19). There are true patriots of the kingdom of Messiah. For the kingdom of Christ they gladly labor and toil. For the kingdom they have only love and respect. They sacrifice of their means that the kingdom may prosper. They would never turn their backs on, nor abandon the kingdom. They gladly cover her flaws and blemishes with a mantel of love (I Pet. 4:8). They are ready to arise to the defense of the kingdom should enemies attach her sacred walls (Phil. 1:16). They will be there for the church in her darkest hour, even if all others forsake her. With true conviction they sing, "I love thy kingdom Lord...the church our dear Redeemer saved with his own precious blood."

There are traitors to the kingdom of Christ; people in the church whose love has grown cold (Matt. 24:12). They no longer respect her, her worship, faith or practices. They ridicule and poke fun at the church in the presence of unbelievers and scorning enemies. They undermine the faith of her weak and immature members. They ravage congregations, driving wedges of division into their hearts; setting brother against brother, relative against relative. They attack her faith, they tamper with her worship, they ridicule her noble forebearers; they rewrite her glorious history and seek to create a false image of her early heroes. They find greater pleasure in the company of those who reject the church. Although they call themselves members of the Church of Christ, their fruit demonstrates that they are not true patriots of the Master's kingdom. They are traitors! They capture and commandeer her congregations, making of them something new and different from Christ intended. What they cannot capture and control they would overthrow and destroy (Tit. 1:10-11). They are "agents of change" whose mission is to destroy the church of our fathers and out of the rubble create a new kind of church, more akin to Christian Churches and "denominational" types of churches which they prefer.

Patriots of the kingdom deserve our respect, admiration and appreciation. Traitors deserve our contempt and rejection. I tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of our Lord and his holy kingdom (Phil. 3:18). JHW

## A PRAYER FOR THE SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

All Christians, especially those who preach, are called to be good soldiers of Christ Jesus (II Tim. 2:3-4). Our warfare is not one with carnal weapons (II Cor. 10:3-4), nor is it with any nation or race of people. It is a spiritual warfare with those who knowingly or unknowingly serve Satan, the great and ancient enemy of Christ and his church. As in all conflicts it is appropriate that prayers be lifted up for those who do battle for the Lord Jesus. Today, one theater of our war is with those within the church who are determined to corrupt her faith, worship and practice by imposing unscriptural changes on them. Will you who read these lines join me in praying:

- \* That we will "be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might" (Eph. 6:10).
- \* That we will be bold and courageous in the face of a determined enemy (Eph. 6:19-20).
- \* That all we who serve in the army of the Master will have "the mind of Christ" (Phil.2:5).
  - \* That we will love our enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:44) because they are our brothers, misguided though they are.
  - \* That when we are maligned or slandered we will turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39), returning good for evil (Rom. 12:14).
  - \* That we will admonish them as brothers who hopefully will realize their mistake and change their course (II Thess. 3:15).
  - \* That we will be gentle toward all, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves (II Tim. 2:24-25).
- \* That we will not mistake our own preferences and prejudices for the will of Christ. This is a common human weakness and when it occurs brethren are led into conflict over matters that are not true matters of faith.
- \* That we will not allow our ignorance in some areas to blind us to some truth discovered by others. We cannot afford to be found fighting against truth, in the name of preserving God's truth.
- \* That we will not refuse to acknowledge our misunderstandings and misapplications of Scripture when it is discovered or pointed out...even when it is our enemy that does so.
- \* That we will not mask our personal dislike of a preacher, teacher or school under charges of heresy.
- \* That we will never lose sight of Christ's desire and prayer that his people be one (John 17:20-21). To that end that we will not only to contend for the faith (Jude 3), but that we will diligently strive to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:3).
- \* That we will be patient and long-suffering with those who are misled and confused (I Thess. 5:14).
- \* That we will have the victory and preserve from further harm that precious church for which our Lord gave his life (Acts 20:28).

May our prayers for the church be offered through Christ, the head, the savior and the mediator of the church. JHW

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### BOOKS THAT WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE CHANGE MOVEMENT

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