
More
LESSONS to
FORTIFY
YOUR FAITH

*in the day of
a changing church*

by
John Waddey, Editor
CHRISTIANITY:
then & now

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INTRODUCTION

The lessons of this book are the author's response to a movement within the brotherhood of churches of Christ that has come to be known as "The Change Movement." This movement had its origin with the work of W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, some 45 years ago. For a period of some 25 years it was spurned by most of our preachers and elders but like an corrupt leaven it slowly spread among the younger generation of men, especially those of some of our Christian schools. It became a public matter in the decade of the 1980s when men such as Rubel Shelly openly embraced and advocated a more liberal and progressive approach to the faith. The movement did not gain full steam until progressive minded administrators and faculty of some of our most prominent universities embraced the change agenda and made it their cause.

When we realized the danger this movement posed we set about to do what we could to block its progress and hopefully to defeat it before it was able to do major damage to the Lord's church. Our first undertaking was to launch a monthly publication entitled **Christianity: Then & Now** (now in its 6th year of publication). We began by mailing 200 congregations in and around the state of Arizona. We now mail to the ministers and elders of over 9,300 congregations in the USA and a sizable number to workers in other nations. We were then enabled to open a website that would be dedicated to the same effort. It came into being in 2001 as www.christianity-then-and-now.com. A number of books have been written in this same period of time that deal with the challenge presented by the change agents. Some four years ago we launched a weekly email project called **Lessons to Fortify Your Faith**. These are sent out each Saturday and a significant number of our recipients cooperate with us by forwarding them on to others.

We have been able to develop these various projects only because of the assistance of a number of faithful Christians across the nation. The members of the West Bell Road Church of Christ in Surprise, AZ have been especially supportive in every way.

This book is a collection of two years worth of our weekly lessons. We send them forth with a prayer that they will help to educate and inoculate our brethren against a movement that, if left unchecked, will be as destructive to us as was the digression of the Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ a century ago. Permission is granted to use them in church bulletins and other papers.

May God bless his church by protecting her from those who would do her harm by corrupting her faith and worship. We urge all who read these line to be strong in the Lord and faithful unto death. John Waddey

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* When articles did not fill the full page, rather than leave it blank, we chose to fill the available space with other shorter articles or useful quotes that we judged to be worthy. We trust that these will likewise be interesting and helpful to those who read them.

* Most of the quotations from wise men of the past were gleaned from **The New Dictionary of Thoughts** by Tyron Edwards, published by Standard Book Co. and **The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations** by Frank Mead, published by Fleming H. Revell. Co.

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A CLARION CALL TO THE SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

The church of our day is facing an unprecedented challenge. A wave of apostasy is challenging the integrity and existence of our congregations such as has not been seen since the end of the 19th century. Large numbers of our younger members and significant numbers of congregations appear ready to embrace these false prophets of change. Several of our Christian Universities are already in their camp and some of their professors are among the most vocal spokesmen for the digressives. Our largest gospel paper is now a sounding board for their champions and their innovations. A call is being sent across our great brotherhood for volunteers who are willing to do battle to save the Church of Christ from the forces of apostasy.

* We must raise up an army of men willing to publicly stand in opposition to these agents of change. We need no summer soldiers or fair-weather patriots. We need courageous men who are set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16), no matter how long the struggle be. Likely, many of us will finish our course before the church is delivered from those who have set out to make a denomination of her.

* We must be willing to devote our energies to fighting a common enemy rather than each other. Of course we will disagree on some points, some methods and strategies. Brethren always have. But we must not lose sight of who the real enemy is. The change agents are counting on us being so consumed with internal strife and bickering that we will not be able to mount an effective resistance against them. Such has neutralized strong armies in the past.

* We must mount an offensive campaign rather than waiting for the promoters of change to attack our positions. Remember the old military maxim, "A strong offense is the best defense." Too long too many elders and preachers have waited until the enemy was within their gates before they responded. Even if they manage to force them out they almost certainly will lose some members to them and suffer damage.

* We must build a defense perimeter around and protect our own congregations, but we must also accept responsibility for defending the kingdom at large. If we save our local congregation but the rest of the brotherhood is swept away we will have suffered a terrible loss.

* We must promote the common good. Important as are our personal projects and local works, we must not neglect the welfare of the kingdom of God throughout the world. We must encourage every good work done by faithful brethren where ever they be.

* We must be willing to help each other in the combat we will be facing. Such spiritual conflicts sometimes leave a man in a lonely, isolated position. We must lend such good men every possible encouragement. Two men fighting together can usually accomplish more than each standing alone. The Duke of Wellington attributed his victory over Napoleon to that fact that he had the good fortune to lead a "band of brothers" in combat.

* We must not allow old loyalties and friendships to silence us. The fact that we once attended a school or enjoyed a friendship is not an acceptable reason to stand with muted voice if they now are working to harm the church of our Lord.

* Each of us must be willing, without shame or hesitation, to recruit as many soldiers as possible to our holy cause. We call them not to our party or clique, we call them to be "good soldiers of Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 2:3). The "change people" are busily recruiting young men to their "new" faith and practice. Each man of sound faith and conviction must use his influence to win his neighbor to the Savior's side in this conflict.

* We must be willing to discriminate. Do not lend the least aid or comfort to the enemy. He who would place unholy hands on the faith and worship of the Lord's church should find no welcome among us. Don't promote their projects or their personnel. Such can only bring harm to the Cause we love. Do not contribute to their projects do not recommend students to attend their schools.

* We need to know our friends as well as our enemies. Lend your aid, support and encouragement to every brother who is faithfully serving in his post of duty. Count him your ally and stand shoulder to shoulder with him in battle.

* We must whet our sword and repair our armor lest we meet the enemy unprepared (Eph. 6:13-17).

Read the books of the false teachers so you will know first hand what they are saying. Read the books written to refute them. Attend lectures and seminars addressing these issues. Subscribe to good papers that will keep you posted on what is happening and provide you valuable ammunition for the battle. Fill your quiver with the arrows of truth that will put to flight the agents of change.

* We must consult with one another about strategy and coordinate our efforts lest we duplicate our efforts, counteract one another or allow another a good soldier or congregation to be overrun by the opposition. Use your phone, the Internet or mail to keep in touch with your fellow-soldiers. Share information; help each other to be informed and encouraged.

* The future of churches of Christ in America depends on the loyalty of her men of arms. Where do you stand? JHW

THE BROKEN FELLOWSHIP

A careful observer will note that Churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches have many similarities. Once we were a united people, worshipping and serving the Lord in a common faith. In this lesson we will notice that past connection and the causes of our separation.

The Period of Unity (1804-1849)

Our roots here in America reach back to the work of Barton W. Stone in Kentucky and Thomas and Alexander Campbell in Western Virginia in the first decade of the 1800s. They had committed themselves to project of restoring the original faith and practice of the church. The seed of the gospel produced a common crop of Christians wherever it was preached (Lk. 8:11). Thousands of godly souls eagerly embraced the invitation to go back to the Bible and be Christians only. Scores of Baptist churches abandoned their denominational connections and became New Testament Christians. The Mahoning Baptist Association was dissolved and its member churches joined the restoration effort in 1830.

In 1831-32, the followers of Stone and Campbell met in Georgetown and Lexington, Kentucky and agreed to unite and merge their efforts for the Lord. A tremendous surge of growth followed this move and the number of disciples soon numbered upwards of 250,000. So great was the reception to the gospel that many thought the restored church would soon sweep the field.

The Period of Turmoil (1849-1906)

Satan never rests when God's cause is flourishing. In October of 1849, a group of prominent brethren met in Cincinnati, Ohio to organize the **American Christian Missionary Society** to coordinate the mission work of the entire brotherhood. The chief leaders of this movement were D. S. Burnett, the organizer and W. K. Pendleton, its chief defender. Alexander Campbell had laid the foundation for the missionary society in a series of articles published in the **Millennial Harbinger** in 1841-1848. He was elected the first president of the organization. Once open, there was no closing the floodgates and a clutch of unscriptural and disruptive practices soon appear in the brotherhood. In 1859 Dr. L. L. Pinkerton introduced an instrument of music into the worship of the church in Midway, Kentucky. His reasoning was that their singing was so poor that even the rats had left the church. Though slow in being accepted, by 1906 the majority of our churches had adopted instrumental music. Inevitably in every place where it came, friction and division followed in the wake.

The issues of slavery and abolition plagued the churches from 1840-1860. A few disciples owned slaves, but many were too poor to afford such a luxury. A. Campbell preached a message of moderation. He viewed slavery as a social evil, but noted that the Scriptures did not specifically condemn it. Rather, it was regulated. While he expected the institution of slavery to fall before the advance of the gospel, he warned against agitation that would disrupt society and lead to bloodshed. John Boggs founded **The Northwestern Christian** in Indiana, a magazine to promote the abolitionist cause within the church. He felt it his duty to drive out of the church all who owned slaves or sympathized with the practice. He went further and attacked those like Campbell who would not espouse his abolition viewpoint. James Shannon of Missouri was just as outspoken in affirming the merits of slavery. He alleged that it was God's will for the African people. Along with the entire nation, the bonds of unity were greatly strained by these agitations.

When the cannons fired on Fort Sumter, in 1861, not only the Union but the church as well was grievously torn. At first, strong leaders such as David Lipscomb (Tennessee), Ben Franklin (Ohio and Indiana) and J. W. McGarvey (Missouri and Kentucky) urged brethren to maintain a neutral, pacifist position. Others were caught up in the fever of war and joined the fray on their chosen side. James A. Garfield recruited Christian brethren and formed the 42nd Ohio Volunteers. He led his troop in the bloody battles of Shiloh and Chickamauga. He was eventually commissioned a general. R. M. Gano of Texas put together a calvary troop made up largely of Christians. By a single day they missed fighting Garfield's Christian troops at Shiloh. During the war years, the Missionary Society issued several inflammatory resolutions favoring the Union cause and condemning the South. This not only convinced the Southern brethren of the evil nature of the society, it embittered them against those associated with it. Following the war a sectional bitterness was clearly evident between those north of the Mason-Dixon line and those south. The division that finally came reflected that sectionalism.

A spirit of compromise had been developing in those churches that wanted societies and instrumental music. This was reflected in Walter Scott's paper, **The Protestant Unionist** which reduced the terms of fellowship to a belief in the deity of Jesus. "Progressive brethren" as they preferred to call themselves, were frequently involved in union meetings with denominational ministers. They came to refer to the church as a "denomination." The cliché was coined that "We are Christian only, but the not the only Christians."

The role of the progressive minister gradually evolved from that of a preacher and evangelist to that of "pastor" like their denominational counterparts. With this it wasn't long until men like Isaac Errett began to add the title "Reverend" to their name.

Within that same stream of progressive preachers there soon were manifestations of rank theological liberalism. Led by men like J. H. Garrison, editor of the **Christian Evangelist**, R. C. Cave of St. Louis, Edward S. Ames of the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, these men began an assault on the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures that equaled the most rabid of the liberal Protestants.

Separation Realized (1906)

In 1906 those responsible for the U. S. Religious Census noted the polarization that existed among the Restoration churches. They commissioned J. W. Shepherd to gather the statistics of those churches whose fellowship excluded instrumental music and missionary societies. The resulting figures were shocking. The progressives claimed 982,701 members, our brethren could count only 149,658. We had 2,649 congregations, they had 8,203. The liberals had gained control of most of the foreign mission work, the schools and benevolent works. We were a small, badly beaten remnant scattered primarily in the South. Our little strength was found in the circle of influence of David Lipscomb's **Gospel Advocate** and Austin McGary's **Firm Foundation** papers. We were poor, with little strength or resources. We were scorned and ridiculed by the progressives and the sectarian world as well. Brethren of great courage and conviction refused to accept defeat. They argued that "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us; they would have continue with us...."(1 John 2:19).

Growth and Recovery (1906-1976)

A handful of faithful men of God, threw themselves into the Lord's work with incredible sacrifice and zeal. Foot by foot they recovered the ground lost and reestablished New Testament congregations throughout the land. By 1976 we had grown to some 1,200,000 members, outstripping those who had left us. Thousands more had been won in foreign fields. From a lower socioeconomic strata we had moved into the middle class of society. Following World War II we expanded our mission outreach into every state of the nation and some 140 foreign nations. There had been substantial growth in good works such as Christian Schools, benevolent works, Christian camps etc. With all of this came growth in recognition and respect in the eyes of the world.

Today's Choice

Today apostasy again is knocking at our door. In the name of "changes" that they claim will improve our congregational life, our worship and evangelism, progressives are agitating among our people. Awareness of the hard battle fought and losses sustained should make us very leery when we hear voices calling for unity based on compromise with the Christian Churches. It was their doctrines and practices that devastated us in the past. The agenda of the "change agents" among us will bring the same baneful results it brought our fathers a century ago. Remember the lessons of history or you will repeat the mistakes of history! JHW

*"All your strength is in your union;
All your danger in discord
Therefore be at peace henceforward
And as brothers live together."
(H. W. Longfellow)*

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

"In God's word we have a perfect standard both of duty and character, that by the influence of both, appealing to the best principles of our nature, we may be roused to the noblest and best efforts" (Samuel Spring).

The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men.—It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter—It is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much; nothing wanting" (John Locke).

"The Bible is God's chart for you to steer by, to keep you from the bottom of the sea, and to show you where the harbor is, and how to reach it without running on rocks and bars" (H. W. Beecher).

"The deathless Book has survived three great dangers: the negligence of its friends; the false systems built upon it; the warfare of those who have hated it" (Isaac Taylor).

WHAT CONSTITUTES LIBERALISM?

The word "liberalism" is often used to describe the teaching of those who trouble the Lord's church. Some are confused as to just what the term means. The word takes on different shades of meaning when used by different religious bodies. For example a liberal among us would probably be a conservative among Episcopalians or Methodists. A conservative Catholic would be a liberal among us. Even among our own brethren the word is used with different shades of meaning. It would mean something quite different to a change agent who teaches in a Christian University than to the preacher who is struggling to build a local congregation. This article will seek to clarify the meaning of liberalism as used among our brethren in this present generation.

What Liberalism Is Not:

- * It is not the use of newer or different translations of the Bible. All translations are the products of uninspired men. They vary in quality. Each has strengths and weaknesses. One can use a different translation and still be faithful to Christ.
- * It is not just a different interpretation or understanding of a verse or section of Scripture. Every student of the Bible will occasionally find a new understanding of some portion of Scripture.
- * It is not just a new or different idea we have not previously heard or held. None of us have fully mastered every thing in God's Word. All will on occasion find that he had misunderstood something of God's message.
- * It is not just the questioning of some fondly held view. God wants us to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (I Thess. 5:21). Like the Bereans we should always be ready to search the Scriptures to see if a teaching is true (Acts 17:11).
- * It is not just trying to honestly understand our past history. Much of what is repeated by word of mouth becomes distorted or embellished. To seek out the facts of what our forefathers did and believed is a noble endeavor.
- * It is not just using words or expressions unfamiliar to us. Anyone who has traveled among our churches in other nations knows there are dozens of ways to express a commonly held truth. The same is true here at home, although we don't always understand that.
- * It is not just doing the things relating to our faith and worship in a different manor or way than we are use to. For example when we pray we might kneel, or sit or stand, bow with our face to the ground or lift up holy hands and be praying in an acceptable manner so long as we petition the Father through Christ the one mediator (I Tim. 2:5). There are numerous ways to participate in the Lord's Supper; but so long as we gather on the first day of the week and partake of the bread and fruit of the vine in memory of the Savior's death, we have properly obeyed God.

Rather, Liberalism is:

- * A lack of respect for the complete and final authority of the Word of God which Jesus said will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).
- * It is a rejection of what the Bible claims for itself. God calls his book, a "pattern of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13). Liberals vehemently deny this truth.
- * It is a willingness to take liberties with the sacred things of God. It is a lack of love and respect for the church as the sacred body and bride of Christ (Eph. 1:21-22; 5:23-25). It holds no honor for the doctrines with which Christ adorned his bride.
- * It is a spirit that despises its brethren and that disparages great Christian leaders of the past. It treats with contempt those disciples who do not share their elitist views.
- * It is a desire to be something other than a simple New Testament Christians.
- * It is a longing to be like the world, to find acceptance with denominational scholars, schools and leaders. It embarrassed by the exclusiveness of the Master's teaching.
- * It is a willingness to exalt ones own opinions, ideas and feelings above the sacred Word of Christ.
- * It is a spirit of deception; pretending to be faithful members of the church of Christ, when in the secret recesses of their hearts they know such is not the case.
- * Rather than strengthening Christians and building up the church, liberalism erodes faith and undermines the kingdom of Christ.

This brief portraiture of a liberal is also an apt description of the change agents at work among us. They espouse and practice all the points mentioned above. For this reason they should be rejected even as all other liberals are rejected.

JHW

CHANGE AGENTS: A BIBLICAL PROFILE

From the beginning there have been those among Christ's disciples who were not satisfied to abide in the simple system that the Lord inaugurated for this church. Paul mentioned several he had encountered: namely Hymaneus and Alexander, Phygelus and Hermogenes (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 15). Jesus cited the Nicolaitans, those who held the teaching of Balaam and that evil woman Jezebel (Rev. 2:6, 15, 20). Today the church is being troubled by a band of men who have embraced a new and different approach to Christianity. Their faith and practice they borrow from the denominational world. They reject the old standards of the Scripture for new standards that are designed to please 21st century man. They boldly have boldly announced their desire and intent to change the church. The church image they greatly admire is that of independent, Protestant community churches like the Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois or the Saddleback Valley Community Church in California.

The Holy Spirit chose several striking metaphors to describe first century disciples who were not content to abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9). Paul called them "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). Those who wished to add ordinances of Moses's Law to the message of Christ, he called, "evil workers" (Phil. 3:2). He foresaw disciples who would "fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). They were teachers with seared consciences (I Tim. 4:2). Those who taught a different doctrine than Christ had given, he describes as "puffed up, knowing nothing...men corrupted in mind and bereft of truth" (I Tim. 6:4-5). In his letter to Titus those who disrupted the peace of the church by their teaching and agitations he called "factious" men (Tit. 3:10). Peter called them false prophets and false teachers. They were promoters of "destructive heresies" (II Pet. 2:1). Jude depicts them as hidden rocks in a harbor, lurking beneath the surface, waiting to rip the bottom out of the ship whose steersman thought he had found a safe haven. They are like shepherds, who without fear feed themselves while the flock is torn and scattered. They are like "clouds without water" promising a blessing but delivering nothing (Jude 12). How do you suppose the Spirit views those today who are busy sowing discord throughout the brotherhood and leading disciples away from the simplicity of the gospel?

The Holy Spirit also instructs us how we should deal with those who trouble the family of Christ. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by them (II Thess. 2:3). We should mark them and turn away from them (Rom. 16:17-18). We should reject them (Tit. 3:10) and refuse their message. We should in no way lend them support or encouragement (II John 9-11). Those who think they can have detente with the agents of change are deceiving themselves. Jesus warned, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6) We must also beware the leaven of the change agents. Like leaven their doctrine will work silently and unnoticed until they have permeated a sufficient portion of the entire congregation and then they will be in control of the whole. He that hath an ear...let him hear! JHW

COMMUNING ON OTHER DAYS THAN SUNDAY?

Dear Mr. Wadley: Could we take the Lord's Supper on other days in addition to Sunday? What about Acts 2:26 where the early church met daily and broke bread? I looked up in Strong's Concordance and it's exactly the same words. So, how do you feel about on Sunday and on other days sometimes? I have some friends who take the Lord's Supper other days. Katherine.

Dear Katherine: Thanks for your note and questions. As to partaking of communion on days other than the first day of the week, Acts 2:46 cannot be relied upon to justify that unless one really does not care to have Bible authority for what he does in worship. That bread which they broke daily was "their food" which they ate at home. In partaking of their daily bread they were glad and did so with a pure or single heart. "They had their meals in their homes" (Beck translation). "They took their meals with great happiness and single-heartedness" (Weymouth translation). To base one's practice of communion on Acts 2:46 is to build on a passage that does not clearly designate the facts they need. Acts 20:7 clearly says it was on the first day of the week that the disciples "broke bread" in their worship. JHW

"A liberal preacher is a shrewd unbeliever on the church's payroll."

JUST HOW BADLY DO YOU WANT TO SAVE CHRIST'S CHURCH?

The church of our Lord Jesus is under a massive attack through out the nation. This is no ordinary, run of the mill problem such as we have faced in times past. Not since the great apostasy of the late 1800s have we encountered a problem of this magnitude. After years of quietly infiltrating our schools and congregations, what has come to be known as the "change movement," has now burst forth in full blossom. At least two of our most prominent schools and dozens of congregations, including many of the largest among us, have already been swept into this new heresy. Under attack is **the very nature of the church** (Are we truly the Lord's church or are we just another human organization?); **the nature and essence of our worship** (Shall we worship with instruments of music and shall our communion be part of a common meal?); **the leadership of the church** (Shall women be allowed to preach and teach over men?); **what constitutes one a Christian** (Is baptism an essential aspect of one's salvation or are we saved by grace through faith alone?); **the nature and extent of our fellowship** (Should we stand apart from churches founded by men or should we embrace them as Christian brethren?).

It takes no genius to understand that if these ideas finally prevail among our people we will have completely lost our identity and will cease to be in any sense the church of Christ. Clearly the threat is enormous. We know that there are many who want to see the above agenda successfully imposed on all our congregations. Without doubt there are thousands who are appalled at the temerity of those who would hold and teach views so diametrically opposed to the revealed will of God. The question is just how badly do we want to save the church from apostasy? Are we willing to pay the price necessary to accomplish this? Consider the following:

- * Do you care enough to pray fervently every day that God will protect his church, that he will discomfit those who would harm her, that he will raise up a faithful band to defend her walls and lead the way in restoring her to prosperity (II Cor. 11:28)?
- * Do you care enough to invest your time energy and money in opposing this change movement and in promoting faithfulness to God's Word? Are you willing to put your hands to the task and work to help salvage those around you (II Cor. 12:15)?
- * Do you care enough to spend time educating and informing yourself and the brethren where worship? This is especially pertinent for those who preach.
- * Do you care enough to write, preach, teach and talk to every person exhorting them to hold fast the faithful word (II Tim. 4:2)?
- * Do you enough to speak up and speak out against the false teaching and error when someone promotes it in your presence? Too many sit tongue-tied and mute while others espouse these concepts in Bible classes, sermons or conversations.
- * Do you care enough to work with others in combating the error? One soldier here and one there can easily be overrun, surrounded or driven from his post. But standing together, we become an unmoveable force that can block the incursions of the enemies of the faith (Eccle 4:9-12).
- * Do you care enough to tolerate the imperfections and different approaches of good men who uphold the sound doctrine of Christ and varied opinions on lesser matters in order to win the greater victory over the true enemies of the church (Phil. 1:16-18)?
- * Do you care enough to help reclaim, restore and rebuild those disciples and congregations who have been led astray (Gal. 6:1)?
- * Do you care enough to reject those who are determined to abandon the Bible way (Rom. 16:17-18)? We cannot keep them in our midst and expect to keep the church loyal to the Master's will.

The way you respond to these questions will reveal just how much you really love the church for which Jesus died. I urge you to let your love and loyalty be manifested by your diligent service on behalf of Christ's church in this hour of crisis. JHW

"The church faces a generation which is trying to drink its way to prosperity, war its way to peace, spend its way to wealth and enjoy its way to heaven" (Anonymous)

BREAK THEIR BOWS AND BLUNT THEIR ARROWS

Aspah wrote of the day when God “brake the arrows of the bow; the shield, and the sword and the battle” (Ps. 76:3). The picture he paints is that of God neutralizing the weapons of the enemies of Israel so they would be powerless before his holy people. It would be altogether suitable for us to ask the Father to do the same for us as we struggle against those who are determined to capture and remake Christ’s church into something he never intended her to be.

One of the primary weapons of change agents is to discredit sound preachers and elders in the eyes of young, immature and impressionable disciples. The following are some of the charges frequently lodged against those who wish to walk in the old paths of the gospel.

Promoters of change suggest that we have ignored and neglected the Old Testament. This is a broad, sweeping charge that ignores reality. We do not deny that some preachers or churches may have paid too little attention to the Old Testament. But many have made the Old Testament books an important part of their teaching program. This criticism masks their real objective which is to persuade brethren to regard the old Covenant as of equal value to the New. Since the New Testament does not provide the proof they need, they need the Old Testament to justify their use of instrumental music in worship.

They charge we are legalists, teaching salvation by works of human merit and law keeping. That some have been legalists or that some are today, we cannot deny. But certainly such is not true of all. It is a “religious slur” or put down. They pronounce this damning judgment against those who stand in their path to dominance. Unthinking minions are expected to believe it without questions. They then will be free to march on to ultimate victory.

They assert that we don’t understand God’s grace and have failed to teach it. This is another example of blaming the whole for the failure of the few. The fact is the promoters of change are generally mistaken in their understanding of grace. Many of them are teaching that sinners are saved solely by grace, ignoring the many verses that clearly enjoin faith and obedience on the part of the sinner who seeks salvation (Matt. 7:21).

They insist that we have emphasized obedience to the neglect of faith. This is the most egregious of their false accusations. I would challenge them to cite a concrete example of any brother who has neglected to emphasize the importance of faith. Brethren have correctly emphasized the importance of obedience to make faith meaningful, as did James in his epistle (2:14-26), and Paul in Gal. 5:6. This charge also is a ruse. They are teaching salvation by faith alone, and to veil that which is clearly contrary God’s word, they falsely accuse us!

In each of these slanderous charges those who have infiltrated the church to do her harm are using false allegations to weaken the resistance of those who oppose them and to deceive those who are willing to listen. They cite the failures of a few and then seek to attach them to all who are faithful preachers and elders of the church. Do not allow them to deceive you. **JHW**

WISE WORDS ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

In 1831 the followers of Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone met in Georgetown, KY. Both groups, from the study of their Bibles, had arrived at a common understanding of Christianity. In only a few matters did their thinking differ. At the historic meeting Bro. Racoon John Smith made the following statement:

“But an amalgamation of sects is not such a union as Christ prayed for, and God enjoins. To agree to be one upon any system of human inventions would be contrary to his will, and could never be a blessing to the church or the world; therefore the only union practicable or desirable must be based on the Word of God, as the only rule of faith and practice” (F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom- A History of the Church of Christ*, p. 344-345).

Those brethren who are pursuing unity with their denominational neighbors need to read and heed these powerful words from our ancestor in the gospel. He clearly understood what many of our contemporaries do not...including some of those who fancy themselves theologians and historians of our cause. **JHW**

BELIEVING THE PREMILLENNIAL LIE

Thinking folks are amazed at the wild speculation of the various teachers of premillennialism that seem to dominate the religious book market, the journals of most conservative denominations and the religious broadcast media. Almost weekly some new discovery is announced: the man of sin has been identified, Armageddon is just around the corner, the mark of the beast has been spotted, the State of Israel is ready to fulfill Bible prophecy. The date of Christ's return has been repeatedly set and then abandoned. The absurdity of this religious game-playing would be humorous were it not for the precious souls being led astray by its false teachers.

A few clearly stated Biblical facts forever refute this ancient heresy. God is omnipotent. Therefore, the Jewish nation could not thwart his plan to establish his kingdom in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44). Christ established his kingdom and first century saints were citizens of it (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6). Christ now reigns on David's throne in heaven (Rev. 3:7; Acts 2:29-33). No one knows the date of Christ's return (Matt. 24:36). When he does return there will be one general resurrection of the good and the evil (John 5:28-29). These and many other plainly stated Scriptural truths destroy once and for all the foundations of this false system.

Why is Premillennialism So Popular?

The burden of this lesson is to try to understand why this anti-Scriptural teaching is so widely received. It is startling to observe that it is the **cause celebre** of most of the evangelical churches. Generally speaking only the Lutherans, conservative Presbyterians, Mennonites and Churches of Christ are free from its taint. Most other bodies are infected to some degree.

The following reasons help to explain why this strange, contradictory teaching has such an attraction and hold on people's minds.

A. Paul writes of people who believe a lie, "because they receive not the love of the truth... but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12). Those who have had much experience in trying to teach people who hold this view have observed this amazing lack of interest in those plain, simple truths of God that nullify the millennial heresy. Jesus spoke of a kind of person who "seeing, saw not and hearing, understood not." "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart..." (Matt. 13:14-15).

B. Some folks are attracted to the bizarre and incredible. The more unbelievable the proposition the more eagerly they rush to embrace and then cling to it. We see this spirit demonstrated in the huge crowds lined up to view the freak shows at the fair and the masses that pay their money to see movies based upon the occult, the ghoulish and the impossible. Perhaps the human race is not so far removed from the primitive superstitions of yesterday with witches, ghosts and apparitions of demons. Premillennialism abounds with spicy fruits for the superstitious souls.

C. Premillennialism appears to answer question of the unknown future. Men have always had an insatiable desire to know what lies beyond the curtain of tomorrow. With its predictions of the date of Christ's return and the end of the world, it attracts these date seekers even as does astrology its disciples.

D. There are people who relish the thought that they have discovered a mystery that others have not found. This, in their proud minds, elevates them and makes them superior. The infamous Gnostics of the early Christian centuries suffered from a similar illusion. Thus false pride and superior attitude is at least one of the many causes. It will not take many encounters with such teachers to see this elitist attitude demonstrated. Paul warns against being lifted up with pride lest we "fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6).

E. Some folks are prone to be naive and gullible in matters religious. They do not like to expend the mental energy required to think for themselves. They reason, "Let the preacher do the studying and then explain it to me." Thus they are like baby birds, they trustingly open wide their mouths to whatever the preacher brings them. Such people need to take heed to all those verses that stress individual responsibility for faith. Study to show yourself approved unto God, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily to see if the teaching was true (Acts 17:11). In judgment each one of us will give account of himself before God (Rom. 14:12).

F. Some people believe this lie because they have been told that they are supposed to believe it in order to be faithful. They have the sheep complex; they blindly follow their leaders. They should remember that the Judas goat leads the flock into the slaughter pens. God never intended for his people to be blind followers of blind teachers. He warned us that both will fall into the pit (Matt. 15:14). John admonishes us "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

G. Some blindly hold to premillennialism because they have heard it proclaimed in a bold, matter of fact way all their lives and they have never thought to question it. Long ago the propagandists learned that a lie oft repeated is soon held to be truth by the thoughtless masses. The early church had men miraculously endowed by the Holy Spirit to be discerners of spirits (I Cor. 12:10). Though inspiration has past, each of us needs to measure what we hear by the infallible Word of God. Jesus warned "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24).

H. There are some Bible students who have fallen into the trap of premillennialism because they have failed to rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). By that we mean that they co-mingle Old and New Covenant promises. They have not compared Scripture with Scripture to learn of God's fulfillment of his promises to Israel. They fail to distinguish between figurative and literal language. It has well been said that a correct hermeneutic will destroy the premillennial doctrine.

I. Most believers in Premillennialism have not taken the time to review the spotted history of the many millennial movements and thus to discover their numerous false predictions and contradictions. Most glaring are the predictions of Christ's return by William Miller of the Adventists and Judge Rutherford of the Jehovah's Witnesses. One of the recent mistaken premillennial prophets is Hal Lindsey who has repeatedly set dates for the Master's return, only to see them proven false. Moses said "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously..." (Deut. 18:22).

J. Shrewd false teachers have taken advantage of the ignorance and credulity of the believing masses. They feed them their sorry diet of speculation for the notoriety and wealth it brings them. "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:18). They are "false teachers, who... bring in destructive heresies... bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1). They make merchandise of non-discerning believers.

Brethren it is not enough that we do not believe these strange doctrines of men. Our task is two fold;

- a). To fortify the faith of our brethren lest they be led astray.
- b). To liberate those held captive to this false system of premillennialism.

May God give us wisdom to understand the issues and the courage to press the battle in Jesus' name. **JHW**

PARABLE OF THE JOYFUL MOTHER

I sometimes hear from fellow-Christians who prefer not to read of the problems we face because of the promoters of change. They chose to concentrate on the good things that are happening in some regions of the brotherhood. While we are eager to find the good and rejoice in it, we dare not overlook the dangers that are before our gates.

Young Bobby's mother was excited and happy that his permanent teeth were coming in nice and straight. She liked to tell her friends about his dental progress. However in her elation she failed to notice that his gums were infected and swollen. Nothing was done to counteract the problem. Consequently, Bobby contracted rheumatic fever which severely damaged his heart. He eventually lost his teeth to gum disease.

Yes, we need to rejoice over every success story in the Kingdom of Christ. We need to be positive and look for the good every day of our lives. But it is a foolish person who fails to notice the dangers about him. Suddenly, when he least expects it, disaster will sweep over him and great will be his loss. The danger posed by the agents of change is real and of large portions. It is contagious and fatal to the health and welfare of the Lord's church. We must deal with it or suffer the consequences. **JHW**

RIGHT THINKING ABOUT SALVATION

Christianity is a thinking person's religion. Salvation is not "caught" as is an infection, but results from thoughtful investigation of one's own life and God's word. "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves" (II Cor. 13:5). Luke commends the Bereans who received the word with all readiness of mind and examined the scriptures to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." (Is. 1:18). Peter writes, be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you..." (I Pet. 3:15). Salvation is an objective experience.

Wrong Thinking About Salvation

It is almost universally held that man "feels" his way to salvation, i.e., a subjective approach. This popular view asserts that man has nothing to do but wait for God's Spirit to move upon his heart. To such folks, studying, thinking and reasoning about salvation are totally unnecessary. They would urge a sinner to pray, to wait, to seek some supernatural experience from God. Although believed by millions, this approach to salvation is faulty throughout and worthless to those who pursue it.

Sound Thinking About Salvation

Sound thinking about salvation is based upon the Word of God. "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Paul wants us "not to go beyond the things which are written" (I Cor. 4:6). Those who abide not in the teaching of Christ (have) not God. Those who abide in the teaching have both the Father and the Son (II John 9). Right thinking about salvation is always Bible centered. It does not depend upon speculation or a preacher's assurance; not on popular opinion or current fads; not on family tradition or some ancient practice.

Scripture declares that our salvation is centered in Christ. He "came to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). He "died for our sins" (I Cor. 15:3). His blood "cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him" (Heb. 7:25). "In none other is there salvation" (Acts 4:12). The church cannot save us, that only Christ can do. Any approach to salvation that would neglect Christ, or in anyway detract from his divine nature and office is faulty and worthless.

Salvation is a free gift from Christ (Rom. 5:18). "By grace have ye been saved" (Eph. 2:5). Man cannot earn or merit salvation. It is "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us..." (Tit. 3:5). "All our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment" (Is. 64:6). We cannot save ourselves. We have nothing to offer for our salvation. We stand before the righteous God guilty, condemned and lost. Our only hope is the mercy of our Judge. He freely extends it because his Son has already paid the price for our sins (Is. 53:5-6).

Salvation demands trusting faith on our part. "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him..." (Heb. 11:6). "Except ye believe that I am he (Savior) ye shall die in your sins," said the Master (John 8:24). This faith comes by hearing and believing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Saving faith is obedient faith. Your race or social status avails nothing, only "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). "Ye see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith" (Jas. 2:24). Faith is a change of attitude in our heart towards God. Formerly we did not believe, trust or obey him. With faith we do all.

Repentance is a prerequisite of salvation. Either we repent or we perish, said the Lord (Luke 13:3). Repentance is a change of heart toward sin and God which results in a change of life. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation" (II Cor. 7:10). No man can receive salvation until he acknowledges his wrong and truly wants to do right.

God "commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). Any approach to salvation that fails to call sinners to a full repentance is worthless, for only those who repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus are promised remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Confession of one's faith in Christ is a condition of salvation. If we confess him before men he will confess us before the Father. If we deny him, he will deny us (Matt. 10:32). In confession we tell the world of our change of heart and direction. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in they heart that God raised him from the dad, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). There is no secret salvation.

Immersion in water is essential to ones salvation. All who believe in Christ are to be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). The apostles commanded men to be baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 10:48). That baptism is like a burial, i.e., an immersion (Rom. 6:4). Baptism effects a change in our relationships. It takes us out of sin and puts us into Christ (Rom. 6:1-3). We leave a life of estrangement and are baptized into God's family (Gal. 3:26-27). In baptism we are born of water and Spirit and thus enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). We must be baptized to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16). Any system that separates baptism from salvation is in conflict with God's word and is therefore wrong.

Salvation brings one in to God's spiritual family, the church. The Lord adds to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47). We are baptized into one body which is the Lord's church (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is the savior of the body/church (Eph. 5:23). All who are saved are in God's house which is his church (I Tim. 3:15). The church does not save us, but when Christ saves us, he places us in his church wherein we serve him. It is mistaken thinking that separates the church from salvation.

More Wrong Thinking

In the religious dialog of our day we hear a multitude of faulty concepts about salvation: "You need only believe;" "The good Lord won't let anyone go to torment;" "God can't save me, I have been to wicked;" "Infants need salvation from Adam's sin;" "Only those predestined by God will be saved;" "You can't be saved until the Holy Spirit calls you." While space fails us to answer each of these common beliefs about salvation, when compared with Scripture each of them is found to be mistaken.

Children learn in math that an answer is either correct or false. It cannot be both. The same is true in salvation. Either you are or are not saved! Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him (Heb. 5:8-9). If you have done what Scripture says, you are saved. If not, you are lost. In judgment you will give account for the deeds done in this life, whether good or bad (II Cor. 5:10). Is your thinking right about salvation? **JHW**

FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONAL PREACHERS

Promoters of change would have us believe that Alexander Campbell and other early pioneer preachers embraced denominational disciples as their spiritual brothers in good standing with Christ. When Campbell addressed the principal Baptist preachers of Kentucky in a meeting at Washington, KY in October of 1832, he spoke the following words:

"For let me tell you in all candor, I have almost as much against you Baptists as I have against the Presbyterians. They err in one thing and you in another; and probably you are nearly equidistant from original apostolic Christianity (J. M. Powell, *The Cause We Plead*, p. 108-109). Me thinks the agents of change invent their history as they go along. **JHW**

BEYOND DENOMINATIONALISM

Churches, churches, everywhere. An infinite variety of religious organizations clamor for our attention. The multitude of names, doctrines, worship and practices of the different churches are utterly confusing. Multitudes of honest souls realize their need for God. They long for a closer walk with Him. For years they have sincerely sought for the right way to serve the Lord they love. Tragically, many have become so discouraged they have given up in disgust, lost in the maze.

Is it not possible to be a Christian without joining any denomination? Need we accept all the accumulated trappings and traditions that are fixed like barnacles to the various religious bodies? O, if we could just sip the pure, fresh waters of original, unadulterated Christianity as it came from Jesus and his holy apostles! Is there not somewhere, someone content to be simply a Christian? to worship as did that first congregation in Jerusalem? to believe the simple gospel announced by the apostles?

Take courage my friends, there is in your community a body of people who are committed to just what we have described; i.e., the restoration of the original Christianity of the New Testament. They use the name "church of Christ" as did the apostle Paul (Rom. 16:16). Their creed and doctrine is Jesus and his New Testament, nothing else. Could there be a better one? Their worship is simple and unadorned like that we read of in the book of Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament epistles. Nothing of human origin is accepted. Their congregations are structured and organized like those churches planted by the apostles (Phil. 1:1). Each is independent and self-governing under Christ (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:1-3).

As a skilled workman can restore a valuable work of art to its original beauty, so a faithful band of God-fearing, Bible-believing, Christ-following disciples can reproduce that original Church of Christ established in Jerusalem on the fiftieth day following our Lord's death (Acts 2:1-47).

You can be a non-denominational Christian. You need not be Catholic or Protestant. This plea for the restoration of Jesus' church is offered for your consideration with the sincere prayer that you will receive it and take up your cross and come follow Jesus with us (Matt. 16:24). **JHW**

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH WITH A PROPER ATTITUDE

As we survey the damage done to the Cause we love by ruthless change agents, and as we realize detestable objective they have in mind, it is easy for us to become embittered and to reflect that bitter spirit when dealing with them. Such bitterness is counter productive and must not be allowed to take hold in our lives.

Paul wrote of false brethren who were creating havoc among the churches of his day, I "tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cause of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). So we should view these departures with heavy hearts. We must try to snatch all that we can from the fire (Jude 23). We must find no pleasure in the unpleasant work we must do in exposing and reproving those who have left their first love. The liberal change agents like to paint those of us who do not go along with their agenda as narrow, negative, hateful, ranters who have nothing positive to offer. We must live our lives, do our work and conduct ourselves in such a way as to refute that libelous charge. "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Pet. 2:15). We must pray for ourselves and them: for ourselves, that we will be faithful, no matter what the future holds; that we will have a right spirit, that we will continue to love the brotherhood; for them, that they will see the error of their way and repent and return to the Master's fold. Satan is rejoicing today, our Lord is sorrowful. We must be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10) and we must at all times have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again" (I Pet. 2:23). **JHW**

THE POSTMODERN AGE AND THE CHURCH

Since its birth, Christ's church has had to deal with the prevailing world philosophies that flourish for a while and then fade away to be replaced by others. These philosophies represent unsaved man's efforts to understand and explain his world. They are attempts to find some workable plan for sane living for those in rebellion to God and his Word.

In the earliest days, Hebrew Christians were faced with the prevailing thinking of Judaism. As Gentiles came into the church they were faced with philosophies such as Gnosticism. Today, the prevailing ism before us is called "Postmodernism." The word "post" means "that which follows." "Modern" refers to the world view that prevailed from the time of the Renaissance until recent years. During this span of time, people's understanding of the physical world advanced from a primitive to a modern stage. Scientific discoveries allowed them to understand and harness the laws of nature and bring them into man's service. The rise of the scientific method challenged the old ways of thinking that had been dominated by the Catholic church. The control of that church over people's thinking and lives was broken. The "modern" age gave us the Protestant Reformation and the American Restoration Movement

Change agents among us are enamored by postmodernism. In the following quotes from two of their recent books they define the characteristics of this system and urge the church to adapt itself to this new way of thinking. The Postmodern age is thought to have emerged from the social upheavals of the 1960s. "It is less confident in reason, more inclined toward experience... It is less-optimistic and more suspicious, less idealistic and more pragmatic (**Jeff Childers, Douglas Foster, Jack Reese, The Crux of the Matter**, ACU Press, p. 48). "It openly challenges those who think they've gotten it right—those who can understand it, name it, and explain it. It is prone to ambiguity, not certainty;...cynicism not trust. It assumes a world largely unordered and unpredictable, more relative, less concrete" (**Ibid**, p. 49). "Postmoderns tend to be more open to spiritual possibilities, less reliant on human wisdom and accomplishment, and are often more pragmatic in their interests.... They are intolerant of intolerance. They are less interested in the head, more interested in the heart" (p. 49). "In a postmodern world, allegiance to institutions loses much of its grip. Young believers in America are typically less loyal to their... religious heritage. They often believe that denominational boundaries are rather arbitrary..." (p. 49). "But there is considerable evidence that people are beginning to view knowledge and the world differently" (p. 50-51). The authors of **The Crux** believe that, "We must choose....we can find a meaningful way to stand within history, appropriate the blessings of our heritage, use the lessons of modernity to understand Scripture better and the lessons of postmodernity to experience it deeply..." (Emp. mine, JHW) (p. 51).

Columnist, John Leo observes that "Postmoderns believe that "To claim knowledge as universal truth is impossible. There is no truth, just narratives that 'work' for particular communities..." "This belief has turned the study of history on campus into politically empowering feel-good exercises..." "Because 'truth' is an act of community empowerment, truth is whatever the tribe or the individual says it is" (John Leo: **We Can By-pass Campuses in Search for Truth, Ethics**, AZ Repub. 7/16/02). This describes the situation on several of our university campuses.

Leonard Allen and Lynn Anderson have recently published **The Transforming of a Tradition**, a collection of essays by active "change agents." Note well what they are saying. "The transformations in the Church of Christ are being wrought by a momentous world view shift, For good or for ill—probably for both—the world of the modern is receding and a new age is emerging" (**Allen**, p. 18).

Milton Jones observes that, "In postmodernism truth is seen as a multiple choice rather than the unique end of a valid syllogism. Post-modernism produced great difficulties for Churches of Christ..." (p. 79). "Today's postmodern world does not want anyone telling them 'the truth.' In fact they don't believe that there is a "truth.".... However in a postmodern world, if 'the truth is ever reached, it will be through discovery rather than leading a person through a bunch of prescribed and ordered steps. "In the postmodern world, truth is discovered through experience" (p. 80). "In the so-called "postmodern age," our culture's old standards of right and wrong have crumbled. We no longer have tried and true cultural norms on which to rely for making our way in the world.... We are not as sure as we once were who we are

what we are to do, or where we are going..." (**Transforming**, p. 93).

Dale Pauls writes "...no one noticed or mourned the death of the world view long dominant. Neoplatonism ... has finally, after a reign of almost two thousand years, been consigned to the cultural trash heap of the postmodern West" (p.105). "It often happens at critical moments in history that ideas which have long held the field almost unchallenged are suddenly discovered, not to be wrong but to be useless; than almost everyone can see they are absurd" (Richard Southern, quoted with approval by Bro. Pauls and referred to those ideas held by members of Churches of Christ prior to this new day. JHW. p. 105). "As a consequence, what many people today believe to be timeless truths are, in reality, twelfth-century cultural constructs with all the limitation inherent in that time" (p. 106). "The challenge for a church that would be Christ's is to understand the present times and not hold on nostalgically to a world that is passing away. On one level, this means that women's voices must be heard and respected within the church; anything less than this is widely understood as discriminatory and therefore morally reprehensible. On another level the church must realize that law no longer possesses in popular imagination the ring of absolute truth. Law is widely perceived today as a hodgepodge of *ad hoc* decisions and conflicting rules that are geared to expediency and not necessarily morality" (p. 106-107). Dale Pauls describes believers of the postmodern world: "they have lost faith in traditional religion (they see it as divisive)...They are generally suspicious of institutions, and they resist creeds, categories and coercion ...Nor are they inclined to see others in exclusionary ways or appreciate those who do" (**Transforming**, p. 111).

Lynn Anderson believes that, "Rationalism is, for significant masses, outdated. Images, intuition and imaging now move people more than logical linear reasoning. Our day doubts there is any "True Truth." Things are relative at best. Thus, since there are no absolutes in morals or ethics, 'what is right for you may not be right for me.'" (p.199). "If this new world has any supreme value it is tolerance. It is tolerant of anything but intolerance. Even tolerant of Christianity—but not of 'exclusive' Christians." (p. 200). "We must rethink how we define, defend and spread faith where rationalism is outdated and where people see no absolute values. Our day calls for persuasion which transcends rationalism." (p. 201). "These times call for a new apologetic. My old apologetic is passe' Reason and logic will not easily convince postmodern people.." (p. 201). "These times are post-rationalistic. There are more ways of knowing than the 'head' way." (p. 202). Postmoderns "do not believe in Authority Figures (**Transforming**, p. 203).

The book, "**The Transforming of a Tradition**," is full of references to Postmodernism. While never challenging the aspects or demands of this new human philosophy, they repeatedly warn us that churches of Christ must change to meet this new spirit of the world or she will surely grow obsolete and perish. If we follow their faulty thinking, every time, a new philosophic world view is born, the church will have to shed her old beliefs and practices and adopt new ones acceptable to the sinful world. Since new philosophic schemes are born every generation and many of these views flourish simultaneously, the church would soon be like the leader who tried to please his every follower. She would be totally paralyzed and collapse in exhaustion. Last century the world produced Marxism, existentialism, pragmatism, determinism, liberationism, feminism and the new morality to name just a few of its delusions. All of these are the products of sinful, "unregenerate" minds and all run contrary to God's will. Rather than constantly changing to please the world, our charge is to "be not conformed to the world" (Rom. 12:2). We are to reach out to our neighbors living in spiritual darkness, bring them to Christ where they can be transformed into his image (II Cor. 3:18). The Lord's church is not an obedient puppy that follows the philosophers of the world. It is at war with the thoughts of men that are contrary to those of God (II Cor. 10:4-5). Christians are not to "walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart..." (Eph. 4:17-18).

Our self-appointed "change agents" are demanding that the eternal kingdom, created and established by Christ, must embrace the weak and beggarly elements of the world (Gal. 4:9), when they should be encouraging every elder, preacher and Christian to be strong in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10) and to "fight the good fight of the faith" (I Tim. 6:12). From the books cited above it seems evident that those determined to impose change on churches of Christ have already embraced the Postmodern spirit of the world. Thus they are blinded to the unchanging nature of the truths of the gospel of Christ. They are the ones who need to make a change, casting away a worthless human philosophy, and with penitent hearts giving heed to "what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 2:29). **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

*"Once to every man and nation come the moment to decide
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side" (Jas. R. Lowell).*

"There is no progress in fundamental truth.—We may grow in knowledge of its meaning, and in the modes of its application, but its great principles will forever be the same" (W. Radcliffe).

"The grand character of truth is its capability of enduring the test of universal experience, and coming unchanged out of every possible form of fair discussion" (Sir. John Herschel).

"Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is" (Winston Churchill).

CERTAIN AND UNCERTAIN SOUNDS

In pointing out the folly of those wishing to address their congregation in foreign tongues (languages), Paul asked, "For if the trumpet given an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I Cor. 14:8). His allusion was to the war trumpets used by officers in that day to signal instructions to their troops during combat. If the bugler did not know the prescribed signals, the troops would be confused and unable to respond to their leader. Disaster would surely follow.

Those who preach and teach God's Word are expected to provide a "certain sound" so their hearers will clearly know what God expects of them. That certain sound is the message of God's Word, faithfully expounded, correctly applied and confidently affirmed (Jer. 23:28). Those who are proponents of change are issuing a litany of uncertain sounds and are spreading chaos and confusion among God's people. From them we hear uncertain sounds:

- * About the inspiration and authority of God's Word.
- * About the inerrancy of Scripture.
- * About the existence of a God-given pattern to which we are to conform in our faith, worship and work.
- * About the nature of saving faith.
- * About the necessity of baptism in man's salvation.
- * About the church of Christ being the family of God, the body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ.
- * About the sinfulness of denominationalism.
- * About the nature of the praise we offer to God in worship. Should it be acappella or could it include instrumental music as well?
- * About the Lord's Supper. Is it a sacred memorial or a fellowship meal?
- * About the role of women in the leadership of the church.

There Are Other Uncertain Sounds.

- * These promoters of change can tolerate most anything in religion but the Biblical convictions we have held and cherished for generations past.
- * They are sure that many folks in denominational churches will be saved, even though they have not obeyed the Lord's instructions for salvation, faith or worship. They are not sure however that those of us who are members of the church of Christ, but refuse their overtures for change, will make it.
- * They preach and practice "non-judgmentalism" for those of the religious world, but they hesitate not to pass judgments on their brethren who reject their new doctrines and practices.
- * They perceive of the church as a democracy rather than as a kingdom. Thus if they can persuade the majority they feel justified in imposing their changes on a congregation.

Because of their uncertain sounds, there is confusion in the camp of God's people and turmoil in the ranks of many congregations. A bugler who did not know the proper calls for action would not have been tolerated by a general who hoped to win the battle. Nor should elders tolerate a preacher in their midst who issues uncertain sounds in his lessons. Back in 1966, when the first tares of the change movement appeared among us, some of them, working in New York City, issued a small paper aptly named, "**The Uncertain Sound.**" JHW

"Some modern zealots appear to have no better knowledge of truth, nor better manner of judging it, than by counting noses" (Swift).

SHOULD WOMEN BE USED IN SERVING COMMUNION TO THE ASSEMBLY?

Dear Bro. John: Should ladies be used to serve the Lord's Supper to the congregation? Our elders say the Bible does not mention serving communion so they can do this without violating any command. They insist that they will not allow ladies to lead prayer, lead singing or teach the assembly, only serve communion. Neville

Dear Neville: I personally think it is a mistake to have women serve the communion in the assembly of the church. I am aware that proponents argue that serving food is a servant's job, not that of a leader. In a home or church fellowship meal such would be true, but in the worship assembly of the church it would be different in my estimation. This is a wedge for a greater goal. While your elders may sincerely plan to limit the ladies to this one extension of service, others will not be satisfied with the accomplishment. If they can get the ladies into this public role, they will then push for additional opportunities for them to fill. In other areas we describe such actions as stepping onto the slippery slope.

It is true that the Bible says nothing about serving the communion. This is the case because our method of having it served to the seated congregation is a relatively modern way of doing things. A couple of hundred years ago folks walked up to the table to be served. You still see this in the Catholic Church. When Jesus instituted the supper the participants were seated around a table. Our method is scriptural since God has not told us just how it is to be served.

The larger question is that of the relation of ladies to the men of the church in the assembly. They are to be in subjection to the men (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Since in our society and age, to help at the Lord's table is viewed by our people as a leadership opportunity, it seems to me our ladies should not strive to fill that position. The question is more than what it *might* lead to.

In our culture and society and in the long tradition of our brotherhood men have filled this position and it has been viewed as a leadership role. Culture and tradition do play a role in helping us decide the way some things are done. For example in the first century a man dressed in a robe. In our culture we dress in pants. If I decided to attend worship dressed in a robe, it would not violate a scriptural prohibition, but it would likely be a distraction to other worshipers.

In some tropical societies, for a man to appear shirtless is of no import. But to attend worship here shirtless would definitely leave a bad impression and should not be done. In Africa most Christians observe the custom of women worshiping with their heads covered with a scarf or some other kind of head covering. If we went there to worship and our ladies were uncovered it would be viewed as a shameful thing to them. There was a time when our missionaries in Mexico requested that U.S. ladies visiting their church services not wear sleeveless blouses as the locals viewed such as the dress of immoral women. Christian women visiting should respect this cultural viewpoint. So should we respect the cultural and traditional view of those who are to serve the communion in our assemblies.

Are you aware that some of those promoting the agenda of change among our churches are already using women to lead public prayers, read Scripture, teach mixed adult classes, lead singing, help serve communion and even preach. Their highest authority for these changes is the theology of the Feminist Movement. When Jeremiah pled with his neighbors to "see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein...they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). JHW

"The most astounding fact about reformers, driven by the purest of motives and the most spotless goodwill, is that it does not dawn on them that their programs can make things worse" (Leo Rosten).

Fanaticism consists of redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim" (Santayana).

LOYALTY TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

When Jesus said to the saints in Smyrna, "Be thou faithful unto death" he was calling for their loyalty, even in the face of great hardship and suffering. For their loyalty they would receive "the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Loyalty: some profess it, some practice it. Only the latter can always be counted on. A. P. Gouthey wrote, "If virtues be graded, loyalty I think, would stand near the top of the list. At any rate, no leader can demonstrate his full capabilities without it." John Ruskin said, "The noblest word in the catalogue of social virtues is 'Loyalty.'" Loyalty is expected in many areas of life: marriage, family, friends, nation, and employment. God also expects loyalty of his children, the subjects of his kingdom. We must be loyal to God, his Son, his Church and his Word. Loyalty to the church includes the universal church of Christ (I Pet. 2:17) scattered throughout the world and the congregation of which we are members.

Many of those who now lead our congregations came into the church in the days of her prosperity. They fought no battles, knew no hardship, endured no hateful scorn. They made few sacrifices for their faith. They inherited congregations long established and facilities built and paid for by others. So also is the case with the administrators and teachers in our Christian Schools. Loyalty or the lack thereof is not easily detected in times of peace when all is well. It is in times of conflict that men's loyalty or lack thereof become evident. Now a time of testing has come upon us. Living in a society that has been coopted by alien philosophies and an anti-Christian value systems, many members of the church have been influenced by the wisdom of the world. They are embolden to question every aspect of the faith, worship and practice of the church Christ is head of (Eph. 1:22). Christian leaders who have attained worldly standing cast reproach on the church. They ridicule her doctrine and ancient forms of worship. Abandoning the sacred canons of Scripture, they look to the world of commerce to find new and exciting ways to enlarge their congregations. They loudly protest that they are faithful members of the church of Christ, but their actions demonstrate their disloyalty. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of little-known preachers and elders stand like opportunistic politicians waiting to see which way the wind is blowing before they declare themselves. They can follow the promoters of change if the tide goes their way, or they can hold to the old ways if that is to their advantage. Such wind-watchers are not loyal servants of Christ! They are serving their own interests. "Loyalty is one thing a leader cannot do without. It is as priceless as it is rare. It creates a quiet confidence in the heart of many leaders and is the assurance of success in any enterprise" (A. P. Gouthey).

Those who have already turned their backs on the church, as they seek standing among the evangelical denominations, protest that they are not disloyal to Christ; that they are only tired of the church. Although it may sound redundant, they must be reminded that you cannot be loyal to a king and disloyal to his kingdom! The church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ (Matt. 16:18). It is his body (Eph. 1:22) Acts of disloyalty toward the church of Christ manifest disloyalty to the Master himself.

"Loyalty to God is alone fundamental. Feelings, words, deeds, must be beads strung on the string of duty...say you ever and only, 'Lo I come to do Thy will, O my God.' Out of that dutiful root grows the beautiful life, the life radically and radiantly true to God—the only life that can be lived in both worlds" (Maltbie Babcock). In this mortal struggle for the heart and soul of the church we need the conviction expressed in the following words of Will Shakespeare, "Master go on, and I will follow thee, To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty" Only then will we prevail and the church we love be spare from desolation. May it be said of us as Alexander Pope said of a departed comrade, "friend to truth! Of soul sincere, In action faithful, and in honor clear; Who broke no promise, served no private end, Who gained no title, and who lost no friend" In a word, he was loyal! JHW

"Faithful found among the faithless, his loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal, nor number, nor example with him wrought to swerve from truth, or change his constant mind" (John Milton)

SHOULD WE ANOINT AND LAY HANDS ON THE SICK, PRAYING FOR THEM?

Dear Mr. Waddey: I would like to know if James 5:14-15 is in effect today? If so, why is it not practiced in the church of Christ today? If not, why would the scriptures right before it and after it be in effect today? Steve

Dear Steve: Thanks for your question. James wrote, "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..." (4:14-15). To properly understand this passage you must remember that in the early days of the church, God gave supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit to some of his people. Among those gifts was the gift of healing the sick (Mark 16:16-18; I Cor. 12:9). Thus it is easily understood why the disciple who was sick would call for such gifted men to lay hands on them and pray for them.

Olive oil was used among the ancient people for hygienic, medical and ceremonial purposes. It was rubbed on the skin and hair to refresh the person (Lk. 7:46). It was used as a balm for wounds (Lk. 10:34). It was used ceremonially or symbolically for anointing priests and kings (I Sam. 10:1,9). The use of oil along with the miraculous healing by Spirit-endowed men would certainly be symbolic. Jesus sometimes used such outward symbols when healing folks. He used spittle and clay to heal the blind man (John 9:6). Clearly, the spittle and clay had no healing value. It was the power of Christ that healed him. In James the outward symbol used in healing was oil. But olive oil will not cure any disease-born illness or serious injury. But the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gifted men could and did.

Since the miraculous gifts of the Spirit only lasted through the apostolic age and thereafter diminished and eventually disappeared, we have no one today with such healing powers. Consider the many different miraculous gifts Spirit gave in those early days (I Cor. 12:4-11). Just as we cannot raise the dead, cast out demons, walk on water, smite opponents blind; we cannot heal miraculously. Hence when we are sick we call the physicians and submit to his treatments. We do pray, because prayer was not limited to that early day, nor does prayer demand a miracle to be answered. God does hear the prayers of his people. Every Christian knows of cases where the doctors felt they had reached their limit and case was hopeless, yet God brought the person safely through. **JHW**

THE PARABLE OF BILLY THE BULLY

Billy was the school yard bully. One of his favorite ploys was to walk up to some unsuspecting kid and hit, kick or trip him. When his victim tried to defend himself, Billy would bellow out so the teacher would hear, saying, "He started it." "He hit me first!" Sometimes he actually fooled a new teacher or a substitute. The victim of his aggression was sternly corrected and sometimes punished. Thus the poor kid was twice victimized; once by Billy's fist, then by his lies.

A band of Christians are living in peace, doing God's work, prospering in their undertaking. A new preacher or campus worker is hired, or perhaps a new family moves in and begins to promote the change agenda. Seeds of unhappiness are sown among young people. Elders are pressured to allow unscriptural changes in the faith, worship and practice of the congregation. When they or other members protest and demand that the interlopers cease and desist, the change agents accuse them of disrupting the church, or being contentious. They try to turn other, gullible members against them. They are often given the ultimatum to get in line or leave. Thus the insult and injury are twofold. First they see their beloved congregation invaded, and violated by agents of change and then they find themselves blamed as trouble-makers for trying to protect that to which they have devoted their lives and support. Such was Paul's sad experience in Corinth (II Cor. 11:1ff). He that ears to hear, let him hear and beware. **JHW**

THE LAW OF CHRIST

Inspired writers refer to the New Testament as “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2); “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas. 1:23) and a “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). This being the case, how say the change agents among us that we are not under a law of God? They love to say that we should not view the Bible as divine law. Are they so ignorant of the book they claim to teach? Do they not believe what the Scripture says of itself? Do they think they know more about God’s Book than the Holy Spirit who gave it? Could it be that in order to sell their agenda to a Bible-believing, Bible oriented people, they must first convince them that the Scripture is not law, therefore it will be no great thing if its words are ignored?

If the Bible is not divine law, then no man is a sinner. For “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15). If we have no divine law, how can some be called “lawless” in their conduct? (II Thess. 2:7; I Tim. 1:9). If the Scripture is not law, how could some men in the church be desirous of teaching “the law?” (I Tim. 1:7). If there is no law in Christ, we would have no knowledge of sin, or of right and wrong, “for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). If the New Covenant is not God’s law, then no man need worry about being judged by it in the last day (John 12:48). If it is not law, then we can do anything we desire in the name of religion and not worry about having to give account unto God (II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). If the Scripture is not law, then James and Paul were mistaken in calling it that. If that is so, how can we have confidence in other things they said? That would mean the New Covenant is not reliable and free from error, would it not? If God had wanted to tell us that his written word is His law to guide and govern us in matters of faith, practice and worship, what do our champions of change feel He should have said, beyond what he has said, to make it clear?

It is true that we are not under the Law of Moses (Heb. 8:6-13; Rom. 7:4). It is true that we are saved by God’s grace rather than by law-keeping (Eph. 2:8-9). It is a fact that our response to God must be one of faith rather than an attempt to earn salvation by works of law (Rom. 3:21-22). But it is a flagrant error to teach men that God’s Word should not be viewed as law. This lesson our change agents need to take heed to. **JHW**

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS

Close observation reveals to kinds of Christians, each with a different way of viewing things.

* Two disciples go to hear a gospel preacher. One weighs every word to see if he can find anything wrong in his message. He reports that he did not hear the man say anything wrong. So intent was his scrutiny that he heard nothing of value. The other brother listens and delights in the truth he brings. So impressed is he with the truth presented that he fails to find any flaws.

* Two disciples see a sinner who ventures into their assembly. One searches for any reason why the sinner should not be encourage do to stay in their midst. The other welcomes the poor sinner and seeks to help him turn to the Savior and reform his life. He wants him to have a permanent place in the church family.

* Two disciples observe the efforts of fellow-Christians to evangelize the world, to care for the needy, to build up the church. The one stands back watching carefully for any flaw or blemish, any mistake in their endeavor. Finding even the slightest imperfection is sufficient excuse for him not to lend a helping hand or word of encouragement. The other sees the good being done and the potential for even more and greater things in the future. He speaks encouraging words and does all he can to assist them (Gal. 6:10). He can overlook mistakes inadvertently made. He can forgive wrongs realize and forsaken.

* We have considered two disciples of the same Lord; two members of the same church with two different attitudes and two different ways of looking at things. We have pondered two different ways of responding to situations that arise. Which, think ye, has the mind of Christ? (Phil. 2:5). **JHW**

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

In his excellent history of the American Restoration Movement, James DeForest Murch made the following insightful statement concerning us of the Churches of Christ:

“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**, p. 313).

There are two remarkable things about this quote. First, Murch was a national leader in the Independent Christian Churches whose predecessors rejected the law of silence 125 years ago and who almost to a man, still refuse to recognize this aspect of Christ’s authority over his church. Second, is that we now have a sizeable number of professors, preachers and elders among us who are preaching and behaving as though there is no such a thing as “the law of silence.”

This principle of divine authority is revealed in a half dozen examples of Biblical history. When Jewish brethren journeyed to Antioch and told the Gentile converts, “except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved (Acts 15:1), Paul and Barnabas took the matter to the apostles at Jerusalem. After an inquiry, the apostle and elders wrote “For as much as...certain (men) who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment” (Act 15:24). Thus a teaching not commanded by apostolic authority is not to be allowed or accepted. Although there was no command forbidding circumcision, in the absence of some positive instruction the practice could not be introduced into the life of the church.

The writer of Hebrews observes that Christ could not serve as a high priest on earth since he was of the tribe of Judah, “as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests” (Heb. 7:14). No specific statement forbade a man from Judah serving in that exalted station, but it did not have to since God had said that the sons of Aaron the Levite would bear that office (Ex. 28:1).

Two other familiar events of Old Testament history vividly illustrate this point. The tragic case of the priests, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who perished while using strange fire in offering incense in Jehovah’s sanctuary (Lev. 10:1-3). The fire they used was strange in that it was not taken from the sacred fire on the great brazen altar, as God had instructed them to do (Lev. 16:12; 6:12)

When David ordered the ark of God to be carried up to Jerusalem another tragedy occurred. It was placed on an ox cart and care was taken to insure that proper respect was shown. But when the oxen stumbled and the ark was about to fall, Uzzah reached out to steady it and God instantly struck him down (I Chron. 13:6-10). Shocked and saddened, David ordered the procession halted until they could research the matter and determine why God had so dealt with them. Consulting the Scriptures, they discovered that God had ordered the ark to be carried on the shoulders of priests. Although he had not specifically said, “Don’t carry it on an ox cart,” such was excluded by the positive directive given (I Chron. 15:2,13).

Today, to our shame and sorrow, many of our young preachers have never heard this lesson explained or else have been convinced it is of no significance for modern disciples. The most notable example of this failure is in the current discussion about our worship. Theses poor scholars who wish to introduced changes are asking, “Where does the Bible forbid us to do so?” Shame, shame, shame. The above lesson, which you should have learned in Freshman Bible, answers you with a thunderous voice. **JHW**

OUR CHALLENGE

To win in our struggle against the liberal forces at work among us we must find a way to enlist every available man who shares our basic loyalties and is willing to stand strong. Most folks can easily see the dangers of the extreme liberals or the radicals on the right. Either camp is still relatively small in number. Between those extremes are several thousand congregations and preachers whom we must try to salvage and save. Large numbers of them are clearly tilted to the left and will likely go that way if we are not able to reach them with a clear and cordial message that will help them see the problem and inspired them to stick with the Book of God.

While the two extremes mentioned above have done their damage, our ability to hold the center has been greatly weakened, even crippled, by an unfortunate tendency to demand total agreement on every detail from our fellow-workers and an unwillingness to work together. This attitude has been seen primarily among those who are the conservatives of the middle group. The tendency to attack rather than reason, to write up and write off those who don't see the details as we do has weakened our forces. It has also provided powerful ammunition for the liberals to use against us. By painting us as narrow, factious and hateful they have convinced many younger, weaker, more moderate brethren that they offer the only reasonable alternative. Is there any way we can arrive at a simple understanding of basic truths that must be mutually held if we are to be able to work together against a common foe, without writing a creedal statement?

The following items are being challenged by liberal brethren. They are central to our being New Testament Christians and the church of the Bible. If we are in agreement on these points how tolerant can we afford to be on other issues that occasionally arise?

1. The verbal inspiration and thus inerrancy of the Bible.
2. The full and final authority of the New Testament of Christ in the faith and practice of the church.
3. The ability of the common man to arrive at a correct understanding of the word of God.
4. Belief in the nature and status of the contemporary Church of Christ of which we are members as the church which Christ purchased with his blood; that it is not a sect or denomination founded by humans?
5. That denominationalism is unacceptable to Jehovah?
6. The fact that the Lord's church is separate from the other religious bodies founded by men. Hence we can have no fellowship with them.
7. Loyalty to the concept of restoring Christianity to its original faith and practice.
8. Loyalty to the items and kind of worship set forth in the New Testament: Weekly communion, on the First Day as a memorial; Acappella music; Prayers; Offerings and Scripture Studies.
9. Congregational leadership that is limited to male Christians.
10. Only men to be "preachers, ministers and evangelists"
11. No name but that of Christian for individual disciples and only Bible names for the church.
12. Commitment to the sufficiency of the church to do its work of evangelism. (Here we must be careful not to drift into a position like the non-institutional brethren did). The liberals would like very much to brand us as just a new brand of "anti-ism." We clearly have a bevy of organizations soliciting the funds from our churches to do their work of evangelism in the same way that the missionary societies did a century ago.
13. Baptism by immersion as an essential prerequisite for remission of sins and membership in the church.

We will sink or survive on our ability or lack thereof to maintain a united front in the face of our enemy. The big question is can we find a common ground on which to stand and fight our common enemy? **JHW**

PRAYERS NEEDED FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH

Paul wrote, "I exhort therefore,...that supplications, prayers, intercessions thanksgivings, be made for all men; kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior..." (I Tim. 2:1-3). Would it not also be good and acceptable to ask that saints every where lift up prayers for elders preachers, youth workers, campus evangelists and missionaries and teachers in our Christian schools in the day of crisis:

- * That all will take seriously their sacred privilege and duty to serve the Lord and his church.
 - * That all will "hold fast to the faithful word" (Tit. 1:9);
 - * That they will be true to their task and responsibility to lead, teach and guide all of God's people safely in the footsteps of Jesus' revealed truth (II Tim. 4:2);
 - * That they will resist any and every temptation and allurements to turn aside to the siren voices of denominational teachers (II Thess. 2:3);
 - * That they will be content with the old paths of Scripture and resist every temptation to embrace new methods, means and doctrines that may please young minds, but which have neither foundation nor approval in Scripture;
 - * That they will all have an interest in and a sense of loyalty to the brotherhood of New Testament Christians scattered around the world;
 - * That should they lose their faith in the Bible way and the church of Christ, they will be honest and openly admit their changed convictions. If they are unwilling or unable to teach the sound doctrine of Scripture, held and loved by our brethren, that they will leave the church in peace and follow their new found faith to its denominational sources and there take up their abode;
 - * That teachers and preachers will work diligently to indoctrinate and confirm in the faith the disciples under their influence so they will remain loyal to Christ and his teachings;
 - * That elders will closely watch, guard and protect the flock of their charge lest any false teacher slip into their fold and ravage them (Acts 20:28-29);
 - * That preachers will inform themselves of the dangers the change movement poses and speak words of warning to those they address.
 - * That they will recover the evangelistic zeal Christ wants us to have so the church may once again grow and prosper.
- JHW**

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Paul urged the Christian in Ephesus, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might" (Eph. 6:10). The Christian life is not a parlor game, nor a viewing sport for couch potatoes. It is likened to a warfare. Our enemy is the evil Satan who like a roaring lion is seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8). To win the victory in this cosmic war, God's people must be strong in their faith. Three things make Christians strong:

- * God promises to strengthen us with his Holy Spirit that dwells in our inner man (Eph. 3:16). It is possible for us to quench the Spirit by not yielding ourselves totally to his guidance (I Thess. 5:19).
- * God's Word fills us with spiritual strength. It is the sword with which we fight our battles (Eph. 6:17). But unless we read, study and apply the message of the holy Word, we will be like a soldier without a weapon.
- * Our faith is a source of personal strength. Faith is man's love, trust and dependence upon God (Heb. 11:1). Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). Again we can see how the depth and quality of our faith is tied to the Word of God. Read and study it and grow strong. Neglect it and grow flabby and weak.

The church desperately needs an army of strong Christians to fill her ranks. Will you be one of them? **JHW**

CHRISTIANS MUST CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

Christianity was born in a crucible of controversy. Real flesh and blood men bravely crisscrossed the pagan Roman world, preaching the gospel. They planted congregations of Christians in every community that would receive them. They encountered hostile enemies without and subtle deceivers within. Either of these would surely have destroyed the infant church had they not boldly resisted their assaults. The little epistle of Jude is a classical defense of the true faith of Christ. The author urges the disciples to rally in defense of the sacred cause of Jesus against false teachers. "I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4). In these words we see the following lessons:

I. The Faith is Something Which is Delivered to Us. Our faith was passed down to us from past generations. We did not discover its great principles and truths all by ourselves. The Christian faith originated with Jesus. He then entrusted it to his apostles (Heb. 2:3-4). The Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance all he had said to them (John 14:26). The apostles first taught and then recorded "the faith" in their books and epistles and placed it in the hands of the various congregations. The things they wrote were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Loyal churches continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

Each Christian has the duty to teach and protect the faith and pass it on to the coming generation. This principle has always been true. Moses taught Israel to "make them (God's truths) known unto thy children and they children's children" (Deut. 4:9). We continually look back to the stream of truth which flows down to us from ancient Jerusalem (Is. 2:3).

II. Our Faith Was Delivered Once and For All. The Christian faith is an unchangeable commodity. It is permanent and enduring. It never needs revision as men's creeds do. It is always relevant, never obsolete. These facts are true because of its divine origin. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He is eternal and unchanging (Heb. 13:8) and so is his word (Matt. 24:35). Christianity is a completed system and allows no additions or deletions. We are forbidden to go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:6 ASV). Those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ have not God (II John 10). Curses rest upon those who either add to or take from the faith of Jesus (Rev. 22:18-19). Such writings as the **Book of Mormon, the Watchtower, Science and Health With a Key to the Scriptures**, and those of Ellen G. White are excluded and condemned as spurious.

III. The Christian Faith Was Entrusted to God's Saints. Saints are those who are saved by Jesus and members of his church. The Corinthians Christians were addressed as saints (I Cor. 1:1-2). They were sanctified when they were washed in the name of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 6:11). We are washed in the name of Christ when we are baptized to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16). The faith is not the exclusive possession of any one individual or group. Anyone, anywhere, with a Bible in hand can know and do God's will and be acceptable to him. Scripture is not of private interpretation (II Pet. 1:20-21). Nor is it the private property of any church such as the Roman Catholic Church. God has given every saint the sacred privilege and responsibility to study the faith, teach and defend it. When the early brethren were scattered abroad, they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4). Selfish men would seek to restrict these privileges to a professional clergy.

IV. The Faith of Christ Must be Defended. Paul was set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16). Our faith is always under fire by unbelievers, false teachers and hedonists. Sadly the church suffers from heretics within her midst. Every Christian should be a defender of the faith. Each one should be ready to give an answer to any man that asks a reason for his/her hope (I Pet. 3:15). All must be prepared to fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12). We must prepare ourselves to defend the faith against the hosts of wicked spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). There are such enemies as militant atheism, evolutionary dogma and the promoters of immorality such as homosexuality, pornography and abortion. There are heathen religions and denominations and cults with which must contend. We must also be concerned

about those who attack church or seek to corrupt her with their own ideas and opinions. We must oppose both legalism and liberalism within the church.

Our methods of defense are numerous. Men must be trained to both preach and teach the truth in love (Eph.4:15). We need soldiers to write tracts and articles, letters to editors and books setting forth the case for the Lord's true gospel. We need to talk about God's ways in our daily associations, whether at home or at work (Deut. 6:6-9). Capable men are needed to publicly engage the enemy on the forensic platform (Prov. 25:9). Elders must exercise careful oversight to protect their congregations against false teachers (Tit. 3:10).

We are blind and foolish if we think we are immune to the poison of false doctrine. Only those willing to contend for the faith will survive the conflict.

Kings and queens of England wear as one of their titles, "Defender of the faith," but this honor is not for them alone. Each soul that wears the name Christian is privileged to contend earnestly for the holy faith of Jesus. **JHW**

NEUTRALITY

Many of our fellow Christians are committed to a position of neutrality in the current war that is wracking the churches of Christ. They claim to be neither for nor against the promoters of change that are working among us. If you were just discussing Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, such a stand would be commendable. We are however concerned about the church for Christ Jesus died, the kingdom of Christ here on earth, God's family of saved people. A powerful movement is at work to change and reshape the doctrine, worship and practice of our churches. If successful, we will cease to be the church of Christ our fathers knew. We will cease to be a church patterned after the church found in Scripture. Instead, we will devolve into a human denomination as worthless as hundreds of other man-made churches.

To stand neutral in this hour of conflict is like the mother who stands by and watches as one of her children inflicts serious harm on the other. It is like those liberal thought-leaders who remained neutral in the great contest between Democracy and Communism. It is like those secular reporters who wish to be neutral in the mortal struggle between our nation and the Islamic radicals.

In times of crisis, neutrality, at best, is a sign of weakness. Joseph Hall well said, that "Neutrality in things good or evil is both odious and prejudicial." Thomas Williams correctly observed, that "professed neuters on religious subjects are always false and faithless in reality." A faithful servant of Christ will promote the good and decry the bad. I plead with all who read these lines to stand up and defend the church we love. **JHW**

"Everyone wishes to have truth on his side, but it is not every one that sincerely wishes to be on the side of truth"
(Whately).

"When a spot of neutral ground is found in heaven, or earth, or hell, then let neuters take their stand; real neuters are nothing, and professed neuters on religious subjects, are always false and faithless in reality"
(Thomas Williams).

CAMPBELLITES

As a child I remember a neighbor sneeringly calling members of the church of Christ, Campbellites. At that time I had no idea what the term meant or from whence it derived. Later I learned that it was a term of derision used by denominational zealots implying that members of the church of Christ were followers of Alexander Campbell and hence a denomination like themselves. That which first motivated them to use the term was Bro. Campbell's remarkable success in attracting members of their denominations to the cause of New Testament Christianity.

In 1828 Alexander Campbell responded to those who called his associates Campbellites and his teaching Campbellism. He explained, "It is a nickname of reproach invented and adopted by those whose views, feelings and desires are all sectarian—who cannot conceive of Christianity in any other light than an ism....I have always disclaimed everything sectarian; and if the people of the different sects slander me or any of those who prefer the scriptures to any human creed, and the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah, to any sect; I say, if they slander us with the names and epithets which we disavow, they must answer to him who judges righteously. But for ourselves, we protest against the name, the precepts, the feelings of any sect or schism in Christendom." (**Christian Baptist**, Vol. 5, p. 270). From that time until apostasy was well developed, never did any one associated with our Restoration Movement accept the appellation "Campbellite" or use the term in referring to fellow-Christians save perhaps in a joking manner.

As the Disciples of Christ moved further and further away from their prior commitment to be nothing but Christians and governed solely by the word of God, many of their people began to use the term as an acceptable way to refer one to another. No longer was it offensive to them to be called Campbellites. They now view Campbell as the founder of their denomination. Members of the churches of Christ however rejected the term and viewed those who might call them by it as either ignorant or mean-spirited. In the mid-1950s W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garret shifted from long careers of factionalism to become the first of our liberal change agents. To them the epithet Campbellite was no longer offensive, in fact they often used it to describe the brotherhood of churches of Christ.

As with the liberal element a century ago, our contemporary liberal change agents blush not to refer to themselves and the church by this term that was first spoken as a hiss and a byword. Their teaching and conduct is such that "Campbellite" is really an apt description of them. Two examples demonstrate this point.

* In their attempt to escape from the restrictions of Bible authority for what they believe and practice, virtually all of them cite the famous **Declaration and Address** of Thomas Campbell, item six, where Campbell writes, "...although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connections ...Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion....Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession" (C. A. Young, **Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union**, p. 110). Giving these lines of Thomas Campbell ultimate authority, they conclude that they can use instrumental music and other innovations, not specifically forbidden in Scripture.

They also cite Campbell's opening greeting "To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout all the Churches..." and his call for unity to justify their belief that people in all denominations are truly Christians and that unity with other religious bodies should take priority over doctrinal considerations. They quote that good man's words, spoken in the misty morning hours of our back to the Bible movement, as though they, rather than the New Testament of Christ, are the standard to determine right or wrong.

* When the question of the necessity of immersion in order to salvation is being considered, change agents are unwilling to accept the plain statements of Scripture (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). They much prefer to cite Alexander Campbell's **Lunenburg Letters** where the notable reformer expressed his opinion that the pious unimmersed believer

was saved, along with the immersed believer who in piety served the Lord.

Since these examples demonstrate that change agents place the words of Thomas and Alexander Campbell above scripture, it seems to me to be entirely fitting that they call themselves Campbellites. Perhaps all those who still respect the authority of Christ and his Word over his church should recognize them for the Campbellites they have become.
JHW

PARABLE OF THE DOCTOR

Most of those who read these lines have a doctor they visit occasionally for his medical opinion, advice and treatment. Edward is a good doctor. When his patients come to him, his diagnosis is determined by the condition he finds when they are examined. To some patients he says, "You are fine. Keep on with just what you have been doing." To others his report is unpleasant. "You have a problem." For some patients the problem can be cured with a change in diet, or with exercise or medication. For others surgery is a necessity. Some have a condition that is fatal and is too far advanced to resolve.

Dr. Edward is not his enemy when he tells a patient, "You have heart trouble or cancer." He might be able to help them if they listen to his advice and accept his treatment. But should Dr. Ed be so timid that he cannot admit to himself that his patient is ill; if he cannot bear to do surgery on a patient who needs it, he would be a failure as a physician and actually a danger to those who trust their physical well-being to his hands.

So it is in Christ. Preachers in many ways are like the doctor. We too have to make diagnoses. We too sometimes have to tell our patients bad news. We occasionally have to use the scalpel to save a person or a congregation from a dangerous situation. A preacher will not help the Cause of Christ if he pretends the spiritual sick Christian or church has no problem. In fact he is dangerous to those who look to him for spiritual guidance. To be a faithful preacher we must not shrink to declare the whole counsel of God to our hearers (Acts 20: 27). We must be willing to reprove, rebuke and exhort with sound doctrine (II Tim. 4:2-3). When Paul delivered an unpleasant diagnosis to the church in Galatia, he felt compelled to ask them "Am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). We find no joy in diagnosing the problems that the change movement cause the church. But like a good physician we have no choice but to do so.
JHW

OUR MISSION

Why do we exist? What are we about? Christ did not leave us without instructions when he ascended to heaven. He commissioned us to go into all the world, preaching the good news about salvation to every creature (Mk. 16:15). He also told us to help the weak (Acts 20:35) and to care for the fatherless and widows (Jas. 1:27). We also exist to help each other safely travel the straitened and narrow way and reach our home in heaven (Gal. 6:1-2). You lend me a helping hand when I am up against an obstacle and I will do the same for you when your time comes. Are you not glad there are folks you can depend on when the going gets rough? Don't forget our obligations are reciprocal. Seneca wrote that what the world needs most is for someone to extend a helping hand to lift them up when they are down. JHW

"A wolf never worries about how many sheep are in the flock. He knows they won't resist."

SALVATION IS BY GRACE, BUT GRACE IS NOT UNCONDITIONAL

Salvation is man's most pressing need. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). The just reward for our sin is death and damnation (Rom. 6:23). We dare not ask for justice. We desperately need mercy.

Experience teaches that man is incapable of saving himself from sin's ruin. If we expect to become righteous by our own achievement we are reminded, "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). If we attempt to earn salvation by good works of morality and religion, we learn that it is "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves..." that man is saved (Tit. 3:5). Would we justify ourselves by an attempt to keep God's law perfectly, we will learn that "by the works of the law shall no flesh to justified in his sight..." (Rom. 3:20). Should we by human wisdom set out to find right-standing before God, we are told that "the world through its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). Without Christ, a sinner is alienated from God's people, a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope (Eph. 2:12). In this pitiful plight, we cry out, "Wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" And the answer comes ringing across the ages, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25a).

We Can Be Saved By Grace

The good news of the gospel can be summed up in the words of Paul to the Ephesians, "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God..." (Eph. 2:8). Grace means a free and unmerited gift or favor. "The New Testament writers use "*charis*" preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favor even upon the ill-deserving and grants to sinners pardon of their offences and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ" (J. H. Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 666). Grace is God's part in our salvation. Faith is our response to God's grace.

"God Is Love"

God's grace springs from his loving nature (1 John 4:8). The God of love sent his son to save us from punishment (John 3:16). When the grace of God appeared (i.e., Jesus) bringing salvation to all men, he instructed us as to God's will for our lives (Tit. 2:11-12). Through "the gospel of the grace of God," the inspired apostles made known to us the conditions of our forgiveness (Acts 20:24). By grace God gave us his holy church to see that each person has opportunity to be saved and to provide a proper environment for the saved on earth (Heb. 12:28). The grace of our Lord has prepared for us an infallible record (the Bible) on which to base our faith and by which to order our lives. This "word of his grace...is able to build (us) up and give (us) the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

God's grace offers salvation to all people regardless of their race or record. The Lord is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). All earthlings can rejoice that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Tit. 2:11).

Salvation By Grace Is Conditional

God saves us by grace, but we do not read of salvation by grace alone. Numerous teachers have erred at this vital point. Scripture makes it plain that **God's offer of grace is conditioned on our faithful response** to his will. Hear Paul: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). If salvation were by grace alone, since grace is extended to all, literally all would be saved: even those who did not wish to be. Vile sinners and rebels would populate heaven along with God's faithful servants. Such universalism is untenable.

God has determined that we play a part in our salvation. Peter exhorted the men of Jerusalem to “save yourselves” (Acts 2:40). In the words of Paul, man’s part is to have faith or to believe on the Lord (Eph. 2:8). We are “justified freely by his grace...through faith in his blood...” (Rom. 3:25).

What Is Saving Faith?

A common mistake in the religious world is misunderstanding the Biblical meaning of faith. This does more than cause inconvenience; it can be fatal. We must look to God’s word for the proper meaning. Saving faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Religious convictions based on human opinions, traditions and doctrines do not qualify. Biblical faith is living and obedient. Nothing avails “but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). Thus, Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Heb. 5:9). Salvation by grace is received by obedient faith! James labels “faith only” as dead and worthless (Jas. 2:24, 26). We see a Biblical demonstration of saving faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The author in numerous examples vividly portrays faith as a trusting heart gladly obeying God’s will. Noah and his family were saved from destruction because he, “moved with godly fear, prepared an ark...and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). The same kind of faith saves us today.

Obedient faith does not attempt to earn or merit salvation. It is evident that we cannot save ourselves. God paid the price and offers us salvation freely upon the condition that we believe in his son and obey his will. Some object that to do anything beyond mental acceptance is to attempt to earn our salvation. Should I offer to send you a coupon for a wonderful gift, free upon the condition that you send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope, surely you would not claim you earned or merited the favor you received. So it is in salvation. Through Christ, God offers free salvation to all who believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16). Those whose faith leads them to do so are saved (Acts 22:16). They in no way place God under obligation. They are simply claiming his gracious offer. This helps us understand Philippians 2:12 which says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

We Are Not Saved By Works Done In Our Own Righteousness

Our salvation is not of ourselves, not of works, lest any one should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). In every age there have been folks who thought they could achieve salvation by their own efforts. Scripture presents two classic cases for our learning. The proud Pharisaic Jews sought to be justified by the works of the Law of Moses. While acknowledging their zeal for God, Paul wrote of them: “For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). Sophisticated Gentile philosophers thought that they could attain salvation by human reason. The same apostle comments that they, “Professing themselves to be wise...became fools” and fell into gross idolatry, “wherefore God gave them up...” (Rom. 1:22-24). The greatest minds “in their wisdom knew not God.” They became foolish in the attempt (I Cor. 1:20-21). Tragically, men are yet trying to save themselves with no better success. Every attempt of man to establish a new kind of church or to introduce a new doctrine or demand in religion is a vain attempt to do it “our way.” Such is doomed to failure. Attempts of sinners to somehow mitigate their vices by great deeds of charity or benevolence have precisely the same internal flaw. Beneficial as these deeds may be to the recipients, they have no saving power. But, they can be fatal to the man trusting in them, for they may lull him into the vain hope that God will be obligated to treat him kindly. Thus he will fail to accept God’s grace on the terms offered

The Ephesians Were Saved By Grace

Paul reminded the Ephesians Christians of their salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:4-8). If we do what they did, we too can enjoy the same blessing. They “heard the word of the truth, the gospel of (their) salvation, in whom, having also believed, (they) were sealed ...with the Holy Spirit...” (Eph. 1:13). They were taught the necessity of repentance toward God (Acts 20:21). “And when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). By doing as they did we too will be saved by grace through faith. We must be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10) else we will have received his grace in vain (II Cor. 6:1). Be assured that “God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that

ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work" (II Cor. 9:8).

It is the supreme discovery of life that we need not punish ourselves in a hopeless effort to earn God's forgiveness. It is freely offered to all. We must gladly accept his gift of love on the terms offered. A grateful heart will make the best effort to please him. No longer do we as criminals seek by our own strength to escape our chains, rather as faithful children we do our best to please our loving Father. **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**

FAITH: THE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION

"For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:4-5).

"(A)nd without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6)

The foundation of all relationships with God is **faith**. It is the most basic and fundamental ingredient of Christianity. Faith underlies all hope and is the link that binds the saved to the Savior. Without doubt, the most commonly used religious term in the Western world is faith: yet it is also the most misunderstood term in the public's vocabulary. We must look to the Bible for light on the meaning and application of faith.

WHAT FAITH IS NOT

Many themes can best be understood by considering them from the negative point of view. By thus eliminating all the false notions, we arrive at the true.

Faith is not **blind, thoughtless gullibility**. There is a kind of religionist that believes that the highest degree of faith is the one that asks no questions; and never thinks or tries to understand. It is closely akin to superstition. However, the Scripture presents a much different view of faith. Paul states, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing of the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Faith is based on testimony from God. John wrote his gospel that we might believe (John 20:30-31). God commends those who search the Scriptures to see if the preacher is teaching God's word faithfully (Acts 17:11). Really, faith is the opposite of gullibility.

Faith is not **emotionalism**. In many Protestant churches, faith is equated with a spiritual thrill, a light feeling in the chest cavity and head. Many people have seen a man slap his hand over his heart and declare that he would not exchange what he felt for all the Bibles in the world. To another, faith is the excitement of a "Pentecostal" type of service with shouting, dancing, clapping of hands and emotions raised to a fever pitch. Yet this is totally foreign to the faith described in the Bible. Bible faith is always based on facts and knowledge (Rom. 10:17). It appeals to the rational mind as well as the heart or emotional nature. Paul said, "I know him whom I have believed" (II Tim. 1:12). He asked the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the **hearing of faith**" (Gal. 3:2). Faith is always based upon testimony.

Faith is not **foolishness**. We have read of people who died after drinking poison and being bitten by deadly snakes as they proved their faith. Never does the Bible present faith in this light. Always, believers are described as sane, self-controlled, reasonable people. Jesus refused to leap off the pinnacle of the temple to prove himself (Matthew 4:5-7). It is strange how the bizarre and senseless appeals so strongly to a certain type of mind. But whatever its attraction, it is not of God.

Faith is not **rationalism**. By rationalism we mean the attitude that I will not believe a thing unless I can understand it thoroughly and explain it. God has not said that we were to understand everything we encounter in the Scriptures, but we are to believe. "...we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). If God says a thing, faith believes it to be true whether it is understood or not.

WHAT FAITH IS

Having cleared away some misconceptions, we shall now note what God declares faith to be. Usually people attempt to define faith in a single sentence. Some offer, "Faith is **trusting God**," others quote Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the assurance of things hope for, a conviction of things not seen." This attempt to describe so broad a concept in so few words has contributed to our misunderstanding of the word. The following verses will help us to see that faith is like a cut diamond with a multitude of facets.

Faith is the **belief of testimony** given by God in his words. "So belief cometh of hearing and hearing of the word of

Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The quantity and quality of your faith will be in direct proportion to your study and understanding of God's word.

Faith is **trusting God and his Son**; laying our all in his great hands for safekeeping. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; he went out, not knowing whether he went" (Hebrews 11:8). The apostle was confident that God would keep that which he had committed unto him (II Timothy 1:12). So faith trusts God ultimately whether in life or death.

Faith is **believing God's threats and promises** and acting accordingly. Sarah believed God's promise that she would have a son, even though she had been childless, near 90 years old, and long past the age of child-bearing. She had Isaac. (Heb. 11:11). So we must believe the wonderful promises of God if we are to receive them. Noah believed God's threat to destroy the world with water. He built the ark by faith and preserved himself and his family (Heb. 11:7). Never had there been such a universal flood, never such an act of judgment, but Noah believed God. What a task to undertake to build the immense ark. What faith it took. What a contrast when we see many today who do not have enough faith to believe the record of Noah's experience to be true fact!

Faith is **doing what God has said**, just as he said to do it. Faith that works through love is the kind of faith God demands (Gal. 5:6). Abel illustrates the fact that careful attention to do exactly what God has ordered is expected. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness born to him that he was righteous" (Heb. 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17), Abel must have heard God specify an animal sacrifice. Cain was willing to sacrifice, but he did not offer the kind of sacrifice God ordered. He may have reasoned that his was as costly; as sincerely and properly offered as Abel's, yet God rejected it. It was not of faith. He was willing to do **what** God said as long as he could do it his way. Faith does things God's way whether in worship, service or salvation.

Faith is **doing God's will even when it is extremely distasteful and dangerous**. "By faith Abraham being tried, offered up Isaac..." (Heb. 11:17) Imagine how **distasteful** this must have been to that aged father. Think of the anguish and torment he underwent. It was his only son. It was the one link through whom God was going to fulfill his many promises to Abraham. What chance was there that he and Sarah could ever have a second son? Yet Abraham did what God commanded. So must we. It is doubtful that we will ever face such a test as that patriarch did, how much more then must we be faithful in the small matters that seem distasteful to us.

Sometimes faith leads us down dangerous trails. Consider Israel as, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up" (Heb. 11:29). In contemplating the great miracle of the dividing of the sea we sometimes overlook the situation when God commanded them to step into the canyon between the walls of water. Their wives and children, their cattle and earthly possessions were laid on the line. What faith it took to risk such an escape. Ours is not a day of persecution. But should we live to see it, we must have faith to face whatever trials Satan thrusts upon us.

"Faith is **assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen**" (Heb. 11:1). The saint cannot see heaven, but faith enables him to firmly be convinced of its reality. So it is with a hundred other unseen things. Faith accepts them as reality, because God said it.

Faith is **doing God's will, even though you do not fully comprehend all that is involved**. "We walk by faith and not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). We might never fully understand why Christ had to die, but faith accepts it. Just why baptism is essential may never be completely fathomed, but faith believes it. I may never grasp all that is involved in grace or the resurrection of the body, but I believe it because God has declared himself on these matters.

Faith **trusts God and not self for salvation**. Scripture declares what all men know; that man cannot direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8-9). One of man's major problems has been the mistaken notion that he could save himself. This has led him to ignore God's will and seek to establish a righteousness of his own (Rom. 10:1-3). Genuine faith recognizes one's **inability** to save self and drives the sinner to cast himself on the loving mercy of God, being willing to do whatever God says.

Saving faith **accepts Christ as Lord and Savior of its life**. "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord,

and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). The true believer surrenders all his rights and prerogatives to King Jesus. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Whatever Christ says, I gladly do, if I truly believe.

Faith is an **active, energetic response of the human heart to God** (Galatians 5:6). Faith without works is dead in itself (Jas. 2:26). The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews aptly illustrates this truth. Faith is more than understanding, or accepting as true, or feeling inclined unto a person or thing. Faith is humble submission and obedience to God's will.

Faith is a **growing thing**. Do not despair because you have not the faith of Abraham. You can grow unto it. Some of Jesus' disciples had "little faith" (Matt. 6:30). Barnabas was full of faith (Acts 11:24). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), we can watch our faith grow as we feed upon his holy word and daily prove his promises.

Faith **protects against sin and temptation**. It is a shield (Ephesians 6:16), to block the attacks of seduction, ridicule, and provocation. It blunts false doctrines and attempts of others to destroy our faith. Faith is a **breastplate** to turn away the arrows of destruction Satan constantly hurls at us.

Christ is "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Faith in Christ begins he has learned God's will for his life and the trembling sinner seeks pardon and mercy from his offended Lord. Faith ends when this life ends. In eternity faith will give place to sight. The redeemed will be resurrected to spend their eternity in heavenly joy in the very presence of the Sacred Three (Rev. 22:1-5). Only in Jesus can our faith reach those earthly proportions that God intended it to have.

To the soul that truly believes in Jesus, a shower of manifold blessings comes. "Being, therefore, **justified by faith**, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). We are made **righteous by faith**. (Rom. 3:21-25). Again, "the righteous shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11).

Christians are "**sons of God, through faith...**" (Gal. 3:26). We are **saved by grace through faith** (Eph. 2:8). Christ **dwells in our hearts** through faith (Eph. 3:16). We are **sanctified by faith** (Acts 26:18). Our hearts are **purified by faith** (Acts 15:9). We are made to **stand by faith** (II Cor. 1:24). There is **joy in faith**. (Phil. 1:25). And the saint enjoys **boldness and access in confidence** through faith (Eph. 3:12). But not by faith only (Jas. 2:24).

Without faith, prayer would be a meaningless ritual. Without faith, no man could be faithful unto death. How could we ever attain that holiness that God desires without trusting faith? Satan would swamp us in temptations and trials were it not for faith in God's delivering providence. Who can face death like the believing Christian who knows that God who holds eternity and the fates of men in his hands. **JHW**

WHAT ABOUT APPLAUSE IN WORSHIP?

Dear Bro. Waddey: About hand clapping: I find it a little uncomfortable but not "scripturally wrong." Instead of clapping at a baptism I prefer the singing of songs. Having said that I see that clapping hands at an announcement such as "Bro. ___ is 100 today" would be in order as I see it. S.B.

Dear Bro. B: I too would see a difference in clapping for a baptism and for a birthday. The problem is, if we encourage the applause in the one case, during our assembly, it will be well-nigh impossible to keep it from spreading to other occasions such as baptisms, well-made points in sermons, etc. Such possibilities seem to me to make it not an expedient thing to do. I would not condemn a church or an individual that applauded the birthday...but I would try to show the people that there is the danger of where a thing may lead. Parents often do this when training their children. Better to save the applause for the concert and ball game and offer a simple amen for the hour of worship. **JHW**

THE LANGUAGE OF SALVATION

When Jehovah chose to reveal his great salvation to humanity he directed his inspired spokesmen to describe it by illustrations from their everyday life so the most humble soul could easily understand it.

The many illustrations utilized are much like the various acts of a play or verses of a song, in that they are saying essentially the same thing. In all of them we see man separated from God by an impassable barrier called sin (Isaiah 59:1-2), then we see how God saves man from his predicament through his holy Son, Jesus.

Justification

Our first illustration is drawn from the law courts. The metaphor pictures the sinner before God his judge. He is a guilty, condemned lawbreaker. Because of his guilt he can only look forward to an awful punishment in hell. But when all hope is gone, Christ the innocent one steps forward to pay the penalty of death for the sinner. "For while we were yet weak... Christ died for the ungodly... much more then being now **justified** by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God..." (Romans 5:6-9). The condemned sinner is "justified by faith" in his Savior (Romans 5:1). He is no longer condemned (Romans 8:1). He is a sinner but now God treats him as though he were innocent. Because of Christ and his trust in him, God deals with the sinner "just as if he had never left." When asked how he would reward the South for their rebellion, President Lincoln said, "I am going to treat them as though they had never left." This too is the lesson of the way the loving father received his prodigal son (Luke 15:20-24). Condemned ones are justified through faith in Christ, not by the works of the law of Moses (Galatians 2:16).

Reconciliation

Our next example is from the social realm and has to do with friendship. Here we see man pictured as an enemy of God. "...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:10). Sinners are alienated and enemies in their minds and in their evil works (Colossians 1:21). In this plight, separated from God by our foolish actions, we are lost. We need to make friends with our God and thus be reconciled. But we sinners have no suitable gift to bring to our Lord against whom we have sinned. What can we do? God meets our need. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father... through Christ to reconcile all things unto himself..." (Colossians 1:19-20). Peace was effected "through the blood of the cross" (Colossians 1:20) and we were "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Colossians 1:22). The reconciliation of all men is realized in the "one body" of Christ (Ephesians 2:16). But what is this one body? This favorite expression of Paul is defined in Ephesians 1:22. God gave Christ "to be head over all things to the church, which is his body..." So we are reconciled to God in the one true church of Christ.

Remission

From the business world we have our next illustration. Man is represented as standing before God with an impossible debt to pay, i.e., his sins. This is seen in the parable in Matthew 18:23-27. The servant owes his king over a million dollars. In a day when workers earned some 15 cents per day, this was a debt he could never pay. By right, the king could have inflicted great punishment upon him, but he forgave the debt. In Christ we have our debt of sin canceled or paid in full. God calls it **remission of sins**. No money or good works can achieve this, for "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). But the apostles taught, "that through his name, every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). When does this occur? Hear Peter, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto (for) the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Without water baptism no one can enjoy remission of sins, i.e., have his great debt of sin marked paid in full by the Lord.

Redemption

In the Roman world, over half the population was in bondage. Slavery was a very real and everyday fact of life. Every slave longed for the day when he could be redeemed from his master and set free. It was usually through the kindness and generosity of some benefactor that a slave's price was paid and he was set free. Every man is enslaved to the tyrant Sin, with no way to free himself. "Everyone that commiteth sin is the bond servant of sin" (John 8:34). God, through Christ, redeemed us. "Ye were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things,

with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life... but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish... even the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). We have our redemption in Christ (Colossians 1:13-14). How then may we get into Christ? Paul says we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). Thus only those who are properly baptized into Christ are redeemed from the bondage of sin by his precious blood.

Conclusion

Space fails us to deal with all of God's terms that describe our glorious salvation but perhaps these will suffice to show the honest soul that his only hope of salvation is through faith in God's Son, baptism in water according to his gospel and fellowship in the church which bears his name. Will you accept the salvation God offers today? 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, imagine 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

TWO KINDS OF WORSHIP

There is kind of worship that appeals to the spiritual nature of man and there is a kind that appeals to the fleshly, animal nature. We see this in secular music. Patriotic songs and sweet songs about love, home and family appeal to man's higher instincts while the wild music of the dance hall and rock concert appeals to the lowest aspects of man's nature.

The music Christ ordained for his church was that of "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Early Christians knew about religious music accompanied by instruments. Jewish converts had seen it at their temple. Gentiles had observed it in their pagan temples. But when they worshiped God through Christ, they praised God with sweet vocal hymns of devotion (Heb. 13:15).

Today some among us are clamoring for instruments of music. They justify themselves by insisting such will help them praise God better. Consider the following quotes that address this very issue.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883), famous German composer, made the following observation:

"There is no doubt but that those qualities absolutely necessary to church music, namely, modesty, dignity, and soulfulness are more inherent in the vocal style than in any other. Reserve and humble restraint befits the house of God...Religious feeling finds its most natural expression in vocal utterance, for the human heart is the source of both devotion and song" (**Catholic Encyclopedia** (1911), Vol 10, p. 651).

Of the other type of worship, that which appeals more to the senses, **D. B. Cameron** wrote:

"...this mode of worship fosters a craving for sensational novelties. As it excites the natural sensibilities, it creates a desire for further indulgence of the same nature, for the more that kind of pleasure is gratified, the more its votaries demand. It acts much on people as the exhilaration of strong drink, so that many become quite enslaved at last to the enjoyment of this kind of religious aesthetics. When spirituality decays, people invent external attractions in worship. Many mistake the soothing effects or buoyant feelings produced by fine music for spiritual effects, but they are entirely sensuous" (**Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews**, 1889, pp. 518-519).

James Beggs observed:

Some argue "...that organs and a splendid ceremonial must have the effect of elevating and refining the soul, of arousing and exalting all the better principles and feelings of our moral natures; and that, therefore, it is scarcely possible to imagine that their religious use can be absolutely unlawful in the Christian Church. Now all this is a mere delusion, contradicted by history and experience. In proportion as the senses and imagination are excited and gratified, the soul is generally starved...All idolaters maintain that the fine arts generally, but perhaps especially music and sculpture, have a direct and necessary tendency to refine and elevate the human soul above the groveling pursuits of sense and sin. The theory is very plausible, and is apt to be eagerly embraced by the ignorant and thoughtless. The facts of history, however, teach a very different lesson" (**Open Forum, The Converted Catholic Magazine**, May 1954, p. 159).

Robert Milligan, 19th century gospel preacher, wrote,

"...the general tendency of instrumental music is to quench the influence of the Spirit in the heart, and to promote in the churches a cold, barren, and lifeless formalism, has I think, been historically demonstrated; for otherwise, how shall we account for the fact that, wherever the organ is used, there is a least manifested a constant tendency to give up congregational singing..." (**The Great Commission**, pp. 208-209).

C. G. Herbermann sums it up in a forceful way;

“...the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice” ©. G. Herbermann, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911, Vol. 10, p. 648).

May we not repeat the mistake of those who seek a sensual experience at the cost of the truly spiritual. **JHW**

* Quotes are from James Bales, *Instrumental Music & New Testament Worship*, 1973.

THE EXPANDING QUEST FOR UNITY

News reports tell us that “Stone-Campbell Unity Conferences” are taking place in different locations across the country. Among the dignitaries from the “Acappella Churches of Christ” featured in these sessions are those ever-faithful agents of change, Lynn Anderson, Rubel Shelly, Rick Atchley, Mike Cope and Randy Harris. Among those helping to sponsor at least one of these meetings are Hillcrest Publishing of Abilene Christian University, Pepperdine University and Leonard Allen’s Leafwood Publishers.

These current meetings include the Disciples of Christ who represent the most liberal of liberals not only among those kin to us but in the Protestant world in general. When the Unity Summits began in the 1980s, they were between the Independent Christian Churches and some of our people. They all insisted that they were not pursuing unity with the Disciples of Christ...they were too liberal. Now after some 25 years, the Independents and our participants are courting the Disciples. It is not that the Disciples have grown more conservative, rather our participants and those of the Independent Christian Churches have grown more liberal in that quarter century and now feel comfortable embracing the liberal Disciples.

If branches from three different trees fall into a flowing river with nothing to restrain them, they will all eventually reach a common destiny. One by one they will be swept over the falls and caught up in the roiling, foaming vortex below. The Disciples of Christ got there first, some of the Independent Christian Churches and our Change Agents have recently joined them in the churning liberal brine on the other side of the falls from where they all first began their journey.

The next logical step would be for them to pursue unity with the United Church of Christ for the remnants of the James O’Kelly/Elias Smith/Abner Jones Movement merged with other denominations to form that denominational body. They are no more liberal in theology than the Disciples of Christ. And since the Disciples and the United Church are both thoroughly committed members of the National Council of Churches and World Council, they should explore the possibility of merger with those bodies as well. If not why? Once the slalom skier begins his descent there is no stopping, no turning back. The brethren who have started down the slope called change will eventually end up at the bottom where all the other denominational teachers have landed. It is just a matter of time and circumstances.

While the quest of unity in Christ is noble and commendable, it must always be on the terms set forth by the founder, head and savior of the church. He prays for us to be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:20-21). In no way does the ecumenical unity of modern denominations resemble that of the Father and the Son. Nor does the unity pursued by the Stone-Campbell participants reflect that divine unity. At best it is but counterfeit. **JHW**

“It is foolish and deadly to ignore the sign and drive the wrong way on a One Way street, It is the height of folly to try to get to heaven by going the wrong way.”

PROVIDING IMMUNITY TO FADS IN WORSHIP

Today our congregations are troubled by preachers eager to sample anything proposed for worship that is new or different. Few members would come up with such ideas on their own. They are led astray by enterprising young preachers determined to make a name for themselves.

There are some churches where the promoters of the change agenda cannot gain a foothold. Their schemes for change are dead on arrival. In such congregations brethren have antibodies that make them immune to the smooth and fair speech of change agents (Rom. 16:18).

Those who receive a steady diet of meaningful Bible instruction are safe from this ailment. Knowing God's will, they can spot error, no matter how lovely it is packaged. They have no appetite for anything contrary to the Master's message for the church. They have been fed the meat of the word in the classes and sermons (Heb. 5:14). It has settled deep in the hearts and minds and they will tolerate no changes to the divine plan.

Those whose worship experience is meaningful and genuine are not interested in the promotions of the change agenda. Where elders and preachers provide rich, spiritually uplifting worship, there is no interest in tricks and performance to give them some emotional exhilaration. They are thrilled as they lift up their voices in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). They thrill as they are led in devout, meaningful and sincere prayers to God. They are deeply touched when they commune in memory of the death of their beloved Savior (Matt. 26:26-29). They rejoice at the privilege to give their gifts to the Provider of every good and perfect gift. They feast on well-prepared lessons, spoken with enthusiasm, love and concern. The gimmicks of the promoters of change seem foolish to them. Such things profane the holy worship they already enjoy.

Those who enjoy in a close walk with God have no interest in artificial stimulates offered by the peddlers of change. This walk is pursued when they leave the worship assembly to live their daily lives (I John 1:7). It is presenting oneself to God as a spiritual sacrifice seven day of the week (Rom. 12:1). Those brethren who live sober, righteous and godly lives laced with prayer and devotion have the deep, meaningful relationship with the Father that satisfies their souls.

Those who are actively involved in meaningful Christian service have no need for entertainment when they come to worship. Having experienced pure and undefiled religion in ministering to widows and orphans and in keeping themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27), they know unspeakable joy in Christ. They do good to all men, especially fellow-Christians (Gal.6:10). They are abound in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). The charades of the change agents seems like silly child's play to them.

Those who are actively engaged in seeking and saving the lost do not need the assistance of performers in order to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). No greater thrill or satisfaction can be known than leading a lost soul to the Master. It is much like the birth of one's child. To have witnessed the power of God and his gospel (Rom. 1:16), in transforming sinners into saints, changing those who formerly were like lions, but in Christ are like lambs, puts all the show time stuff in the shadows.

While a few disciples might be able to find these blessings by their own initiative, most will need the guidance and leadership of godly preachers and elders, who like good shepherds lead them to the green pastures. Now is the time to take inventory and determine the spiritual status of your flock. You cannot afford to wait until the agents of change appear in your midst. Sheep will follow their shepherds, but the shepherds must lead the way. **JHW**

WORDS OF A WISE MAN, WELL WORTH HEEDING

Solomon rightly observed that "The tongue of a wise man uttereth knowledge aright" (Prov. 15:2). Those who heed the words of the wise will save themselves from many mistakes and sorrows.

Dr. Robert Richardson was one of the pioneer preachers of our back to the Bible movement. He was a medical doctor, but also an effective educator and teacher of God's Word. He was closely associated with Thomas and Alexander Campbell and a faculty member at Campbell's Bethany College. Richardson wrote extensively for the *Millennial Harbinger* and published three books the most notable of his "Memoirs of Alexander Campbell."

Recently I came across the following quote from Dr. Richardson. Although first written 140 years ago, it needs to be repeated for today's church.

"People are wont to admire a speaker who uses high flowing words above their comprehension. They think the stream is deep because they cannot see the bottom, and do not consider that it is owing to its muddiness."

These words describe the response of many gullible brethren to the pronouncements of the doctors of theology of the change movement. They seem to think because a man has attained a terminal degree from a secular or denominational university, he must therefore be a Bible scholar. The doctors of change, aspiring to be recognized as profound theologians, fill their lectures and pages with the murky theobabble of the seminary. Error and truth are mingled together and presented as God's message. Brethren, not recognizing their pedantry and convinced that they are learned men, nod their assent, say amen and blindly follow these blind guides into the ditch of error (Matt. 15:14). JHW

PARABLE OF THE PROUD MAN

Some folks have some personal principles by which they operate. Being proud folks, they refuse to compromise on their principles. While in some situations such inflexibility may be commendable, in others it is downright foolish.

Think of a sick man who refuses to allow a doctor to treat him because the doctor had made some poor financial investments in the past. Imagine a drowning man who will not accept a rope from a rescuer who has a jail record. Consider a man lost in the forest who will not allow a forester to lead him to safety because the forester had once been drunk? Do you say, How foolish!

What of the preacher who will not read a valuable book that analyzes and refutes a pernicious error, because the author is not a member of the church of Christ; or because he was not a member of his circle of Christians friends. Visualize a preacher who refuses to accept a computer for use in his work for Christ because the man offering it has been divorced.

If the above examples seem foolish, imagine the brother who refuses to help oppose the agents of change because some of the soldiers in the battle are not perfect spiritual specimens or because they bear scars from past injuries. He is proud. He has his principles. He refuses to help and takes his seat on the sidelines congratulating himself on his stand for righteousness. If for want of such helpers the battle is lost and the Cause of Christ is swept away in his nation, how do you suppose the Lord of the Kingdom will view such conduct? Think about it. JHW

A SYNOPSIS OF THE CHANGE AGENDA

I marvel at the number of brethren who are not aware of the nationwide movement afoot among us to change the every aspect of the church of Christ, reshaping her according to a denominational format. Others have heard rumors of problems here and there but have no idea what is disturbing their fellow-Christians. For those who may not be aware of what it is these brethren are about we offer the following brief synopsis of the things relating to the Lord's church, her faith and worship that they are busily working to change.

They wish to implement changes in what we believe and the way we worship. Some would introduce instrumental music into the worship of their congregations. Others are willing to tolerate it. They yearn for a choir, but at this point most are satisfied with only a praise team. Solos, duets, trios and quartets are featured in some assemblies. Some would change the Lord's Supper from a sacred, solemn memorial to his death to a joyful celebration combined with a fellowship meal. They seek to change the tenor and atmosphere of our worship assemblies to one more like our Pentecostal neighbors, with clapping, hands raised and rhythmic swaying to the hymns they sing. They would introduce drama as a way of teaching their message with men and women acting out various skits for the audience. Rather than preach Biblical sermons they much prefer story-telling.

They wish to allow women a public leadership role in the church. Most feel that women have been badly treated in our congregations and we must give them more opportunities for public leadership roles in the church. A few already have women preachers.

They are attempting to change the nature of the church. They have concluded that the church of Christ is a human denomination founded some 200 years ago by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. They eagerly seek out the fellowship of other denominational bodies.

They have changed Christ's way of salvation. They teach sinners are saved by grace alone...but then they say they are saved by faith alone; before and without baptism. Baptism, say they, is to declare that one is saved; a message borrowed from our Baptist neighbors.

Many of them have discarded the name church of Christ, preferring Community Church or some other name that disassociates them from us, and allows them to bring unsuspecting souls under their influence.

All of them deny the New Testament of Christ is God's pattern by which we are to order and arrange our service to him (II Tim. 1:13). Some of them question the inerrancy of the Scripture. Many of them make no distinction between the Old and New Testament since they can find justification for many of their doctrines in the old Testament.

Some deny there is a hell, others deny that man's spirit goes where Lazarus and the Rich Man went (Luke 16:22-23). Some want a new kind of congregational government. There are other matters, but these should suffice to enlighten even the most skeptical soul. Significant aspects of the religion of Christ are being challenged by these men. Numerous false doctrines are excused, rationalized or tolerated by them.

Now that you see the extent of the problem, can you understand why we labor to extinguish this firestorm of error?

JHW

"Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable than fidelity. Faithfulness and truth are the most sacred excellences and endowments of the human mind"

CHANGES, CHANGES, CHANGES

Change agents are clamoring for changes in the faith, worship and practice of churches of Christ. The changes they envision are profound and fundamental. Congregations that embrace them will no longer be churches patterned after the New Testament (Heb. 8:5). They would no longer be striving to be Christians only. They will not be churches of Christ such as Paul referred to (Rom. 16:16). Instead, they would be denominational bodies, adrift in a sea of human doctrines, traditions and opinions.

When we warn against the change movement, occasionally a well-intentioned brother will respond, "Since we all are imperfect, don't we all need to change?" Such answers suggest that we need to specify just what it is that cannot be changed.

I. Some Changes Are Needed. The heavenly side of the church is perfect and unchangeable. But the church on earth will always be imperfect because of its human membership. At our best, we are imperfect people. Our work of restoration is task that is never-finished. When we fail to measure up to any aspect of the revealed faith, we need to change. The key is the direction in which we are moving. Beneficial change are those that draw us into closer conformity with God's divine standard. When in any aspect of our worship, faith or practice we fail short of the divine pattern we need to change! Only when we are observing "all things whatsoever (Christ) commanded" (Matt. 28:20), are we immune from change.

II. Some Changes Are Inconsequential. Over the years our congregations have made a multitude of changes that were acceptable because they were in areas that were of no consequence. We changed from plain, simple meeting places on the back streets to fine buildings on main thoroughfares. We changed from handheld fans to air conditioning. We changed from 60 minute sermons to 30 minute lessons. We change from one cup to multiple cups for communion. We have changed our hymnals, our Bible School literature and a hundred other matters. Such changes are harmless because they have nothing to do with the essence of the religion of Christ. We still sing, pray, commune, give and study as the Bible directs, as we always did. These changes are the kind we can take or leave without transgression. Most of these changes are beneficial and should proceed without protest. The only reservation would be, if implementing them should be the occasion of strife in the family of God (I Cor. 8:9-13).

III. Some Changes Are Destructive And Forbidden. If the changes proposed would cause us to go contrary to the expressed will of God, they are wrong and must be rejected and opposed.

* To change the music of the church from singing which the Holy Spirit has authorized (Eph. 5:19), to making a different kind of music with mechanical instruments is wrong.

* To change the day we commune from the first day to another day of the week violates the example of the early Christians who communed on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

* A change that would allow women to teach men in the assemblies or classes of the church would violate Paul's inspired restrictions on them (I Cor. 14:33-34 and I Tim. 2:11-12).

* To change the message of salvation from faith and obedience to faith alone is wrong for it violates James' statement that faith without works in dead in itself (Jas. 2:26); also the declaration that Christ is the author of salvation to all who obey him (Heb. 5:9)

* To alter the doctrine of God's grace and claim that He saves us by grace alone violates God's commands that sinners must obey him to receive the promised blessing. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). They Holy Spirit is given to all them that "obey him" (Acts 5:32).

* To change our view of Scripture is sinful. God describes it as a "pattern" for us to follow (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5). To teach men it is not a pattern is wicked arrogance.

* To change people's thinking about the nature of the church is wrong. The church is Christ's body, his bride, his

kingdom, his family. It is sacred, singular and unitary. To change it into a denomination is an evil thing. It is to make the sacred secular and profane. Other examples might be cited but these illustrate the point.

To beneficial changes that bring us into closer conformity to God's will, we say, Yes! To inconsequential change we say, Yes! But to changes that lead Christians away from God, that make void the word of God (Matt. 15:9), we not only reject them, we must also object to them with all our strength! We are obligated to contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered (Jude 3). Simply stated, our position is Change? Yes! Apostasy? No! **JHW**

IF YOU CHOOSE "CHANGE"

A number of our university professors and preachers are working hard to convince members of the churches of Christ to embrace certain changes in our faith, worship and practice. Of course, the changes suggested are the ones promoted by these very teachers. Already some of our Christian universities and a number of our congregation have made the decision to follow this route. For those still undecided, I offer some thoughts for consideration before you choose the path of change.

* To do so, you must be willing to abandon the concept of restoring the original faith and practice of the church, for the changes advocated were not a part of the original church. They are borrowed from our Baptist and Pentecostal neighbors.

* To do so, you must cut your ties with those noble saints who went before you. A preacher, congregation or school that can accept instrumental music in worship, women as church leaders, an imperfect Bible and think of their church as a denomination, would not have been accepted by those gone before. Neither would the faith and preaching of those predecessors be compatible with the advocates of change. Like oil and water they would not mix.

* To do so, you must acknowledge that the changes proposed will make you and your congregation denominational with all that adjective entails. As a denomination, your church will be no more valuable or acceptable to God than any of the 1200 other denominations men have created. In judgement He will say, "I never knew you: depart from me..." (Matt. 7:23).

* To do so, you should be prepared for the destination to which those changes will take you. Sooner or later you will find yourself alienated from and out of fellowship with those people who for some 200 years have been worshiping and serving Christ as simple Christians, and known collectively as churches of Christ.

* To do so you must be prepared to stand before the judgement seat of Christ and receive the things done in this life (II Cor. 5:10). To be there guilty of abandoning the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and having participated in causing division in the body of Christ is a fearful thought. Especially is this so when the only excuse you can muster is "people like it, or young people demanded it or it feels so wonderful or where does the Bible forbid us to do these things? "Woe to them! For they went in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). **JHW**

"When a person feels disposed to overestimate his own importance, let him remember that mankind got along very well before his birth, and that in all probability they will get along very well after his death" (Simmons).

"Nothing is so easy as to deceive one's self, for what we wish we readily believe" (Demosthenes)

SOME THINGS AN AGENT OF CHANGE CANNOT DO

Churches of Christ here in America are presently confronted with a sizeable number of preachers and educators who are determined to bring about major changes in the body of Christ. These are not anti-Christian unbelievers, nor are they members of other church bodies. They are men who claim membership among us and fill pulpits of our congregation and classrooms in our Christian Colleges. Among the things they are busily at work to change are the following:

- * The way we worship God in our public assemblies.
- * The role of women in the leadership of the church.
- * The way we approach the Bible in our efforts to determine right and wrong.
- * The way we do our work as a congregation of Christ's people.
- * The way we perceive ourselves. They reject the idea that we are the church which Christ established. They see us as just another denominational body. They have a very poor opinion of the brotherhood of churches of Christ as evidenced by the scathing criticism they continue heap upon us.
- * The manner and way in which we teach lost sinners that they must be saved.
- * The way we deal with those who embrace and promote false doctrine.
- * The name by which we identify our congregations.

Most of these agents of change are well educated men. Many preach for large, well known churches. Not a few of them hold teaching positions in our Christian Colleges. They have already gained a significant foothold among our people and have succeeded in influencing many of our younger members and a number of congregations. However successful these teachers may be in their quest to rework and reshape our people, there are some things they can never do.

* They cannot claim to be a part of the great Restoration Movement of the 19th century. They do not believe restoration is a valid way to approach Christianity.

* They can not identify themselves with the great men of the past who preached God's Word among our people. Any time they invoke the names of David Lipscomb, Austin McGary, G. H. P. Showalter, N. B. Hardeman, G. C. Brewer, C. R. Nicol, Gus Nichols, R. L. Whiteside, Otis Gatewood or any of the great men of the last 200 years, they are speaking a lie. This is true because those men all loved the church as we have known her for the last two centuries. They taught people to be saved upon confession of their faith, repentance and baptism. They worshiped each Lord's Day with acappella singing, prayers, contributions and the Lord's Supper. They all repudiated denominationalism. They all loved and honored the name Christian. They believed the Bible to be an inspired, authoritative book that determined all things spiritual for Christians.

* They can take no credit for the congregations they serve, or the schools in which they teach, for the folks who founded those churches and schools were committed heart and soul to the Church of Christ of their generation for which the promoters of change have only contempt.

* They cannot identify themselves with and take joy in the great host of missionaries who took the gospel of Christ to the nations of the world in the last century. The reason being, all of those who went out carried the same message, faith and practices held by Churches of Christ in America to the lost of humanity.

* They cannot boldly preach their message with the conviction that it is right because it is biblical. Their motive is to sow doubt, not faith. They reject the approach that looks to the Bible for "book, chapter and verse" proof of what one believes and does in Christ.

* They cannot stand in the face of the competing claims of denominationalism and present a way that is right and cannot be wrong because they don't think that such exists. Nor are they sure denominationalism is wrong.

* They cannot with confidence say "I have fought a good fight... I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7). The fact is, they have betrayed the faith that was passed down to them by those who went before them. Like Esau, they have given up their birthright for a mess of pottage (Heb. 12:16). **JHW**

“WE BESEECH YOU ON BEHALF OF CHRIST”

Paul penned these words to the Corinthian, some of whom had become alienated from the head of the church (II Cor. 5:20). Within our brotherhood today there is turmoil and confusion as the result of a self appointed band of change agents who are pressing for unscriptural changes to our faith, worship and practice as the body of Christ. In the face of this challenge, which has the potential of doing great harm to the church, the author extends the following appeal:

I. To you who are elders of God’s church: I beseech you to be faithful shepherds; to diligently protect the flock of God among you (I Pet. 5:2-3). Please don’t allow agents of change gain even the smallest foothold among your people. They are truly wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). They will promise you great things; numerical growth, an influx of young families and revitalization, but their prescription will actually bring death. It may well divide and scatter your people. It most certainly will change your congregation by leading you away from the clearly taught principles of the gospel into the world of unauthorized human ideas and opinions. Even if you gain the advantages which they promise, you will lose the favor of God and be rejected. What a terrible price to pay.

II. To you who stand before God’s people to preach his word: I beseech you to preach Christ (I Cor. 2:2), but do not neglect his teaching regarding his doctrine and his church. To do so will leave your hearers weak and anemic in faith and vulnerable to Satan’s deception. Preach the whole counsel of God, including warning your people against cunning false teachers who will lead them astray from the paths of God (Acts 20:26-31). Take time to inform yourselves regarding the message of the change agents, invest the time and energy to prepare yourselves to answer them and to defend your people from their error (Phil. 1:16). Then use your classes and sermons to make sure your brethren are properly taught and inoculated against this pernicious error. Should the agents of change appear in your congregation or even in your city, be bold and courageous to speak out against their pernicious program of change.

III. To you who work with young people: In most cases the change agenda finds early acceptance among youth workers and their charges. Please understand that your job is more than just providing entertainment and fun for the precious young people of your congregation. They are young and immature, you are older. Children don’t always know what is best for them or good for them. You are there to help them discover that. While many of your peers have eagerly embraced the call for emotionalism and excitement in worship; for an entertainment style of worship, please don’t follow them in that error. I beseech you to be faithful to God’s standard. Recognize this pattern he has provided us and follow it (II Tim. 1:13). Do your work in such a way that when those boys and girls are grown they will be faithful members of the Church of Christ and not likely to be lured away into denominational bodies.

IV. To you who are young in years: I beseech you to always be faithful to Christ and his church. Take heed to the teaching and guidance of your elders in the faith. Remember it is God’s will that “ye younger, be subject unto the elder” (I Pet. 5:5). Please remember that what your friends like and enjoy may not be what God wants from us in our worship. Respect the authority of God’s Word. It will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Do not allow vivacious and charismatic young teachers to lead you away from the faith of your fathers. The church was here long before you were born and will be here when Christ returns. We must take heed that we stay faithful to it.

V. To our sisters in Christ: I beseech you to remember that God who created you said, “Your desire shall be to your husband and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). In his divine wisdom he ordained, “Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a women to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness” (I Tim. 2:11-12). He gives you his reasons for so doing. “For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled but the woman being begirded hath fallen into transgression...”(I Tim. 2:13-14). Understand that this restriction is not simply a matter of custom, culture or tradition. The Holy Spirit directed Paul to tell us, “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). In our generation you have been liberated from virtually all the limitations that culture and social convention placed upon your predecessors. For some this has been a blessing for others it has brought

catastrophe. But remember that no matter what the social reformers may say, or regardless how liberated your peers may be, you are still under the restrictions that Christ our King has placed upon you. You cannot be his faithful child and rebel against his revealed will. Even if people arise within the church urging you to ignore those prohibitions and aspire for public leadership roles in the church, please don't heed them. Reject them as false teachers whose message will lead you astray. To be with Christ in glory, we must abide by his will in this life (Matt. 7:21).

VI. To all fellow-Christians: I beseech you to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Observe the old paths of Biblical truth, they are unchanging and totally reliable. Stand up for Jesus! For his church and his Word! "Mark them that are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling among our people and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). When the change agents come knocking, do not open the door and give bid them welcome. "They are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). **JHW**

OUR GOD IS ABLE

Throughout our nation and in many of our mission outposts unscrupulous men are imposing their unscriptural changes on hapless churches. In the face of this crisis, every faithful Christian man and woman should be eagerly volunteering to help with the defense of the Lord's church. Instead, we see a sad spectacle. Only a scattered handful are responding to the need. The majority of those who have offered their help are aged saints with limited means. But their love for the church stirs them to do what they can. With the assistance of just a thousand dedicated helpers we could build a wall around the promoters of change that would effectively block their progress. While hundreds have expressed their appreciation for our efforts and spoken words of encouragement, most have never done anything more.

When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were threatened with death for refusing to worship the king's image, they told the haughty king, "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us..." (Dan. 3:17). When Esther seemed hesitant to respond to Mordecai's urgent request for help in delivering her people, he sternly reminded her, "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place..." (Esth. 4:14). John the Baptist told the hardhearted Jews, "that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9).

We remind every brother and sister that the church belongs to Christ. It was purchased at terrible cost. It is precious to him as a bride is to her husband. In saving our souls he added us to his church so we might serve him as we make our preparation for eternity. It is a selfish, childish Christian who only thinks of what the church can do for him/her. We must ask what can I do for the church? And then do it! Our God is able to save his church with or without my help. It is my privilege and sacred duty to stand up for her. If I fail to rise to her defense, God is capable of raising up helpers from the very stones that her enemies are casting at her. If I turn my back on the church in her hour of crisis, God will raise up help from another place.

All of those Christians who have no interest in protecting the bride of Christ from those who are ravaging her should be reminded that God can save his church with or without their assistance. Interestingly while many Christians do nothing, God has raised up a friend to help us who is not yet a member of his church. He has raised up a brigade of invalids, some elderly, some infirm, all of whom are working mightily to get the word out to our brethren to beware the wolves of change who are lurking at the doors of our churches. As Paul said to the erring disciples at Corinth, "I say this to move you to shame" (I Cor. 15:34).

A hundred helpers sending \$50 per month would enable us to place this paper in the hands of every preacher and eldership here in America; send it to every missionary abroad; send it every English speaking congregation in other nations; place bound volumes of CTN in the library of every Christian School and send bundles to every school that trains preachers. This is no pet project. It is not child's play. It is no business venture. It is an emergency effort to save the church of Christ from those who would wreck and destroy her. Will you be one of our helpers? **JHW**

PREACHING GOD'S WORD IN AN AGE OF CHANGE

Whether a congregation follows the change agents into the apostasy of denominationalism or continues in the old paths of the gospel will depend in large measure on the leadership of the man in their pulpit. If he does a proper job of teaching and indoctrinating his brethren they will be strong; if he fails in his duty they will be vulnerable when false prophets come to them.

TOPICS THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED IN TODAY'S RELIGIOUS CLIMATE

To fortify and strengthen the faith of your brethren and to inoculate them against the change virus, a faithful man of God needs to prepare and present lessons that directly address the many false teaching of the change agenda. Don't be opaque; don't leave folks guessing about what you are saying to them. Warn them of the problem and prepare them. Every congregation needs to hear lessons on the following themes.

- * Preach on **grace**, showing that God's grace is conditional. To receive grace we must meet the conditions God has imposed (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 2:11-12; 3:5).
- * Preach on **faith**, showing that faith without works is dead and useless (Jas. 2:24,26).
- * Preach on **baptism** showing its importance in God's scheme of redemption. Show how the blood of Christ saves us when we obey the sacred command to "arise and be baptized and wash away (our) sins" (Acts 22:16).
- * Preach on the **necessity of obedience** to the commands of Christ. (Heb. 5:8-9).
- * Preach on the **one true church**: purchased by the blood of Christ, his bride, his kingdom, his family of the saved (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-24). Stress its superiority over every institution established by men.
- * Preach on the **sin of denominationalism** (I Cor. 1:10-15; 3:1-5).
- * Preach on God's wish and command that **all his people be united in Christ** (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:3).
- * Preach on the **proper role of women in the life of the church** that they learn in quietness and neither teach nor have dominion over men (I Tim. 2:12).
- * Preach on **true worship in spirit and in truth** (John 4:24); worship that is not based on the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:6-9), nor on emotion or subjectivism but on the solid rock of Christ's revealed Word.
- * Preach on **praising God in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with singing**, with the melody made in our hearts, not on mechanical instruments of music (Eph. 5:19).
- * Preach on the **meaning of and proper observance of the Lord's Supper**, as a memorial of Jesus' death for us (Matt. 26:26-29).
- * Preach on the **New Testament as the absolute and final authority in all matters relating to Christianity** (Matt. 28:18; John 12:48). Show that God has given it as a pattern for us to follow (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5).
- * Preach on **fellowship and show that God has specified conditions that call for a refusal of fellowship** (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:13; II Thess. 3:6; II John 9-11).
- * Preach on the **Holy Spirit** noting the many blessings the gift of the Spirit brings to the Christian, and show that no miraculous gifts or personal revelations are available today.
- * Preach on **traditions** marking the distinction between those of men (Matt. 15:9), those from God (II Thess. 2:15) and those that are simply harmless ways of fulfilling the divine will.
- * Preach on the **Bible showing the difference in the two great covenants** and that we are now amenable to the New Covenant of Christ but not to the laws and regulations of the Old (Heb. 8:6-13)
- * Present lessons **showing brethren how to read and understand the Bible**, especially how we determine right and wrong and how authority for what we believe and do is established.

* Have a lesson that illustrates the “law of silence” and show how it impacts on what we do as disciples of Christ (Heb. 7:12-14).

* Have a lesson that deals with the uniqueness of the name Christian (I Pet. 4:16) and the scripturalness of using the term church of Christ to identify our congregations (Rom. 16:16).

All of these topics are featured items on the agenda of the change agents. You must prepare your brethren before the wolf is found in the midst of the fold. “If you put the brethren in mind of these things you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine...” (I Tim . 4:6). JHW

THE DESIRE TO BE WHAT WE ARE NOT

Michael Jackson, the Black Rock star, obviously wants to appear as White. He has gone to extremes to change his skin color, the appearance of his hair, his face has been radically altered to reach his goal.

Eminem is a young White man who badly wants to be a Black rap star. Many young White males wish to identify with the Gangsta Rap culture. They deafen themselves with the music, wear the clothing, speak the vile language, practice the same crude manners.

There are men who desperately wish to be female and women who wish to be male. They wear the clothing of the opposite sex, they learn to talk and walk like their opposites. They try to fill the sexual roles their bodies were not made for. They close their eyes and stop their ears to the prohibitions God has given regarding such conduct (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27).

There are Christians who preach for non-denominational churches of Christ who crave to be accepted as members of the denominational community. They speak of their “denomination,” they attend denominational ministerial alliances, they participate in denominational services and crusades, they relish their degrees from denominational seminaries. They walk, talk and act like denominational preachers...they even preach like them.

We shake our head at Michael Jackson’s bizarre conduct. We wonder about Eminem and his kind. We view the homosexuals and transvestites with disgust. How then shall we view those brethren who are ashamed of their faith, their identity with the church which Christ built and who gladly sell their souls in order to be what God did not intend for them to be? True, Jackson and Eminem have been successful in their quest for money and fame. The homosexuals have been very successful in their quest for acceptance and power. True, some of our change agents have been successful in the eyes of the world. But to purchase their fame they have forsaken the ways of Jehovah (Jer. 2:13). They have abandoned the old paths of New Testament Christianity for the ways of men (Jer. 6:16). Rather than applaud them we should reject them (II John 10-11). Rather than honor them we should pity them for they have exchanged the true for the false, the genuine for the counterfeit, that which is eternal for that which is temporal and passing. Their conduct is as bizarre and disgusting as the others who like them are not content to be what God made them to be. JHW

“A new Decalogue has been adopted by the neo-Christians of our day. The first words of which reads “Thou shalt not disagree,” and a new set of Beatitudes too, which begins, “Blessed are they that tolerate everything, for they shall not be made accountable for anything.” It is now the accepted thing to talk over religious differences in public with the understanding that no one will try to convert another or point out errors in his belief. Imagine Moses agreeing to take part in a panel discussion with Israel over the golden calf; or Elijah engaging in a gentlemanly dialogue with the prophets of Baal...Darkness and light can never be brought together by talk. Some things are not negotiable” (A. W. Tozer).

INOCULATING YOUR CONGREGATION AGAINST THE CHANGE DISEASE

Sooner or later every congregation of God's people will be confronted by someone wishing to promote the agenda of the "change movement." Rather than wait until the dangerous moment arrives, we need to act now to inoculate our members so they will recognize the symptoms and reject it upon sight. The following suggestions will help to immunize your congregation beforehand.

- * Your preacher needs to present an extended series of lessons on the fundamentals of the faith. He needs to touch on every point of faith, worship and practice that is being challenged by the promoters of change. This should be repeated on a yearly basis.
- * Lessons need to be presented that remind brethren of the danger of false teachers and false doctrine.
- * Elders could plan a retreat for the men of the church where the dangers of the change movement could be pointed out and the specific errors of it be discussed.
- * Elders might wish to invite a guest speaker who is informed on this issue to come and spend a week end with the congregation. It would be most important that he be a faithful man of wisdom, experienced in dealing with error, lest he do more harm than good.
- * Each year a quarter of Bible Classes should be devoted to studying the distinctives of the church revealed in the Scripture.
- * A series of tracts should be purchased that address the many points under attack by the promoters of change. Each week each family should receive a copy and be asked to read it. It could then be the basis of the Bible class or sermon the following week.
- * A mature sister whose faith is strong and whose understanding of the Word is substantial should be assigned to teach a course for the Ladies' Bible Class on God's plan for women in the church. This should address the challenges of those who wish to place women in leadership roles. The same materials should be presented in any other classes for women from highschool and up.
- * Books addressing the errors of the change movement and others setting forth the Biblical basis for our faith, worship and practice should be purchased and placed in the church library. Notice of these should be placed in the church bulletin and perhaps mentioned in the announcements. In larger congregations several copies of significant books should be ordered.
- * The elders should have a sit down discussion with their minister and other staff members, especially youth and campus workers making it clear that they do not accept the agenda of the change agents, nor will they allow it to be introduced into the life of the congregation.
- * A similar session should be conducted with deacons and all Bible class teachers.
- * A statement from the elders should be presented to the congregation, preferably in person on Sunday morning stating their position and determination to not allow the change program to be brought into the church. This should be printed in the church bulletin or mailed to each family of the congregation.
- * It should be made a matter of policy that no one will be considered for work with the congregation who is sympathetic with the change agenda.
- * The same rule should apply to anyone considered for an invitation as a guest speaker.
- * Elders must stay on high alert for the foreseeable future. Such movements take years to run their course. The fact that a church was rock solid ten years ago is no guarantee that it will be so ten years hence.
- * No brother should be added to the eldership who is unsure of his convictions on this crucial matter. A divided leadership will eventually be a defeated leadership.

Elders, remember that they who hesitate or procrastinate may well lose that which is most precious to them. **JHW**

WHY SOME PREACHERS ABANDON THE OLD PATHS

It is distressing to see men who for years have faithfully preached the gospel, turn their backs on the truths they formerly proclaimed and embrace the errors of the change movement. Some enmeshed in this movement are the sons or grandsons of notable Christians who lived and died in the faith. You may ask how can this be? What makes a man turn away from the old paths of Bible truth? Several factors may cause the corrupting of the faith of a man or woman. Consider the following:

- * For others it was some influential and dominate preacher under whose influence they fell.
- * For some it was the school where they got their higher education. Many of our Christian schools employ men who see their mission to be to undermine and change the faith of their students.
- * Some lost their faith while pursuing higher education in secular or denominational schools. Their faith was not sufficient to resist the pressures of their non-Christian peers.
- * Some gave up their old faith in order to gain the acceptance and approval of the denominational world. They crave its bigness, glamor and respectability.
- * Some grew weary of standing alone on the Word of God and elected to go with the current of the culture. They stay among us but they tailor they message to please the worldly folks among us.
- * Some adjust their faith in order to keep their jobs. When congregations absorb the ways of the world, they want a preacher who will tell them that such is OK. If their preacher will not do so they will find another. Rather they lose their comfortable and well-paying positions such men modify their message.
- * Some are so deficient in Bible knowledge and in knowledge of our past history that they blindly stray from the path of truth and fall into the ditch of error.
- * Some are in the church of Christ by accident of birth. By that I mean they were born into a family that were members of the church. As youngsters they were baptized but they never had a deep commitment, love or loyalty to the Lord and his church. After a while they come to despise the church. Yet they stay among us, spreading their personal venom and hated for the church of their youth.
- * Some of them have had a bad experience in the church. Many a man has been attacked and mauled by some of our ultraconservative guardians for some shibboleth he failed to pronounce correctly. Sometimes such victims assume that all members of the church are of that same cut. Often such an experience turns one against the church.
- * There are likely other reasons we could suggest but these pretty well cover the field. **JHW**

WHY DO WE NOT TITHE?

Dear Bro. John: Why do our churches not tithe? S. Jagger

Dear Bro. Jagger: The Hebrews, living under the Law of Moses, were command to tithe i.e., give one tenth of their income to the support of the priesthood (Num. 18:21). We Christians are not under the law of Moses (Heb. 8:6-13). We are subjects of Christ and his New Testament. We are to obey all things that he commanded (Matt. 28:20). A careful study of the New Testament will show that tithing is not taught there. Our teaching is, that "on the first day of the week we lay by in store" to meet the needs of God's work (I Cor. 16:1-2). We are give according as we purpose in our hearts and without grudging or necessity (II Cor. 9:7). This does not mean that we Christians should feel comfortable about giving less than those Hebrews. Rather it means that we give because we love God and want to do so. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7). Many denominational churches press tithing because their members do not give generously and they feel it is the only way that they can get adequate funds from them. Others do not understand that we are no longer under the Law of Moses. Churches of Christ, follow the New Testament and do not tithe. **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 agent 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

"Congregations must justify their existence. If they only bring people together to be "very much pleased," why, the lecture bureaus will contract for all that. "Did you worship? Were you edified? Did the Lord speak to you? Did you speak to Him? Do you mean more seriously to be pure, honest, upright, generous, manly, holy, from that you did and heard today?" These are the questions which the best part of mankind feel to be proper, and to which we must have affirmative replies" (John Hall)

DECONSTRUCTING A CAPPELLA, CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

For a century and a half our brethren have striven to improve and refine our a cappella singing. Men with fine musical training and Biblical knowledge edited excellent, scripturally sound hymnals. We taught our members to sight read and how to sing four part harmony. We trained our song leaders how to pitch their selections correctly and properly count the time. We instructed them how to choose their selections and coordinate them with the lesson of the hour. We had singing schools and practice sessions that we might truly teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual and sing with grace in our hearts (Col. 3:16).

In days past our religious neighbors often visited our assemblies and were impressed with our ability to sing the lovely hymns of praise to Jehovah in a way that thrilled those present. Often they commented positively on the quality of and uplifting nature of the singing.

Now a new fad is sweeping through our churches. Some have borrowed from their neighbors the practice of projecting the words of their hymns on screens before the congregation. In a recent service in a large congregation that used such equipment I observed the following:

- * Of the nine songs sung, only two were traditional hymns known by all. Seven were choruses popular in youth camps and devotions.
- * The words of songs were projected without musical scores or notations.
- * While each pew had an ample supply of hymnals, the numbers were not announced or posted.
- * Therefore, many of the older members sat and observed while the few who knew the melodies sang for them.
- * The youth devotional songs were difficult to sing, some with unique variations and rhythms. The teens and young adults knew them; most of those above 50 did not.
- * The song leader had a good voice and knew how to pitch and lead the songs properly. Rather than stand on the podium where he could be seen by all and direct them, he chose to stand on the floor where only those in the first few isles could see his hands.

The hymns of the church should be a tie that binds the old and the young of the church together. Today I recall my mother singing, Farther Along and The Old Rugged Cross and other sweet hymns as she rocked her babies to sleep. I remember my grandfather who was an elder, singing the great hymns of Zion. But the campfire songs, known and loved by the young, are unknown by the senior members of the church. Rather than being a unifying experience, they create a chasm between these vital elements of the congregations.

We do not say that projecting the words on a screen for all to see is wrong. Really it is no different than each having the words printed in a book. It is the combination of all the above that is detrimental to the singing of the church. Such an environment hinders rather than helps the song worship of the church.

It is not remarkable that promoters of such programs need a praise team to take up the slack and supply that which has been lost from their congregational singing. Very likely some will eventually have a choir to provide the quality singing they desire. Still, others will feel the need to bring in a musician and an instrument to make up the difference. An acorn planted eventually becomes an oak tree, but a weed seed will grow into a noxious weed. Seeds of change will eventually produce their fruit. JHW

*“He who shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity, will revolutionize the world...”
(Franklin).*

“In the true, original...religion of Jesus Christ and in this alone, all the divided religions of Christendom find their union, their repose, their support. Find out His mind, His character, His will; and in His greatness we shall rise above our littleness....” (Dean Stanley).

“All history is incomprehensible without Christ” (Renan).

ASPECTS OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

- * Acceptable worship must be **Biblical**, i.e. according to the instructions God has given us. Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).
- * It must be **reverent**, i.e., showing proper respect and deference to the great God we are approaching (Heb. 12:13).
- * It must be with **pure hearts and lives**. "Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jas. 4:8).
- * Worship should be with **joyful hearts**. "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Ps. 63:5).
- * God expects our worship to proceed **from our minds as well as from our emotions**. We must worship with the spirit and the understanding (I Cor. 14:15).
- * Pleasing worship will be **whole-hearted**. We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind (Matt. 22:37). Half-heart or indifferent worship is not acceptable to Him.
- * True worship will be **offered with enthusiasm**. "Serve Jehovah with gladness" (Ps. 100:2). Like David, we should be glad when they say to us, "Let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Ps. 122:1).
- * We should worship the Lord **with the best we have to offer**. "But whatsoever hath a blemish that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you" (Lev. 22:20). Give God your best attention and effort in worship and your best gifts as offerings.

Remember that God is not so desperate for worship that He will accept any scraps or second rate efforts we toss Him. There is no greater blessing than to come before the Creator in adoring worship and be accepted by Him. There is no greater loss than to come before him in an unacceptable way and be rejected. **JHW**

DO WE HAVE A CHOICE?

"Join the church of your choice," say some preachers. This expression is contrary to God's Word. There are a number of things in Christianity about which there can be no difference of opinion. Paul names seven of them in Ephesians 4:4-5. There is:

- * **One Body** or church (Ephesians 1:22). It is the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) for He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28) and built it (Matthew 16:18). We have no more choice of churches to be members of, than of Gods to believe on.
- * **One Spirit** that dwells in the heart of every saved person (Romans 8:9).
- * **One Hope**. The same hope is held before all men. It is heaven and eternal life therein (John 14:1-3).
- * **One Lord Jesus Christ**. He only can save you.
- * **One Faith** or system of doctrine that must be accepted, believed and followed. This faith is the Word of God which is able to save our souls (James 1:19). There is but one source of the one faith, that is the Bible (Romans 10:17). Hence there cannot be different creeds and beliefs to choose from. We must accept the Scripture as the only authority in Christianity.
- * **One Baptism**, which is a burial in water (Romans 6:3-4; John 3:23), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). There being only one baptism, then we cannot choose concerning sprinkling or pouring or Holy Spirit baptism.
- * **One God** who is over all. You must believe in Him exclusively (Hebrews. 11:6).

Do we really have a choice? There is only one way to heaven (John 14:6). Our only choice is to accept Christ and obey his commands, or refuse Him, thus choosing hell (Heb. 5:9). **JHW**

"When I go to the house of God I do not want amusement: I want the doctrine which is according to godliness. I want to hear the remedy against the harassing of my guilt and the disorder of my affections. I want to be led from weariness and disappointment to that goodness which filleth the hungry soul. I want to have light upon the mystery of Providence; to be taught how the judgements of the Lord are right; how I shall be prepared for duty and for trial; how I may fear God all the days of my life, and close them in peace" (John Mason).

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

From the New Testament we learn not only that early Christians worshiped God, but we are told what they did in their worship. On the Lord's Day they assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). Unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine were taken in memory of the body and blood of Jesus, in his death on Calvary (Matt. 26:26-29). Through Christ, they offered up the fruit of their lips as a sacrifice of praise to God (Heb. 13:15). This, of course, was in their prayers and hymns. They sang and made melody in their hearts unto God (Eph. 5:19). They presented their freewill offerings to the Lord (I Cor. 16:1-2). The teaching of God's Word was an important aspect of their worship (Acts 20:7).

Justin Martyr was born in Samaria about 100 AD. In 132 he became a follower of Christ. In ca. 152 he wrote, describing the worship of the church of his day. "...on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president (the one presiding, jhw) verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought (the strong wine was diluted according to Jewish custom, jhw), and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, though sickness or any other cause, are in want...But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead" (**First Apology** chapter 67). In his **Questions and Answers to the Orthodox**, Justin writes, "Simply singing is not agreeable to children, but singing with lifeless instruments and with dancing and clapping; on which account the use of this kind of instruments and of others agreeable to children is removed from the songs in the churches, and there is left simply singing," (**Question 107**).

Then came the apostasy predicted by Paul (I Tim. 4:1-3; II Thess. 2:1-9). Every aspect of faith and worship was corrupted over the thousand years of Catholicism's dominance. Courageous Protestants challenged Rome's authority in the 14th century and attempted to reform the faith and worship of the church of their day.

Here in America, Alexander Campbell, who along with his father Thomas, had launched a "Back to the Bible" movement to restore the original aspects of Christianity. Sometime prior to 1835 young Campbell visited a small congregation of Christians in rural Virginia. In his memorandum book he noted the following things about their worship. After greeting each other in a familiar and cordial manner, they began with the hymn, Christ the Lord is Risen Today. Then a brother read the history of the crucifixion of Messiah. A brother was then called upon to pray. The congregation pronounced the final Amen. A brother then arose and read a passage from the Epistles. They then sang a hymn in preparation for the Lord's Supper. The brother presiding reminded the assembly of why they observed this memorial supper and then offered thanks and distributed the elements to each member. After another brief hymn, a brother offered a prayer before and for a contribution was collected from the poor and the preaching of the gospel. After a few more readings and hymns they concluded the meeting with a benediction. (Alexander Campbell. **The Christian System** (pp. 290-292), Standard Pub. Co. Cincinnati, no date).

In 1956 the author confessed Christ and was united with him in baptism at the Woodbine Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee. On Sunday mornings we assembled for Bible study and worship. We usually sang two songs, had a prayer and then engaged in some 45 minutes of Bible Study. After a brief intermission, we took our places for worship. Bro. Aubrey Yearwood led us in hymns. There was a scripture reading and prayer. Bro. Parker French delivered a lesson from the Bible, followed by an invitation for any who needed prayer or who wished to confess their faith and be baptized. We then sang a hymn in preparation for the Lord's Supper. The brethren expressed prayers for the bread and the fruit of the vine and served us. With a closing prayer we were dismissed. It was not uncommon for there to be responses to the invitation hymn. Christians confessing sins were prayed for and penitent sinners who confessed Christ were baptized.

For some 2000 years churches of Christ have worship this way. There are no valid reasons for changes in the content of our worship. It is thoroughly biblical, practical and easily implemented in any age or society. Those who love the Lord are happy and content to worship him now as did their predecessors in the faith 50, 170, or 2000 years ago. **JHW**

KNOWING AND DOING GOD'S WILL IN OUR MODERN AGE

Christ expects those who preach his word and lead his people to teach converts to "observe all things whatsoever ... (he) commanded" (Matt. 28:20). His holy Word will judge us and all of humanity in the last day (John 12:48). He describes his Word as a "pattern" to which we are to conform (II Tim. 1:13). He expect us, as he did Moses, to build his church according to the pattern shown us (Heb. 8:5). Preachers are intrusted with the responsibility to preach "the word" (II Tim. 4:1-2); not just any word, but that sacred word delivered to us by the Spirit of God (John 16:13). To respect God's Word is to respect God who spoke it. To disregard His Word is to disregard Him.

Having given us a written revelation of His will, God expects us to honor it as our only standard for our faith and practice as Christians. God's Word takes precedence over culture, tradition, popularity, public opinion, majority opinion or the pronouncements of scholars. It does not allow for adjustments to new generational interests such as Baby Boomers, Generation Xers etc.

Lip service to the authority of the Bible is inadequate (Matt. 7:21). So is partial respect that honors only those precepts and principles that please us or are convenient. God demands that His Word be preached and honored "in season and out of season" (II Tim. 4:2).

The message of the Bible is the same for our post-Christian age as it was for those in apostolic times. His Word will never pass away (Matt. 24:34). God's Word is as changeless as is He (I Jehovah change not) This basic, primary lesson needs to be instilled in hear and mind of every young preacher (and older ones as well) and proclaimed in every congregation of the Church of Christ in America, not just once, but repeatedly until every member knows that our faith is governed by, restricted by and regulated by the Word of God and that alone. We must be reminded that we may not add to nor take away from the Word either by tampering with the written message or in our response to it. We must obeys its precepts, we must respect its silence. To do more or less is to fail to respect the authority of His Word. **JHW**

GOD WAS WORSHIPED WITH INSTRUMENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. CAN WE NOT DO THE SAME?

Dear CT: It is quiet true that God was worshiped with songs accompanied by instruments in the Mosaic era. He was also worshiped with animal sacrifices. Could we used them now? If not, why? He was served by a priestly caste, drawn exclusively from one tribe. Can we do that now? Why? He was served with incense? Could we do that? It was an act of religion, under that system, that all males should be circumcised else they could not come into His presence. Could we practice that now?

To be a Christian means to follow Christ and be under his authority (Matt. 28:18). To be obedient to his word is the significance of confessing him as "Lord" (Rom. 10:9-10). Remember, Jesus asked? Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say? (Luke 6:46). Bristling won't answer the question. I seek to bind nothing on you, but I do seek to expound the message of Christ as it is written. **JHW**

WHY HAVE A GOSPEL INVITATION?

Recently the author learned of a congregation that had decided to no longer offer a gospel invitation to sinners at the close of their public services. Such is a reflection of the times in which we live and says more about a congregation than they would care to admit.

First, we should point out that having an invitation song such as we are used to is an American tradition. Being a tradition we must not make this practice a matter of Christian fellowship. It is not commonly done in most parts of the world. There are good reasons, however, why this tradition evolved and has prevailed for the last 165 years. On the basis of these practical considerations and the great good that has resulted from this practice, I urge us not to abandon it.

1. It gives us an opportunity to tell all present what they must do to be saved. Surely nothing is more important than that. All men need to know the answer to life's greatest question (Acts 16:30).
2. Almost always there will be present in the assembly someone who does not know what he needs to do to receive pardon. If no adults are there who need this information, at least the youngsters do. Otherwise they may well grow up in a congregation and never learn the plan of salvation. Such would be tragic.
3. It is a valuable practice because it reminds all present of the everlasting invitation of Jesus, that sinners come to him for forgiveness (Matthew 11:28). Sometimes folks get so tangled up in sin and so discouraged with their failure that they despair and assume that there is no hope for them. The invitation reminds them once again that a loving father waits with open arms to receive the prodigal home (Luke 15:20-24).
4. It is good to have an invitation each time the church assembles because some folks are so timid and reticent that they would never come to a preacher on their own initiative requesting baptism or prayers. They tend to think such would be an imposition on their part.
5. Our invitation says to sinners, that we care; that we are concerned for their souls. Our invitation hymns exhort and encourage them to flee to the arms of safety (Colossians 3:16).
6. Our invitational appeal distinguishes us from the dead and lifeless denominational bodies that have no salvation to offer. Churches that believe that faith only saves, need no invitation. Those who have embraced liberal theology see no moral responsibility on man's part, nor saving power in the gospel message and no need for salvation. They have no invitation to offer. God has given us the greatest blessing in the world and duty demands that we share it with the world (Romans 1:14-15).
7. The invitation constantly keeps before our face our primary purpose for existence: i.e., to preach the gospel to every creature, so they can believe, be baptized and be saved (Mark 16:15-16).
8. In this way we affirm our faith in the Master's power to save. We declare our faith and loyalty to the gospel of salvation which so many have repudiated. In short, it says we are not ashamed of the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16-17).

It is likely that those preachers who have decided not to extend an invitation, have reached their conclusion for some of the following reasons: They don't really expect anyone to respond to their preaching. Much of what is presented as sermons is so thin and watered down that likely no sinner could learn what he needed to do, much less be stirred to action by it. Rather than throw out the invitation, let's revive the pulpit. Preachers need to know that their hearers want gospel sermons, filled with Scripture and delivered with power. Those who cannot or will not deliver such lessons should step aside for those who can! "Preach the word, be urgent..." (II Timothy 4:2). When such is done, responses will be evident.

It takes lots of personal teaching through the week to have responses at the assembly. If we take our message to the highways and hedges, there will be prospects for conversion in the pews on Lord's Day (Luke 14:23).

Some are so filled with denominational ideas and concepts that they really do not perceive the responsibilities incumbent upon a gospel preacher to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). To them he is a speech maker, an entertainer and social organizer. Exhorting sinners to be saved is outside their realm of expertise. Perhaps, if our preachers studied more of

the great gospel sermons of faithful men of God and less of denominational pastors, there would be more success in their preaching efforts.

A few, I fear, have lost their faith in the Scriptures which declare men to be a sinner (Romans 3:23); therefore separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and in need of salvation (I Timothy 2:4). To such men sin is an adjustment problem and psychology is the solution. They have little or no faith in the power of the gospel to save a soul. How sad!

This author never thought he would see the day when congregations would abandon such a useful practice. He shudders to think where the trend will lead. May God help us to be faithful to Christ and his will!

"O God, open the eyes of those who preach your word that they may clearly see their purpose and duty to save dying sinners, snatching them from the fire. Give them strength and conviction that they will never forget their holy mission. In Jesus name, Amen." JHW

THE IMPACT OF BAD BOOKS

John Murray wrote, "A dose of poison can do its work but once, but a bad book can go on poisoning minds for generations."

Each year thousands of books are published. Among our brethren a steady stream of new titles are issued. Religious books come in many varieties. They range from excellent to harmless; from worthless to dangerous.

The champions of the change movement are issuing a raft of books promoting their peculiar tenets. All of these books are damaging to the people of God and the church for which Jesus died. Their books attack the basic foundations of the church. They challenge her uniqueness. They discredit her past achievements. They confuse and mislead her young and novice members. They are books that give aid and comfort to the enemies of Christ. They cause discord and division in the body of Christ by their misleading message.

Change agents will come and go. Many of them will leave the church for the inviting fields of denominationalism. In a few years all of them will go the way of all flesh. But the poison books they have written will live on to damage souls for generations yet to come.

"A book may be compared to your neighbor: if it be good, it cannot last too long; if bad, you cannot get rid of it too early" (Brooke). "There is no worse robber than a bad book" (Italian Proverb). "A bad book is the worse that it cannot repent—it has not been the devil's policy to keep the masses of mankind in ignorance; but finding that they will read, he is doing all in his power to poison their books" (E. N. Kirk). "Bad books are like intoxicating drinks...The safeguard against each is the same—total abstinence from all that intoxicates whether mind or body" (Tyron Edwards). Jesus rightly said, "Take heed how ye hear" (Lk 8:18) and we could add take heed what and how you read.

May God deliver us from false teachers and the books they write! JHW

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Tim. 3:16).

*"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart"
(Jer. 15:16).*

CHRIST'S BIRTH: MORE THAN TREES, GIFTS AND PARTIES

The Christmas season is upon us, complete with trees, decorations, parties and gifts. For many Americans it is primarily a secular occasion. Most churches provide special services honoring Christ's birth. Even those clergymen who do not believe his claims to be descended from heaven and virgin born, participate in the joyful occasion. Non-Christian business men relish the season since it provides the major portion of their yearly sales. Devoted Christians read the story of Christ's birth and see in it lessons important for every day of the year.

- * We are reminded of God's love and concern for us. He so loved the world that he gave us only begotten Son (John 3:16).
- * That Jesus came into the world as a "child born," demonstrates God's love and respect for the innocence of babies. Contrary to popular belief, they are not born with Adamic sin. Christ said we must become as little children if we would enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). This implies their innocence.
- * In a society where one of three babies conceived is legally aborted, we are reminded of the sacredness of innocent human life. Every child is made in the image of God, whether in or out of the womb. (Gal. 1:26-27).
- * Christ's birth reminds us of God's concern for woman. Through woman came sin and its deadly consequences. God redeemed womanhood by allowing Mary to bring the savior into the world. We are saved through her child-bearing" (I Tim. 2:13-15). In Christ, women were saved from the degradation of the pagan world. Modern women living in our Christianized western society can hardly imagine the low estate their sisters occupied in ancient society. Before Christ, they were little more than the chattel of men. Now there is no male or female in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28). The golden rule of Messiah brought them untold benefits as men obey their Lord by given honor unto them as unto the "weaker vessel" and "joint heirs of the grace of life" (I Pet. 3:27). This story also illustrates God's respect for moral purity in that he chose a virgin to be the mother of his Son (Luke 1:34). God put a premium on sexual virtue for all and so should we (I Thess. 4:3-4).
- * The birth of Christ teaches us God's respect for manhood and fatherhood. He gave Joseph the responsibility of providing for and protecting the infant Savior. Responsible fatherhood is a commodity in short supply in contemporary America. We need fathers like Abraham who will command their children to keep the way of Jehovah (Gen. 18:19) and who will "nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).
- * The nativity of our Lord demonstrates God's respect for and interest in the family. His son was placed in a loving, caring, devout family with mother, father, and siblings. We too must appreciate and respect the family. It is the strength of the church and society and the hope for the future well-being of the race.
- * In the birth of Christ, we see God's respect for the poor of the earth. He could as easily have sent his son in to the home of a rich and noble family. Instead, he chose a humble family in a poor community to receive the blessing. The righteous "poor are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2:5). The poor were not neglected when Christ began to preach the good news of his coming kingdom (Matt. 11:5).
- * God's appreciation for labor and hard work are reflected in his allowing Jesus to grow up as a carpenter with his foster-father Joseph (Mark 6:3). There is dignity in labor. Working with one's hands is not shameful (Ephesians 4:28). Every child should be taught the shame of laziness (Pro. 6:6-11) and that it is his duty to provide for his own (I Tim. 5:8).
- * The story of Jesus' nativity reminds us that there is a place for people of all stations in the Lord's kingdom. There were the lowly shepherds (Luke 2:8-13) and the wise kings (Matt. 2:1). So today, the gospel is for every ethnic group (Matt. 28:19). With God's people there can be no respect of persons (Acts 10:35).
- * This timeless story tells us of our desperate plight as sinners before a just God. If we were to be saved, it was necessary that "Christ die for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). God knew full well that his only Son must endure the cruel cross of Calvary before salvation could be accomplished. "Since then, the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself...partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15). This Jesus was not forced to do; rather "he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death..." (Phil. 2:7-8).

The Christian's commitment to Christ is expressed 365 days of each year. The one day celebration is best suited for the secularists. JHW

LENT: WHY WE DO NOT OBSERVE IT

Our Roman Catholic, and Anglican neighbors along with a few others are celebration their Lenten season. If you wonder just what all of this means, I offer the following information. The term "Lent" derives from the Old English "lencten" which means "spring." It is forty days of fasting before the celebration of Easter in those churches. It is supposed to be a time of penance wherein communicants abstain from festivities, and give themselves to alms-giving and more than usual time to religious exercises. Thus many churches have special services during these days. Until 1966 Catholics were expected to fast during lent, but that rule has been lifted. The idea of fasting was derived from the fact that Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness. It is noteworthy that the Bible is utterly silent about Christians observing a forty day fast prior to Easter. In fact it is silent about the observation of an Easter holy day. This practice was unknown to Christians of the first three centuries. The **Catholic Encyclopedia** states that "Irenaeus about the year 190 knew nothing of any Easter fast of forty day" (Vol. 9, p. 152). The earliest mention of the forty days in the Canons of Nicea, (325 A.D.), although the practice was not fully developed in the Roman church until the 7th century (Ibid.). While some devout souls may have truly fasted during this period of penance, most of us have known folks who gave up "butter, or sugar, or smoking, or liquor or some similar thing" as their fasting for the forty days. Even in the beginning of the practice, practitioners ate one meal per day, a vegetarian diet for the duration.

Because it is not authorized by Christ (Matt. 28:20); Because it is a human tradition devised by men and imposed on worshipers (Matt. 15:6-9); Because Christ nowhere commands us to fast for religious purposes; Because Paul warns against the observance of special days, months, seasons and years (Gal. 4:10-11); Because we are not to add to the word of God (Prov. 30:6) we do not observe the religious season of Lent. We are however to confess our sins and ask forgiveness on a regular basis (Matt. 6:12; Jas. 5:16). We are to be truly sorry for our sins. We are to daily remember that Jesus died for us on the cross and was resurrected. Each week we remember this in our Lord's Day assembly and the Lord's Supper. Let us be happy and content with being simply Bible Christians, nothing more nor less. JHW

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Easter. It introduces the "Holy Week" for Roman Catholics and those who follow their tradition. It commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the people waved palm branches praising and welcoming him (John 12:13). This holy day with its elaborate services dates from the 4th century A.D. (**Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church**, p. 1008). Among the ceremonies observed on this day are the blessing of palm branches used by participants, a procession representing Jesus' entrance into the city. This is usually graced with a carved representation of Christ, an ornate crucifix, a copy of the Gospels, or a carved figure of one seated upon a donkey. The elaborate ritual dates from the middle ages, although it is now much subdued in the Western world. Modern clerics now call the day, "Passion Sunday."

While Jesus certainly did enter Jerusalem riding on the fold of a donkey, neither he nor the apostles instructed us to have a special holy day and services to commemorate it. The traditions and ceremonies of this day are the inventions of men. As Christians we assemble on the first day of every week just as the early Christians did (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). We remember our Lord's death on the cross. We celebrate his resurrection. We praise his greatness and goodness. We study his word and worship as he has directed. We have no other special holy days since Christ, the founder and head of the did not teach us to have them (II John 9-11). JHW

"Add thou not to his words lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6)

THE CHURCH IN LILLIPUT

Perhaps in childhood you read Jonathan Swift's book, **Gulliver's Travels**. What is now a fascinating children's story was originally intended as a satirical critique of the petty politics of Europe and England. In the story, normal sized Lemuel Gulliver was shipwrecked and woke to find himself on the sandy beach of the kingdom of Lilliput. The inhabitants of this kingdom were remarkable for their small, match-like size. Whilst Gulliver was unconscious, the tiny folk of Lilliput had bound him with their thread like ropes and pegs, attempting to bring him under their control.

In the author's parable, the Lilliputians are "little men marked by moral pettiness, trivializing pretense and obsession with pompous 'points of honor'" (S. Fields). They sought to control the giant in their midst and force him to act in accordance with their will. The burning issue that dominated the thinking of the Lilliputians was the proper way to break an egg. Should one crack the large end or the small end of the egg? Endless wars were fought over this profoundly foolish question.

In the religion of Christ we too have our Lilliputians. The church is like Gulliver, a great body of people whose outreach is greater than any social, ethnic or national group. Its identity is greater than any single preacher, school or clique of men. Like Gulliver, the church is no threat to others. She seeks only to do them good. But there are "little men" in our midst whose vision of Christianity is pinched and narrow. They feel they alone have a proper understanding of truth, that they alone know what is best for the church. None but those of their circle can be entrusted to lead the way. Although they are few in number, they presume to speak for the whole church. They seek to bind their ideas and opinions on the great brotherhood of Christians. They seek to impose their way by intimidation. By carefully monitoring the affairs of brethren and congregations they gather up scraps of information with which they can accuse those who refuse to conform to their dictates. With shrill voice and pointed finger they brand a brother a liberal or false teacher whose only crime may well be to ignore their demands. When elders do not adopt their agenda they pronounce them and their congregation unfaithful and work to tarnish their reputation and standing among the brethren. Good works that they do not appreciate, understand or control are often the subject of attack. Their toxic pens spread the accusations far and wide. Conform or be destroyed say the Lilliputians. The egg must be opened this way and no other! Sad to say they do have some negative influence upon the church. Some, fearing the wrath of the Lilliputians, refrain from undertaking or supporting some good works, or from speaking out on some matter. Others, despising the pretensions of the little folk, choose the opposite extreme of liberalism. This they do just to demonstrate their unwillingness to be controlled by Lilliputians.

Lilliputians live and die, leaving nothing positive or constructive behind them. History will show they exhausted their talent and energy trying to bind and impose their will upon the church and their fellow Christians and how they quarreled over insignificant questions. Gulliver looked with pity on the poor little folk of Lilliput. They did not realize how foolish their efforts really were. So today we must pity those Lilliputians among us who make war over the "egg-issue" and devote themselves to restraining others from doing good in the name of Jesus. **JHW**

"Victory belongs to the most persevering" (Napoleon).

"Those who today embrace in fellowship folks who use instrumental music in worship will eventually allow instruments in the worship of their congregations. They have surrendered any meaningful basis for opposing it."

"Let the names of those who betray the church be written in stone that we may never forget their shameful deeds."

A PORTRAIT OF ULTRA-CONSERVATIVES

In all movements, be they civic, political, educational, social or religious you will have a broad spectrum of thought and behavior. On one extreme are those who are liberal, on the other are those who are ultraconservative. This has long been a problem for the Lord's church. The following characteristics come to mind when we contemplate our ultra conservatives:

- * Rather than pursuing peace (I Pet. 3:11), they love conflict and controversy.
- * Rather than meekness and humility (I Pet. 5:5), they often reflect arrogance and pride in their profession.
- * Rather than kindness, gentleness and patience (II Pet. 1:6-7), they reflect bitterness, harshness and impatience.
- * Rather than being long-suffering with those with whom they disagree (Eph. 4:2), they are eager to brand them and be rid of them.
- * Rather than trying to understand another brother's point of view, they are closed minded and determined to destroy him.
- * Rather than using speech filled with grace, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6), they commonly use harsh, denigrating names and epithets to discredit those who reject their dictates.
- * Rather than building up the kingdom of Christ, they devote all their time and energy to their negative work of finding flaws and attacking others.
- * Rather than taking time to salvage a brother, a church, a good work that has veered from the Bible way (Jude 22-23), they rush to attack and destroy them.
- * Rather than being heart-broken and grief stricken when a brother or church is caught in the snare of error (Phil.3:18), they gleefully rush to dispatch them.
- * Rather than looking for the good a brother, a church or a project is doing they spend their time searching for some flaw, real or imagined.
- * Rather than simply teaching God's Word, they promote their opinions, ideas and deductions about the Word as of equal value with the Bible.
- * Rather than granting other brethren the freedom and liberty to study, think and conclude for themselves about God's message, they decide what must be believed and set about to enforce their conclusions on all others.
- * Rather than seeing themselves as sinners, needing mercy, they think of themselves as detectives and law enforcement officers.
- * Rather than seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10), they devote themselves to seeking out and flailing fellow Christians who do not stand in their small circle.
- * Rather than concentrating on those broad, basic truths of the Bible, they much prefer to focus on the odd and incidental things that are often matters of dispute and misunderstanding.
- * Rather than loving the brotherhood (I Pet. 2:17), they are at war with the brotherhood...all save the handful that think as they do.
- * Rather than work for unity of congregation and the brotherhood (Eph. 4:3), they promote strife and division.
- * Rather than commending what others are doing they prefer to criticize them.
- * Rather than concede their mistakes and errors of interpretation they stoutly defend them and attack those who dare challenge their conclusions, or who refuse to be governing by them.
- * Rather than building up and strengthen congregations (Eph. 4:16), they generally succeed in wrecking them and scattering their members .
- * Rather than "cover a multitude of sins" as love should do (I Pet. 4:8), they delight in uncovering and displaying the sins of others.

- * Rather than openly confessing their sins, they often hide them and direct attention to the sins of others.
- * Rather than extending grace, mercy and forgiveness to erring brothers, they much prefer to execute judgment upon them.
- * Rather than proclaim the grace and mercy of God they prefer to preach the judgment and punishment of God.
- * Rather than explore and find new ways to do God's work and advance his cause, they prefer to find fault with those who do.
- * Rather than lead the church to become a large and flourishing body of people, they devote themselves to keeping it small, fractured and struggling.
- * Rather than respect congregational autonomy, they feel authorized to invade other congregations and imposed their opinions upon them.
- * Rather than being mere soldiers in the army of Christ, they often perceive of themselves as commanders of others.
- * While ultraconservatives can exist within the larger body of the church for a while, when their demands are not heeded, they nearly always break away and establish their own brotherhood when they are set policy. Every "anti" splinter group was launched by a band of ultraconservatives.
- * In every generation the church has to deal with ultraconservatives. The issues they raise vary from generation to generation, but the attitudes, the methods, the consequences are always the same.
- * The careful student of God's Word and church history knows that truth lies between the extremes of liberalism and ultra conservatism (Prov. 4:25-27).
- * Rather than help the church, ultra conservatism always harms the body, by splintering and dividing God's people and leaving them weakened and vulnerable to the other extreme of liberalism.

To be conservative is to stand solidly on the Word of God, avoiding extremes of the right or left. It is to have the mind or spirit Jesus in dealing with others who assay to follow the Son. JHW

IS A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN A LEGALIST?

Dear Bro. Waddey: Jesus was a legalist in that He commanded and followed every jot and tittle. This is a dangerous word, "legalist" and to use it without careful discrimination is as volatile as the liberal permissiveness. Sanford

Dear Sanford: You confuse faithfulness with legalism. The legalistic spirit that I described is at odds with God's way of serving Him.

The legalist may do God's will as a matter of grim duty...obey or be sent to hell. The faithful child serves God out of pure love and gratitude. The legalist only does what the law demands...the faithful child does everything he can for his Father. The legalist loves to condemn, punish and reject those who fall short. The faithful child feels deep sympathy for them and prefers to love them, correct and restore them (Gal.6:1-2). The legalist gives up only such sin and pleasure as he fears will keep him from hell...the faithful child gladly surrenders all to his Savior. The legalist concentrates on outward things to the neglect of the heart, the faithful child seeks to have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5) and this makes it easy for him to demonstrate the outward aspect of Christianity. The legalist expects others to yield to his will and serve his needs. The faithful child is willing to become all things to all men (I Cor. 9:22), to spend and be spent (II Cor. 12:15), to be a servant to all (Matt. 20:27). JHW

"All extremes are error--The reverse of error is not truth, but error still--Truth lies between these extremes"
(Cecil).

LITTLE MEN

I recall as a boy reading Louisa May Alcott's wonderful book "Little Men." Today we see another novel unfolding before our eyes as little men are busily engaged in asserting themselves among our churches. These men are full grown physically but spiritually they are developmentally delayed. Some are dwarfed and misshapened in their faith. Examples of these little men are as follows:

- * They pretend to be profound scholars and expect others to accept their pronouncements without question as they seek to discredit our long-held faith and impose their new ideas. While they may hold terminal degrees from secular or denominational schools, many of them are quite ignorant of the fundamental lessons of God's Word.
- * They do harm to the body of Christ while being supported to build it up.
- * They claim to be helping the church while fomenting chaos and strife among her people.
- * They rush forward to offer a fix for the problems they themselves have created. I find it interesting that the schools from which the rivers of change are flowing, offer the services of some of their staff to help churches resolve the conflicts caused by changes their co-workers have brought in.
- * They seek to build their status and influence by bashing and attempting to discredit the godly preachers who blazed the trail before them and built the congregations where they now serve. Their's is the ugly sin of ingratitude.
- * Men whose teaching and practice lowers respect for the authority of God's Word. Rather than honoring the law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Rom. 8:2), they tell us it is a story book or a love letter thus we need not be too concerned about details of duties and obligations set forth therein.
- * Men who refuse to recognize and honor the church of Christ as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22); the church of the New Testament. They relegate her to the status of a human denomination. How shameful of them.
- * Men who think they know more about how to worship God than Christ, the head and founder of the church. They want drama and women in leadership (I Cor. 14:33-34). They crave emotionalism and entertainment. They confuse these things with true worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
- * Men who undertake to change the unchangeable kingdom of Christ (Dan. 2:44). Who are they to put profane hands upon the sacred body of Christ?
- * Men who presume that the new is better than the old in the realm of faith. They care nothing for the old paths (Jer. 6:16). They are like the pagan Athenians, always searching for something new or different (Acts 17:21). The things of Christ flow to us from the time of Christ; from the ancient Testament of Christ.
- * Men who seek to commandeer church buildings and schools built by Christians who did not share their new "ideas of change." Rather than starting their own congregations and schools and building their own facilities they prefer to infiltrate and take over what other have raised up. They join a long line of false teachers who have used stealth and deceit to capture the property of faithful Christians over the last 135 years.

The church desperately needs "big" men with great hearts and souls filled with unbounded love and total reverence for Christ and his spiritual body; for his sacred Word. She needs men who are willing to become all things to all men if by any means they can save some (I Cor. 9:22); servants who are willing to spend and be spent to build up the kingdom of Christ (II Cor. 12:15); men who are set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16). But she can do without the little men described above. May God deliver her from them. JHW

"We love peace, but not peace at any price..." (Jerrold).

"Extremes are dangerous—a middle estate is safest, as a middle temper of the sea, between a still calm and a violent tempest, is most hopeful to bear the mariner to his haven" (Swinnock).

THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH

The church of Christ is the greatest institution the world has ever known. It is a divine institution and we should never think of it in terms of an ordinary worldly thing, nor should we treat it as such. The church is Christ's kingdom on earth over which he reigns (Matt. 16:16-18). One cannot be loyal to Christ without being loyal also to his kingdom, the church. Christians and the world need to appreciate the church more. Consider some characteristics of its greatness.

I. The Church is Great Because of Its Founder. The founder is a most important factor in the merit of any organization. He sets it in order as to its functions. He gives it a code or standard of operation. His wealth and mentality furnish the life-blood of the institution. An organization will usually reflect the spirit and ideals of its founder. Jesus founded the church (Matt. 16:18). He did all of these things for his church. It is our obligation to reflect his divine spirit and ideals in the life and conduct of the church. Paul exhorts us to "have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 2:5). Again, he writes, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

II. The Church is Great Because of the Price Paid For It. Most worldly concerns were founded to enrich their founders. Even many churches began for this purpose. The Lord's church was not established for financial gain. What could the Creator want to extract from the work of his own hands? (See John 1:3). His purpose for the church was to benefit lost mankind. He purchased the church with his own blood when he died the accursed death on Calvary (Acts 20:28). To give us the church he humbled and emptied himself of his equality with the Father and became a servant of men, willing even to die for humanity (Phil. 2:5-9). He taught mankind that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

III. The Church is Great Because of Its Relation to Christ. There are several ways of comparing or describing the church. It is the spiritual body of which Christ is head (Eph. 1:22). It is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22, 32). The church is the kingdom of Christ and he reigns as its only king and lawgiver (Matt. 16:18-19). It is his army and he is our captain and leader (Heb. 2:10; II Tim. 2:3-4). The church is his family, for they do the will of his Father in heaven (Matt. 12:50). There is a certain honor that comes from intimate association with great people. How much more honor is there to the church to be so wonderfully associated with King Jesus. While we ponder this point, as yourself, "Can I be saved out of Christ's kingdom; out of his army; out of his family?" The obvious answer is no. But since to be in his church is to be in all of these. The saved He adds to his church (Acts 2:47).

IV. The Church is Great Because of Its Mission. The great purpose of the church is to save lost men from sin and damnation by winning them to Jesus. It is charged with preaching the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). It helps sinners reform their lives and be translated into God's kingdom on earth (Col. 1:13). It prepares men for heaven (Eph. 4:11-15; II Pet. 1:10-11).

Christ's church is not a political power or economic power. It is not war-like as is Islam. Rather, the church evangelizes, telling all men the good news about Christ and salvation. It serves the unfortunate and keeps Christians in faithful service (Eph. 4:11-12) As a great beacon light, it holds forth the word of life to a world lost in the darkness of sin and error (I Tim. 3:15; Phil. 2:15-16).

V. The Church is Great Because of Its Blessings. James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes down from God (Jas. 1:17). These blessings are available to humanity within the church. There are certain privileges and blessings available to men in America. You may read of these blessings in a book or hear of them from others, but you will not receive them until you enter in. So with the church. You must become a member to enjoy the benefits. Salvation in heaven awaits faithful members of the church (Eph. 5:23). Every spiritual blessing is available in Christ, i.e., in his church (Eph. 1:3-7). There are such wonderful privileges as sonship to God, fellowship and brotherhood with all other Christians, communion, prayer and providential care from God. They are yours within the church. There are great opportunities to serve God and your fellow man in the greatest institution on planet Earth, as we work to make the world a better place in which to live. Really, there is no way to adequately measure these rich blessings.

VI. The Church is Great Because of the People Who Compose It. They are called Christians because they strive to be like Christ (Acts 11:26). They are called saints because they are dedicated to God's service (I Cor. 1:2). They are in the world, yet they do not live like the sinful world (John 17:14). True Christians are honorable, humble, generous, pure, well-informed, truthful, faithful, benevolent, devoted, diligent, and loyal. No, they are not perfect, nor are they angels.

But with God's help they are daily growing into the image of Christ by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:1-2). What great joy it is to be a part of God's family on earth.

VII. The Church is Great Because of Its Ultimate Goal. Paul taught the Ephesian Christians that Christ is the savior of the body (the church) and that he will one day present the church to himself in glory (Eph. 5:23, 27). In I Corinthians 15:24, the same writer says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God..." John in a glorious vision saw the new Jerusalem, the church, in the presence of God in the heavenly paradise (Rev. 21:1-4; Heb. 12:22-23). Throughout eternity the church of Jesus Christ will reign in holy triumph with the loving Father, the victorious Son and the Holy Spirit.

We should realize that it is a matchless privilege to be member of the greatest organization the world has ever known. Prophets predicted its coming. Kings and holy men desired to see the day. The rich and the poor, every devout God-fearing soul, even publicans and harlots, have eagerly sought to enter into the church of our Lord. We who are so privileged should constantly watch lest we by our conduct or speech shame or stain its holy reputation.

All men are invited to seek refuge within its sacred precincts. If you let God wash away your sins (Acts 22:16), He will add you to His church (Acts 2:47; I Cor. 12:13). **JHW**

NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

"Non-denominational" churches are popular in our day. The phrase is often used in their advertising. Wise shoppers look beyond labels and examine the product they plan to buy. God says, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good..." (I Thessalonians 5:21).

A denomination does not claim to be the whole church, but only a part of it. It was founded by one or more humans, this side of the first century, somewhere other than Jerusalem. It has names, doctrines and practices that distinguish it from other denominations. Denominations may be old or young, large or small, wealthy and respected or poor and despised, local or international, sophisticated or homely, yet all have the same basic characteristics of humanness. Many mainline denominations are losing favor. This has prompted some congregations to mask their denominational ties, names and doctrines with the tag of "non-undenominational".

Could we travel back in time to Jerusalem in 34 A.D. and find the Lord's people, we would see true, non-denominational Christianity. There was only one kind of church; Christ's church. No churches wore the names of men or favorite doctrines. They called themselves biblical names such as the "church of God" (I Corinthians 1:2) or the "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). Their worship was simple and unadorned. They sang (Ephesians 5:19), prayed, communed, gave their offerings and listened to God's word proclaimed (Acts 20:7). There were no state, national or international organizations to run the affairs of their congregations. Christ was head over all things to his church (Eph. 1:22). Each church had its own elders or bishops and they directed only the affairs of their flock (Acts 20:28). Their preachers wore no distinctive titles. They were all brethren (Matt. 23:8).

Those wishing to be part of that truly non-denominational church, were instructed to confess their faith in Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). If this imaginary trip interests you, you can find the same kind of non-denominational church in your community. You are invited to visit, investigate and question the Church of Christ near you. **JHW**

"The Christian life is not merely knowing or hearing, but doing the will of Christ" (F. W. Robertson).

DENOMINATIONALISM THWARTS THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

Picture the scene the night of Jesus' betrayal. His heart is heavy, knowing the sorrow, suffering and death awaiting him. He has come down to establish his kingdom or church upon the earth (Matt. 16:16-18). He understands it will cost him his life to bring it into existence (Acts 20:28). As he prepares for his ordeal, he lifts a fervent prayer for the unity of his disciples. "Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are" (John 17:11).

Imagine now another scene. See the victorious Christ enthroned in heaven. He looks down with great sadness on the divided ranks of those who wear his name; the opposite of his wish. Look carefully and you may see tears in his eyes.

Christ established but one church (Matt. 16:18). Heaven's plan was that there be but one body, Spirit, hope, Lord Jesus, one faith, baptism and God (Eph. 4:4-5). That one body is his church (Eph. 1:22). Christ is pictured as the head of his spiritual body, or church (Eph. 1:22). "They are many members, but one body" (1 Cor. 12:20). This imagery is destroyed if he has many bodies. The church is also depicted as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-25). How many brides does He have?

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

- * Christ founded his church, but mortal men and women founded denominations.
- * Christ's church was founded in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. but all denominations were founded long since in other places.
- * Christ's church 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, but men or women 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.
- * The church that Christ built worships as he ordered in his word (John 4:24). Denominations change worship to suit the wishes of the 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 righteous 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 (1 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).

There are many negative fruits of denominations:

- * It provides a convenient ground for criticism by infidels. Jesus understood that the unity of his followers would encourage the world to believe that God had sent him (John 17:21). Division does the opposite.
- * It is confusing to those sincerely seeking the Lord's way. Imagine a truth-seeker having to examine hundreds of differing claims before he can arrive at truth.
- * It provides those in heathen darkness an excuse for rejecting Christianity.
- * It is the occasion of vast sums of wasted money and energy that has been given to God by sincere people. Think of

the duplication of buildings, utilities, etc. Think about the competition between rival bodies of believers.

- * It causes disruption in families. In many families husbands and wives hold different denominational memberships. Their children are torn between the two competing ways and often turn away from Christ completely.
- * It leaves vast multitudes of people unsaved: some, by being taught an incomplete or defective gospel; others because churches consumed in promoting and protecting their own denominational interests, have no energy for or interest in evangelism.

The promotion of denominational division thwarts the dying prayer of Jesus for the unity of his people. May we always be content to be Christians, nothing more nor less; just the church of Christ revealed in Scripture. **JHW**

MASKING THE FACTS

I am short, 5' 7 1/2" tall, bald with a fringe of white hair. I have blue eyes and am a bit rotund. I could alter my appearance with elevator shoes, a toupe and tinted contact lenses but beneath the disguise I would still be the same short, bald, blue-eyed fellow.

Change agents are false teachers. They are deceptive. They despise the church of Christ. They reject the Bible as the complete and final authority in things religious. They want to capture the minds and hearts of our people for their new brand of denominational religion and are willing to use sleight of hand to do so. They want the church buildings and schools our brethren have sacrificed to build and pay for. They know if they approach a congregation openly avowing the above truths they would not get inside the door, so they carefully mask their real agenda and intentions.

- * They wear a mask of righteous piety.
- * They carry a Bible, although they accuse those of us who love and obey it of Bibliolatry.
- * They talk much about unity and fault us for our divisions, all the while they are fomenting yet another rent in the body of Christ.
- * They claim to be legitimate heirs of the Restoration fathers, yet they are dismantling and destroying the great work those pioneers in the faith did.
- * They preach love and complain about the harshness of those who challenge them, but sarcasm and hostility drip from their words and pens when they respond to those who stand in their way.
- * They speak and write much about salvaging and helping the church, but their goal is to reduce the church of Christ to the status of a human denomination and merge her into the murky waters of Protestantism.

Paul admonishes us, "Let no man deceive you" (II Thess. 2:3). Some may be fooled by the disguise of the agents of change, but those who know God's Word will readily spot the deception. Pretense can not replace reality. A wolf is still a wolf no matter how nice his sheep skin covers him (Matt. 7:15). **JHW**

*"Nothing can be proposed so wild or so absurd as not to find a party, and often a very large party to espouse it"
(Cecil).*

"Christianity is more than history. It is also a system of truths. Every event which its history records, either is a truth, or suggests or expresses a truth, which man needs assent to or to put into practice" (Noah Porter).

DEADLY ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH

While on earth, Christ was confronted with enemies who wished to destroy him and defeat his mission. Having conquered death and ascended back to the Father, he left his church on earth to take the message of salvation to the world for which he died (Mk. 16:15). From her inception, the Church of Christ has been besieged by foes within and without. Paul and his helpers were harassed by hostile Jews and angry Gentile who resorted to violence to silence the great missionary. The disciples also had to cope with opposition from misguided Christians. Some Jewish disciples devoted themselves to harassing the apostle and imposing their Jewish customs on Gentile converts. Listen to his plaintiff words, "Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears..." (II Cor. 7:5 KJV). Others corrupted the faith and led disciples astray with teaching that was contrary to the divines message of Christ (II Tim. 1:15). Well did Francis Schaeffer observe, "The devil never gives us the luxury of fighting on only one front, and this will always be."

Today the church of Christ is besieged by foes both within and without. From without we are under attack by a hostile culture, militant unbelief, pagan religions, hundreds of counterfeit churches, an antagonistic media. These enemies alone are enough to occupy every soldier in a never ending struggle with the forces of evil.

From within we are faced with enemies as well. We have those who are corrupting the church and spreading strife and division by disregarding the precepts and principles set forth by Christ to govern and regulate his people. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). They fancy themselves theological scholars and call themselves progressives or workers for change, we call them **liberals** and false teachers. They are descended from the Sadducees of first century Judaism. But as we contend with those who are subverting the faith, we face another problem within our ranks. On the opposite hand are hostile, angry, vindictive preachers who are lashing out in attack against everyone in the church who does not conform to their perception of things. Even those who are standing rock-solid on the Word of God and waging the good warfare against the proponents of liberalism, they blast with their missiles. It is a sad situation when a Christian's foes are they of his own spiritual household (Matt. 10:36). These brethren hold a faulty attitude about the faith. It is known as **legalism**. The legalists are spiritual grandchildren of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They profess a great love for the law of God and his church, but they have little love for the people of God. They are quick to divide the body, and place a low premium on the unity of the church. They often delight more in making war on fellow preachers than in warring against the enemy without. They are to the church as bounty hunters are to the law. They discourage weak members and drive them away. Liberals are grateful for legalists. They holds them up as examples of all that is wrong in the church and imply that all who do not buy their package of change are like them.

Thus contemporary soldiers of Christ stand with their backs to the wall, trying to fend off liberal change agents, while legalistic brethren are snapping at their heels like snarling dogs. Satan is shrewd,. He knows that every hour soldiers of Christ spend in fighting enemies within and without is time lost for evangelizing and saving the lost and thus building up the Cause of Christ

John in his Revelation depicts the victorious Christ, defeating all of his enemies (Rev. 19:11-21). Those vanquished will drink the bitter cup of wrath on the day of judgment, whether they be enemies within or enemies without. **JHW**

"Christianity did not come from Heaven to be the amusement of an idle hour, or the food of mere imagination; to be 'as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument.' It is intended to be the guide and companion of all our hours—the serious occupation of our whole existence." (John Jebb).

FULL CIRCLE

In 1849 progressive members of the Restoration movement meeting in Cincinnati, organized the American Christian Missionary Society. In 1859, Dr. L. L. Pinkerton and the church at Midway, Kentucky introduced the first instrument of music into our worship. By 1857, Tolbert Fanning, Jacob Creath, Jr. and others had seen the errors in the Missionary Society and launched their opposition. In the 1880s some of the progressives had moved women into leadership. By 1906 the apostasy was full grown, our circle of fellowship was broken. Those who preferred human organizations to do the Lord's work and humanly devised methods and styles of worship went on to evolve into the modern denominations known as the Disciples of Christ and Independent Christian Churches. By 2000 an element of preachers and educators among our brethren had evolved away from their historic Biblical roots and embraced human organizations to do the work of Christ's church, instrumental music in worship, women in church leadership and the same approach to Bible authority as the digressives of yesteryear. These modern expression of apostasy are openly expressed in such books as **The Crux of the Matter** and **The Transforming of a Tradition**.

This leads us to the following necessary conclusions:

- A. Either our fathers were wrong in objecting to missionary societies, instrumental music, choirs, soloists, and female church leaders or our liberals are wrong today. If the fathers were wrong, then they were guilty of the grave sin of dividing the body of Christ and forming a schism that has no right to exist.
- B. If the fathers were wrong, the Disciples of Christ are the legitimate extension of the church and we all should repent of our erroneous and divisive practices, ask their forgiveness and seek a place in their fellowship.
- C. If our acappella worship is only our tradition, then in shame, we should renounce that human tradition that we have allowed to divide the body of Christ. We should no longer object to the piano, organ or rock band.
- D. On the other hand if our fathers were correct in their objections and the digressives were acting contrary to the doctrine of Christ (II John 9), then our contemporary preachers and professors who have embraced the errors of the Disciples are as guilty of false teaching and causing division in the Body of Christ as were those a century ago. They should repent and turn away from their destructive program or be rejected and marked as enemies of the Cause of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18).

In a century we have come full-circle. Because the lessons of our past history were not learned, some among us have repeated the mistakes of the past. Our fathers were right in their stand against digression last century because they stood on solid Biblical grounds. May God raise up a band of loyal and courageous leaders in the mold of David Lipscomb who will lead us in this hour of trial. **JHW**

"The more extensive a man's knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his power of knowing what to do..." (Disraeli).

"Accurate knowledge is the basis of correct opinions; the want of it makes the opinions of most people of little value". ©. Simmons).

"Knowledge without common sense, is folly..." (Lee).

DAVID LIPSCOMB STOOD IN THE GAP AND MADE A DIFFERENCE

As the people of Judah languished in Babylonian captivity, God spoke to them through his faithful prophet, Ezekiel. The reason for their ruined state is expressed in chapter 22:30 where God says, "I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me or the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none."

A hundred and 125 years ago the situation within the brotherhood of restoration churches was much like ours today. The progressives had all the momentum went them. Their movement away from the authority of the Scripture was moving like an avalanche. The issues then were the same as now: *extra-congregational organizations to do the Lord's Work, *the use of instrumental music, choirs and soloists in worship; *women in leadership roles in the church; *fellowship with denominational bodies; *lack of respect for the authority of God's Word.

Had it not been for David Lipscomb and the small band of men he gathered around him, it is likely that the liberals would have taken everything. By 1906 it was clear that two separate bodies of people existed where once there was one. The larger group, came to be identified as Disciples of Christ/ Christian Churches. They had captured some 85 percent of the movement, including virtually all of the schools, benevolent works and mission outposts. The smaller group was known as Churches of Christ consisting of a remnant of faithful disciples who were determined to be faithful to the old paths of God's Word.

We can learn great lessons from the work of David Lipscomb. He was a very ordinary preacher, in terms of his pulpit ability. But he was a dedicated and determined disciple of the Master who stood in the gap.

* He was willing to lay his all on the line for the Cause. He invested his time and energy, his money and his property in his effort to save and rebuild the church he loved.

* He knew it was not enough just to oppose error, he encouraged his brethren to rise up and rebuild the damaged Cause. He worked tirelessly to that end until his aged and worn out body was laid to rest.

* He saw the value of the printed page. He and Tolbert Fanning relaunched the Gospel Advocate following the Civil War. He printed useful religious books that would shape the hearts and minds of the brethren for good.

*He understood the importance of training children in the way of righteousness. He and his team produced Bible School literature that was true to the Scriptures.

* He knew the effectiveness of engaging the enemy head on. Thus he published articles that addressed the problems of the day and offered Biblical answers to the errors being promoted.

* He saw the need for a school to train the young and especially future leaders for the church and with James A. Harding he founded and financed Nashville Bible School. He gave his own farm to house the school.

*He actively recruited men to join the ranks on the side of truth. He built a strong network of faithful Christians to fight side by side. He frequently met with men who were uncertain and unsure and used his influence to persuade them to take a stand for the truth.

*He encouraged every good work done by those who were true friends of the gospel. These things we must do today.

Each of us has talents that could be helpful if put to use. Each of us has a sphere of influence. We need to find 1,000 good men who will dig in and take their stand for the primitive faith and then use their influence and energy to educate and inform all of those around them. If we can find and mobilize such a team of workers we will soon see the drift slowed to a halt. We encourage those who read these lines to contact us and see how we can cooperate to benefit the blessed church of our Lord Jesus. Write us at 12630 W. Foxfire Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375 or e-mail us at johnwaddey@aol.com. 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**

CHURCH OF CHRIST NUMBER III

In the 1920s A. T. DeGroot wrote an interesting little book entitled **Church of Christ Number Two**. DeGroot was a liberal scholar and spokesman for the progressive wing of the Disciples of Christ. His book was a sarcastic criticism of the conservative wing of his church which was in the process of breaking ranks with the liberal leadership. They eventually separated themselves and became known as the Independent Christian Churches. Unhappy that anyone would dare reject the progressive leadership of himself and his liberal comrades, DeGroot wrote his book to heap scorn upon them. Since all in the Disciples of Christ/Christian Church body had elected to repudiate the conservative, bible based stand of our forefathers in the Churches of Christ, he sought to embarrass them by suggesting they really were just as old fashioned, narrow and out of date as were they. To those unfamiliar with our past, the issues that separated us from those folks were: human organizations such as missionary societies to do the work of the church, the use of instrumental music in worship, allowing women in leadership positions of the church, fellowship with denomination bodies and theological liberalism. To call his Independent Christian Church brethren a "Church of Christ Number Two" was a pointed insult.

Today we truly do have a new religious body, emerging on the religious scene that wears the name Church of Christ. These disciples and their preachers have ties to the that body of people known for more than a hundred years as churches of Christ. Most of their leaders grew up in congregations of that brotherhood, and attending schools operated by them. Somewhere along the way their faith was subverted and they turned away from the faith of their fathers. They are known today as "agents of change" who have devoted themselves to imposing significant changes in the faith, worship and practice of the church.

They hold their predecessors in the faith to be old fashioned traditionalists who are hopelessly out of touch with the Postmodern world. Among the changes they have embraced are a willingness to accept instrumental music in worship, the creation of numerous "extra-church" organizations to do the work of the church, allowing women roles in the public leadership in the church, embracing a Pentecostal type of worship environment with an entertainment format and a physical expressions such as hand clapping, etc. They believe that salvation is by grace and thus they no long believe that baptism is essential to salvation. Having concluded that they are a denomination, they are quite ready to embrace other denominational bodies in their fellowship. They have repudiated the idea of restoring the faith and practice of the New first century church and the New Testament as a standard of authority which must be conformed to by all who would be pleasing to God. Other points could be cited but these are sufficient to demonstrate that regardless what these folks call themselves they are not members of the Church of Christ that most of us know and love. They are a new variety or genre of church using the same name as the church they once were part of. It seems to me entirely appropriate that they should take a new name lest they be confused with us. They feel we are hopelessly mired in Biblical tradition. In the spirit of A. T. DeGroot, I would like to suggest that they henceforth be known as **Church of Christ Number Three**. If that does not please them, perhaps they could be part of the **Church of Christ Number Two** that DeGroot had in mind. Since nearly all of these are eager to embrace the Independent Christian Churches in their fellowship, they could share that cognomen with them. **JHW**

"That he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or nay such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27)

ARE THEY TRULY CHRIST'S DISCIPLES?

Jesus said to those Jews that had believed in him, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31). This reminds us that there are two types of followers of Christ. There are some who are truly, and some who are not truly His disciples. The differential is whether or not they "abide in his word." Later John enlarged on this thought saying, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). With this in mind, consider the following.

* We have disciples among us who read Acts 22:16, which says, "be baptized and wash away thy sins" and then teach folks that we are saved by grace alone, before, thus without baptism. "My salvation is on grace alone, not by anything I've added to it." "The one step of salvation is faith..." "It (baptism) is not the fifth step (in the plan of salvation)." (Quotes from Rubel Shelly's recorded sermons, cited in **Change Agents and Churches of Christ** by William Woodson, p. 236).

* Some brethren read Paul's prohibition, "I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (I Tim. 2:12), then say, but such does not apply to us. They encourage women to seek leadership roles in the church. Bro. Paul Casner wants to see "men and women serving alongside one another in all aspects of church life" (Allen and Anderson, **The Transforming of a Tradition** p. 100).

* Some read Paul's charge to Timothy to "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me" (II Tim. 1:13), then deny that there is a divine pattern and ridicule those who strive to follow the pattern God has provided. "...the Bible does not provide a constitution or pattern for church organization" (Cukrowski, Hamilton & Thompson, **God's Holy Fire**, ACU Press, p. 48).

* Some read about the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ" (Rom. 8:2) and the "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25) and then insist that we must not view the New Covenant of Christ as God's law for us. They obviously think they know more and better than the apostolic writers.

* Some read that divisions among Christ's disciples and the practice of identifying oneself by the names of men are contrary to his will (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-6) yet they work diligently to fashion the church of Christ into just such a denomination founded by Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell. Also they teach our people one can be saved and serve God acceptably in such human organizations (Holloway & Foster, **Renewing God's People**, ACU Press, p. 138).

These scenarios are not illusions or theoretical cases. They describe the scores of "change agents" that are circulating among our churches and teaching in our schools. They call themselves Christian and members of the Church of Christ, but given their attitude towards the Savior's Word, the question must be raised, "Are they truly His disciples?" What say ye? JHW

"Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable than fidelity—Faithfulness and truth are the most sacred excellences and endowments of the human mind" (Cicero).

"Faithful found among the faithless, his loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal, nor number, nor example with him wrought to swerve from truth, or change his constant mind" (J. Milton).

"He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block" (Shakespeare).

HANDMAIDEN OR MISTRESS

The Bible knows nothing of Christian Colleges. But as expediencies to help the church do her work, they have played a significant, but not always salutary role in the history of our Restoration Movement. In the early days, the founders and promoters of Christian schools saw them as handmaidens to the church. Their mission was perceived to be that of assistants to the church in fulfilling her mission here on earth.

- * They provided a wholesome, quality education for the children of church members within a strong Christian environment. Teachers were expected to be faithful members of the church and campus life was to be shaped by Christian values.

- * Christian schools provided an environment where young Christians could meet and find mates who shared their faith in Christ.

- * They educated young Christians and provided them skills necessary for success in business. The graduates, as they pursued their vocations, provided strong, well-trained and faithful leadership in local congregations.

- * The schools provided training for young men who desired to serve as gospel preachers. With solid, dependable Bible instruction, they would go forth and bless the church by their faithful teaching and leadership. It was understood that the doctrines imparted by the schools would be thoroughly Biblical and reflect the broad general convictions of the brotherhood on all essential points.

- * They trained and encouraged young Christians to take the gospel of Christ to mission fields where the good news had not yet gone.

For these valuable contributions, Christians and congregations gave thanks and encouraged their young people to choose our Christians schools for their education. Thousands of Christians provided financial support for our schools and some congregations lent support especially to their Bible departments and mission programs.

A SHIFT IN THE RELATIONSHIP HAS OCCURRED

Since the 1960s a new spirit has evolved within the leadership of some of our schools. No longer do they perceive themselves as handmaidens to render service to the Lord's church. While not formally announced, the shift is seen in their actions. They now see themselves as the superior mistress to supervise, lead and guide the fumbling, unprofessional churches. Their behavior suggests that congregations exist to serve the schools by providing them students and the funds needed to maintain and further enlarge their institutions. The principle interest of the academics that control many of these schools is to gain the approval, respect of their educational peers in the broader secular and denominational realms.

Today an eldership cannot safely assume that a graduate of some of our Christian schools will hold doctrinal views consistent with New Testament principles. In fact they must be very careful that he does not hold views contrary to Biblical standards. Parents can no longer assume that all teachers in those schools hold views that will strengthen the faith of their sons and daughters.

Rather than serve the church, many administrators and professors look upon the typical elder and preacher as obsolete and out of date in their understanding of spiritual matters. Hence they (the school men) have taken it upon themselves to reshape the beliefs, worship and practice of our churches. With an elitist air, they have launched their uninvited program of change for our people.

Looking back a hundred years, we see the same scenario was played out among our people in that day. The Christian schools led in the apostasy that divided our people then. We did not learn from the mistakes of the past. The problem has surfaced again in our day and we suffer for our folly.

If there are to be Christian Schools among us, those who direct them must never forget their proper position as handmaidens to serve and benefit church of the Lord Jesus.

(The author appreciates those schools that have faithfully served the church and continue to fill their role in the work of the Lord). JHW

A FOUNTAINHEAD OF APOSTASY

A flood of apostasy is sweeping across our brotherhood, taking with it numerous preachers and congregations. The fountainhead of this movement to reconstruct and change the faith, worship and practice of our brethren is Abilene Christian University. Some other schools are not far behind them. The compelling evidence of this is the fact that from her Bible Department is flowing an unceasing series of books promoting these changes. The University Press is issuing a series of books specifically designed to implement these changes. The first two volumes, **The Crux of the Matter** and **God's Holy Fire** are sufficient to convince all but the blind. They are highly endorsed by Bro. Royce Money, president of the university.

As the battle for the soul of the church unfolds, we do not expect the leaders of this school to renounce the course they have taken. They have not only embraced the agenda of the change agents, they are the leadership for that movement.

When apostasy swept through the brotherhood at the end of the 19th and the open decades of the 20th centuries, most of the Christian Schools associated with the Restoration Movement followed the pipers of error: Bethany, Columbia Christian College, Culver-Stockton, Kentucky University, Northwestern University, Drake University, Texas Christian University. All of these schools abandoned the authority of Christ for the "progressive" teachings and practices of that generation of change agents.

Most of the schools of higher education among us began and flourished in the 20th century. All were founded, funded and nurtured to success by faithful members of Churches of Christ. They were intended to be safe havens for educating and training young people and in particular gospel preachers. One of their major purposes was to prepare young men to be faithful preachers of God's Word who would go forth to bless our congregations, teaching them the unadulterated truth of God.

As older generations have passed on, a new breed of disciples have emerged to lead our schools. In some notable cases, the results have not been beneficial for the church. Once men of corrupt faith gain control of a school, the likelihood of them repenting and turning back to the Biblical standard is remote. Neither is there much likelihood that they will relinquish their control of the institution they have captured. Once the position, power and wealth are in their hands, they will not be easily surrendered. The president and board of a university have control of the wealth that past generations of Christians invested in their schools. In the case of Abilene, many millions of dollars are laid up in endowments. They control the property of the school, again worth millions. They enjoy a high measure of local, state and even national recognition and honor. They have found acceptance in the heady world of academia by distancing themselves from the old-fashion, simple faith of their founders and the churches they were intended to serve.

Like a hundred other institutions of higher learning, they are ready to abandon their religious heritage for a bowl of pottage. When you hear the names of Princeton, Yale, Vanderbilt and other great universities, remember that they were once "Christian Schools" of various denominations. Shall this be the end of ACU and other of the Christian Schools among us? JHW

"A child miseducated is a child lost" (John Kennedy)

LIKE THE PHILOSOPHERS OF ATHENS

In Athens, Paul encountered and engaged the intellectuals of that seat of worldly wisdom. Luke tells us the Athenians “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). As I pour over the writings of our agents of change I am impressed with their similarity to those ancient philosophers. I see them glorying in their intellectual attainments. I note their tendency to question, challenge and reject any and everything held by brethren who preceded them. I see their obsession to find and try things new and different in religion. Strangely, many of the changes they propose have been around for years, even generations. They have been tested, found wanting and rejected by those who know and believe the truth of God’s Word (I Tim. 4:3).

* They have discovered the doctrine of **salvation by grace alone**, the work of God from beginning to end. But this is not new; it is old Calvinism, 500 years old.

* They think they have found **salvation by faith alone**. *Sola fide!* But neither is this new. It was the message and marching song of Martin Luther and his followers.

* They claim to have discovered that **baptism is not essential to salvation**, rather it is a declaration that one has been saved by grace through faith. This however is not new. It has long been preached by Baptist preachers.

* They say they have discovered that rather than having one visible church on earth, **Christ has one invisible church consisting of hundreds of differing denominational bodies**. But this is an ancient doctrine, the theme of all denominational bodies for over 400 years.

* They have discovered that **racism is a sin** and they make allusion to it in virtually every presentation. But this is not new. It is as old as the Bible and has been widely preached and practiced by our brethren for the last 40 years. Many of the change agents were mute on the subject until the battle was fought and won and now they bang their brethren for being tardy in dealing with the issue.

* They have discovered that our **sisters have been deprived** by not being allowed to lead us in worship, to teach our men, to preach and serve our congregations as deacons. But this is the long held theme of such groups as the Nazarenes, Pentecostals and Disciples of Christ. It is not new at all. Our change agents are just a hundred years late in getting around to it.

* They have discovered the joys of **instrumental music in worship**; of choirs, solists and performing groups. But the Christian Church discovered this a century ago, the Catholic Church 900 years and the Protestants at least 200 years before.

Who knows what new things they may find tomorrow. But their pattern of conduct indicates that like a child with a kaleidoscope, they will continue to look for and embrace every new and exciting change. The day will eventually come when they will have completely lost their identity as New Testament Churches. As they journey into oblivion, all who truly love Christ and his church will be “stedfast, unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). JHW

“The question is not whether a doctrine is beautiful but whether it is true—When we wish to go to a place, we do not ask whether the road leads through a pretty country, but whether it is the right road” (A. W. And J C. Hare).

“For these are...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Paul II Tim. 3:6-7)/

“Unlearning is harder than learning” (Anonymous)

OLD HERESY MAKES A COMEBACK

Among the many false teachings emerging from the caldron of the Change Movement is the teaching that since Christians are under grace they are not therefore under law. If they love God and their neighbor, they have fulfilled all their obligations to their Creator and Savior. Promoters of this view see the New Testament as a love letter from God rather than a code to which Christ's disciples are amenable. Granted this is a very soothing doctrine and full of comfort to those who prefer to walk the path of their own choosing and live by their own standard. However, it is not from God! In fact it stands in clear contradiction to Heaven's revealed will.

This doctrine is a revival of an ancient heresy called "**antinomianism**." The following quotes help put it in focus. The term derives from the words, "**anti**" (against) and "**nomos**" (law). Antinomianism is "an opposition to law, specifically, a rejection of the idea that the Christian's life need be governed by laws or rules" (**Concise Dict. Of Christian Theology**). "It refers to the doctrine that the moral law is not binding upon Christians as a rule of life. In a wider sense it is applied to the views of fanatics who refuse to recognize any law but their own subjective ideas which they usually claim are from the Holy Spirit" (**Baker's Dict. Of Theology**, p. 48). John Agricola, co-worker of Luther, "taught that Christians are entirely free from the law...He took this ground from fear of works-righteousness, wrongly thinking that 'justification by faith alone' demanded this" (**Ibid.** p. 48-49).

"The spiritualization of the law into the one precept of love to God, taught and exemplified by Jesus, encouraged some over enthusiastic devotees to believe they had been exalted to such a height of spirituality and over mastering love to God that they needed to have no regard to moral precepts or to outward conduct..." (**Schaff-Herzog**, Vol. 1, p. 196). Almaric of Bena (d. 1204), "maintained that 'to those constituted in love no sin is imputed'" (**Ibid.** p. 197).

From **M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopedia** we glean the following insights: "Antinomianism absolutely withers and destroys the consciousness of human responsibility" (Vol. I, p. 265). "It prophesies smooth things to the sinner going on in his transgressions and soothes to slumber and the repose of death the souls such as at ease in Zion" (**Ibid.** 265). "The error in antinomianism lies chiefly in the sharp contrast which it draws between the law and the gospel" (**Ibid.** p. 266).

Fundamental Errors of Antinomians

* They fail to understand that while salvation is a free gift of God's grace, God has made reception of it conditional on obedience (Heb. 5:8-9). Thus God commands repentance (Acts 17:30) and baptism (Acts 10:48).

* They fail to distinguish between the Law of Moses which has indeed been abrogated (Rom. 7:4), and the law of Christ to which Christians are now amenable (John 12:48; Rom. 8:1-2).

* They fail to understand that while we are saved by God's grace and mercy (Eph. 2:8-9) and not by a law system such as the Hebrews once struggled under, we still must be obedient to our Savior Christ (Matt. 28:20). His will for us is revealed in his New Covenant.

* They must deny the many verses of the New Covenant which speak of Christ's will as our law.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" frees us from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

When we bear the burdens of others, we "fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Those who are new-creatures, "**walk by this rule**" (Gal. 6:15-16). Christians live under **the perfect law of liberty** (Jas. 1:25). Christ has a **royal law** (Jas. 2:8). **Sin is transgression of the law** (I John 3:4). **The words of Jesus will judge us** (John 12:48). In the judgement the books will be opened and **we will be judged out of the things written in the books** (Rev. 20: 12).

* They fail to understand that the two great commands to love God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39), are illustrative of all other laws, the foundation upon which they rest. They are not the only laws. Such summaries are common in Scripture. See Micah 2:8; Ps. 15:1-5; Ps. 24:3-5; Hab. 2:4.

- * Because of their faulty understanding of Christ's gospel they mistakenly embrace the errors of Calvinism; namely salvation by grace alone, enabling grace and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.
- * Because they hold a faulty understanding of legalism, they wrongly conclude that anyone who loves, honors and obeys the Will of God is a legalist. If that were so Jesus would be a legalist (Heb. 5:8-9).
- * Like religious liberals of the 19th and early 20th centuries they hold a utopian view of humanity's ability to live by love without law. The old liberal's dream collapsed in the face of two World Wars and the horrors of Communism. The antinomian theory cannot survive the realities of human life and conduct.
- * Our antinomians mistakenly think they have found something new and different, when in reality it is an ancient heresy that has deceived men in generations past.

Observers of the promoters of change will note that everything old is new again. **JHW**

CHURCHLESS CHRISTIANS

Some folks claim to be Christians but choose not to be part of a church. Perhaps they have had a bad experience with some church, or they may not wish to be tied to one body of believers. Maybe they do not want any responsibility or to be accountable to any spiritual leaders. It could be they just don't know any better. The fact is, God knows nothing of "churchless Christians." Consider the following:

- * Christ died on Calvary to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). This shows its value!
- * The church is the family of God (I Tim. 3:15). Can I be saved outside God's family?
- * The church consists of those who are sanctified in Christ (I Cor. 1:2).
- * The church is the spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 1:22).
- * Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it (Eph. 5:25).
- * When the Lord saves a person, He adds them to his church (Acts 2:47 KJV).
- * Christ is the Savior of the church (Eph. 5:23). If I am out of it, how can I be saved?
- * At the end of time Christ will deliver his church (kingdom) up to God the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

The message of the Bible is that to be saved is to be a member of Christ's church. True, you need not be a member of any denominational body founded by men. But the church that Christ built is of a different quality and kind. Membership in it is not optional. If you wish to be saved and spend your eternity with God, you will gladly embrace Christ's church as your own!

Had you lived in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. you would have observed the following facts:

- * There was but one kind of church in the city. It was Christ's church.
- * Every Christian in the city was a member of that church.
- * Every member had been "buried with Christ in baptism" (Rom. 6:3-4) for remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).

You can be a member of that same church today. We would be glad to correspond with you and discuss the importance of Christ's Church. Just write us a note. **JHW**

When apostasy swept through our ranks a century ago, "The educated upper echelon was siphoned off into the Christian Church" (Wm. Banowsky).

DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Churches of Christ are facing a major crisis as a sizeable and influential body of men and some of our large universities have mounted a campaign to transform the church into a modern charismatic denomination. Apostles of this movement are traversing the brotherhood, sowing their seeds of change with significant success. Elders, whose task it is to protect their flocks from wolves and thieves (Acts 20:28-30), must be especially vigilant in this time of conflict. Faulty assumptions in the current climate could prove disastrous to congregations and souls of disciples, young and old.

* We cannot assume that because a brother or sister was once a faithful child of God that such is still the case. Time and circumstances have a way of eroding the faith of some. They fall away from the faith (I Tim. 4:1-2).

* Nor can we assume that a man, once known as a faithful, dependable preacher, is still that today. Across the country a number of men have embraced the agenda of those who are trying to change our faith, worship and practice. John teaches us to try the spirits for many false prophets are gone forth in to the world (I John 4:1). Paul spoke of men who made shipwreck concerning the faith (I Tim. 1:19-20). Some of the leading advocates of change were once faithful, effective preachers of God's Word. Elders's cannot afford to assume soundness when interviewing preachers or inviting guest speakers.

* We cannot assume that because a Christian College was once a sound bastion of the faith and a safe place to send our young people and preacher students, it still is. Some of our schools with illustrious beginnings and long histories of service to the kingdom have now emerged as fountainheads of false teaching and promotion of change. Parents and students should investigate carefully before deciding on a school.

* No longer can we assume that a congregation wearing the name Church of Christ is in fact a faithful church following the ordinances of Christ. The church in Ephesus had left her first love (Rev. 2:4-5). Some churches that once were strong for the way of Christ are now a new variety of congregation, known for their changes in the faith, worship and practice. Before a person places his membership, he should observe carefully and inquire very pointedly as to their thinking and practice.

* We cannot assume that because a brother or sister once loved the truth of God and rejoiced to hear it proclaimed, they still do. Jesus warned, the love of many "would wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). Experience demonstrates that such is happening among our people today.

There was a day when we could safely assume that if one was a member of the Church of Christ he would:

- * Believe the Scriptures to be inerrant (John 10:35);
- * The church to be the sacred body of Christ (Eph. 1:22);
- * That denominationalism was wrong (I Cor. 1:10-13);
- * That all things must be done according to the divine pattern (Heb. 8:5);
- * That the use of instrumental music in worship is sinful (Eph. 5:19-20);
- * That women should not preach or fill roles of public leadership in the church (I Cor. 14:33-34);
- * That only those properly immersed have their sins forgiven (Acts 22:16);
- * That salvation by faith only is a teaching of man not found in Scripture (Jas. 2:18-26).

Today, thanks to our change agents and to the universities from whence they came, all of these fundamental truths are openly challenged and even repudiated.

In such a spiritual environment, assumptions are dangerous things. Wise leaders will assume nothing. They will "prove all things; hold fast that which is good and abstain from every appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:21-22). JHW

THOSE INFAMOUS 28 DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH

A few years ago, a singing group traveled the country, making a good living singing **Twenty-six Miles Across the Sea**. Today, change agents travel far and wide singing about 28 divisions among Churches of Christ. For them that mantra proves we are an unworthy group and that they with their ecumenical plan for unity are our saviors. A member of their team recently sent me the infamous list. It really shows how desperate change agents are to paint a false picture of their brethren in order to justify themselves in causing yet another division in the body. As we look at their list, note with me the distortions of their accusation

1. The **Firm Foundation faction** (1884). There was disagreement and discussion about whether those immersed without understanding the full purpose of baptism should be rebaptized. There was never an open break in fellowship. Though still discussed, the issue does not constitute a separate brotherhood.
2. **Churches of Christ separation from Digressives** (Sand Creek, IL, 1889). This was a declaration of one congregation declaring they would no longer fellowship digressives who were introducing instrumental music and missionary societies into churches. Had not that congregation and hundreds of others taken a stand against the apostasy of that day there would be no Churches of Christ today. All would be in the camp of the Christian Churches. This would be pleasing to our change agents. The fact is those wishing to have musical instruments and societies went out from us (I John 2:19). We continue to occupy the same ground as did the early leaders of the Restoration movement and the first Christians.
3. **Black Churches of Christ**. Outside of a few Black separatists, no such schism exists. Christians and congregations, be they Black or White, are brethren and fellowship each other.
4. **Those opposed to baptistries** (ca. 1900). While a few folks a century ago questioned the use of baptistries, I challenge the promoters of the list to find us even one congregation holding such a view today.
5. Those who insisted on an **order of worship** (1888). True, a tiny handful of brethren argued that Acts 2:42 provided an order of worship. They have long since died out. No such schism exists today.
6. **Sommerism**. Daniel Sommer was a strong minded, legalistic preacher who had a following that spread into several states. He flourished from 1890-1940. W. Carl Ketcherside led this group after Bro. Sommer's passing but he eventually swung to the opposite extreme of liberalism leaving chaos and confusion among his followers. The survivors, who describe themselves as mutual edification churches, still carry on but are small and few in number. Many of them enjoy fellowship with mainstream congregations.
7. **Anti-Sunday School, anti literature and anti-women teachers** were not three separate schisms but one. Such churches still exist but in many places now have fellowship with the larger brotherhood.
8. **One cup churches**. Some of the anti-Bible class churches also insisted on using only one cup in communion. They divided among themselves over such issues as "fermented or unfermented wine;" "whether the loaf should be broken by the one presiding or by the partaker." Of this group he lists, some who advocated "no plate for communion bread; some who debated whether "to have or not to have a handle on the communion cup" and some that insisted that "communion must be taken around the table." That a legalistic splinter group should continue to divide among themselves is not the responsibility of the mainstream churches, nor should we bear the blame for their foolishness.
9. **Premillennialism**. In the 1920s a few preachers, led by Robert H. Boll, began to promote the false doctrine of premillennialism and found a following in a handful of churches. The brotherhood rejected their message and they were gradually excluded from fellowship. A few such churches exist today. Most have faded away.
10. In the 1950's a group arose that **opposed cooperation of churches in evangelism, benevolent homes operated by the church and eating in meetinghouses**. These are the only significant schism that has continued to flourish. Today there is some fellowship between members of the two groups and that will likely increase in coming years. Within this group was a schism led by Charles Holt and a more liberal minded minority.
11. In the late 1950s and 60s, W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, formerly of the Sommerite camp, swung to the opposite extreme of liberalism. They called for **unity in diversity** and embraced the Christian Churches and other denominational bodies in their fellowship. They worked unceasingly to influence and seduce young preachers of the

mainstream churches. The message of the change movement bears the stamp of these two false teachers.

12. Differing views on **divorce and remarriage** have been warmly discussed by preachers and writers from 1960 to the present. While differences were pronounced and convictions were deeply held, no separate body of people emerged over this issue.

13. Tongue-speaking and supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit were claimed by a tiny handful in the 1960s. Probably not more than a dozen preachers dabbled in this Pentecostal practice. All either left the church ceased to be used by our churches. No schism occurred.

14. Ira Rice's **Contending for the Faith** group. Bro. Rice led an on-going war against anything and anyone he perceived as liberal. His harsh and indiscriminate approach alienated him from most main-stream churches. Even many who opposed liberalism as much as he, refused to use or approve of his tactics. These brethren do not constitute a separate body of people.

15. **The International Churches of Christ**. This group otherwise known as the Cross-roads or Boston Movement were a group of young zealots who embraced a cultish program of control over their members. They flourished for some 20 years but now appear to be disintegrating.

** To this list I will add **The Change Movement**. This is the merging and flowering of several past groups under a new banner. In its ranks one finds Ketcherside's Unity in Diversity disciples; those who yearn for a Pentecostal experience; those who have lost their faith in the inspiration and authority of the Word of God, those who desire an ecumenical fellowship with denominational bodies, especially with the Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches; those who have embraced the agenda of feminism and those who have been caught up in the philosophy of Postmodernism. The issues of this movement are virtual identical to those that led to the separation of Churches of Christ and Christian Churches a century ago.

The authors of the infamous list of schisms badly want to paint the Lord's Church as a flawed and failed movement that must be changed by their more enlighten group. The exaggerations of such a list are telling. While there have been issues and trends, actual brotherhood schisms amount to some eight rather than 28. While eight is too many and those responsible will have to answer to God for their actions, it is unfair and unreasonable to blame the church for the failure of some of her disgruntled members. To do so is like blaming godly parents who have raised six faithful children, for the failure of one child who has chosen to abandon the faith.

Let us all give diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace (Eph. 4:3). We must not allow the enemies of the church to discourage or dishearten us by the false charges and accusations they make. May every faithful Christian reject the proposals of the promoters of change. **JHW**

HAS THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE BEEN PERFECTLY RESTORED?

Dear Bro. Waddey: You said, "No one with an open and honest mind would argue that we have perfectly restored every aspect of Christianity to its original basis." I am not sure what you mean by 'original basis' ? What is included? Lois

Dear Sis. Lois: When I say that no one with an open, honest mind would insist that we have succeeded in restoring every aspect of Christianity to its original basis, I mean that we as a body of people have not perfected our practice of the religion of Jesus. Just as each honest person must confess that he or she is an imperfect Christian, so we must acknowledge that our congregations are likewise imperfect...and all of us around the world who constitute the church of Christ of the 21st century are likewise imperfect. Restoration is our goal. It is our mechanism, method or approach to practicing Christianity. In my piece I mentioned such areas as evangelistic zeal, generosity, holiness of life, etc. as some areas where we have yet to reach the apostolic standard. Restoration is a never ending quest to which we are committed (Jer. 6:16). The fundamental matters of belief and practice we have found it easy to achieve, but others matters have proven more difficult. The church revealed in the Bible is our ideal, it is our intent to be like it in every way that is important. **JHW**

FACTIONS: WHAT DO THEY PROVE?

Those brethren who have appointed themselves to change our thinking and practice in order to make the church acceptable to our "Postmodern," Post-Christian generation, delight in pointing out the schisms that have occurred among us over the last 200 years and condemning us for them. Their conclusion is that since we have experienced divisions, therefore something is seriously wrong with our approach to serving Christ. Perhaps they have not noticed that Jesus and the apostles left us repeated warnings about false teachers who would infiltrate the church (Matt. 7:15). Some would corrupt her (II John 9-10); others would cause chaos and division (Rom. 16:18); still others would lead gullible disciples astray for their own selfish purposes (Acts 20:29-30).

It should come then as no surprise that churches of Christ in America have had their share of schisms over the years. Paul said to the Corinthians, "First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you...for there must also be factions among you: that they that are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 1:18-19). Rather than prove we are a flawed movement, as the change agents argue, it is precisely what one should expect to be the fate of God's church.

The day our forefathers committed themselves to go back to the Bible to restore the faith and worship thereof, Satan resolved to disrupt and destroy their undertaking. The day your congregation was established, he did the same. Old Diabolos never tires and never gives up. If a body of people is striving to be God's church they will have occasional disruptions caused by the prince of darkness. Of course, if a church is already following the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13), Satan has no need to disrupt them. God's will is for his people to live together in peace and harmony (Eph. 4:3). Those who cause division sin and will be held accountable (Gal. 5:19-21). Those who are promoting unscriptural changes are themselves causing division in congregations across the land. For their sinful actions they will have to give account unto God. When they enter into a church and schism occurs, folks are forced to examine the situation and make a decision to follow Christ and His Word or the change agents and their new practices. In this it is manifest who is truly obeying Christ and is therefore approved by Him. **JHW**

IS IT WISE TO CALL A BROTHER A CHANGE AGENT?

Dear Brother Waddey: I certainly agree that we cannot change the church beyond the limits of scripture. But if calling someone a legalist is a "religious slur" and slanderous, what is calling someone a "change agent?" The truth is always better presented without any name calling. Brotherly, Raymond

Dear Bro. Raymond: Thank you for your note. Are you aware that the people of whom I write call themselves "change agents?" This can be verified by looking at Lynn Anderson's book, **Navigating the Winds of Change**. Others do the same. They are very proud of what they are doing to our churches. While we must reflect the spirit of Christ in all we say or do, remember that Christ did not hesitate to call the religious leaders of his day "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Matt. 23:25). John called certain men of the church "false prophets" (I John 4:1). Paul called some of his brotherly opponents "false apostles and deceitful workers" (II Cor. 11:13-14).

I understand that my style may not please all in our postmodern age. Pluralism and multiculturalism insist that we not use terminology that paints things black or white. To speak vaguely of some unknown and unidentified danger leaves people ignorant of the problem and vulnerable to being overtaken by the promoters of error. Knowing this, I do what I must to communicate a word of warning to a brotherhood that is under siege. Tragically a great many of our people do not even realize that there is a problem. **JHW**

"The object of preaching is, constantly to remind mankind of what they are constantly forgetting..." (Sydney Smith).

PUTTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

I am an avid student of our brotherhood history. I have in my library virtually all the biographies and histories of our movement and at one time had bound volumes of most of our major papers and many minor ones as well. My reading in this area puts today's events in clear focus.

Following the Civil War the momentum escalated among an element of our people to change our churches, making them more appealing to society and especially to their denominational neighbors. Even then there were strands of thought that played out in what I see as four streams of brotherhood thought and action. There were the "moderate" progressives that clustered around Isaac Errett and the Christian Standard paper and the liberal element that were represented by J. H. Garrison and others of his stripe. They were truly theological liberals. Their movement and influence blossomed in the Disciples' Divinity House at the University of Chicago. They were to be the fathers of the modern Disciples of Christ. The heirs of those associated with the Standard were to be the Independent Christian Churches.

Among our folks there were likewise two streams. David Lipscomb was the moderate thought leader of our people and Daniel Sommer was the ultraconservative legalist. Lipscomb's heirs have represented the broad main stream of our churches that have prospered and grown while Sommer's heirs have morphed into a half dozen splintered sects at continual war among themselves and with the larger brotherhood. In the last 50 years the splinters have been largely isolated and had little influence on the larger church. But Satan has not rested.

Within the larger body three streams are now apparent. Another ultraconservative element has grown up. They have their papers and schools of preaching. In the last 30 years a liberal element has emerged that has recently reached full blossom in what I call "the change movement." These brethren have gradually gained position and power in many of our Christian Schools, Principally, Pepperdine, Abilene Christian and David Lipscomb Universities. In this group are two elements. Some are theological liberals. These are largely men who have pursued advanced education at some of the great secular universities or theological seminaries where liberalism was expected of all who expect to graduate. They look with scornful pity on preachers and elders who are not their intellectual equals. Others are immature men of meager Bible knowledge who are like the Athenian philosophers, eager to try anything new or different. They are enamored with bigness and worldly success. The one thing both of these groups have in common is a lack of genuine love and commitment to the church Christ built and the concept of restoring the faith, worship and practice of that church in the 21st century. Rather than rejecting and abandoning denominational religion for the pure faith and worship of the New Testament Church, they are abandoning that for the warm fellowship of denominationalism. Strangely the things they are most dissatisfied with and determined to change are the same things the progressives of a 125 year ago were advocating. Even the arguments used to justify their proposed changes are virtually identical to those of that distant time. Thus is fulfilled the ancient proverb, "History repeats itself"...or as the Tennessee farmer says, "What goes around, comes around."

Struggling to survive in the midst of this maelstrom are the mainstream churches who refuse to follow the extremes of either right or left. JHW

"The present state of things is the consequence of the past; and it is natural to inquire as to the sources of the good we enjoy or the evils we suffer" (Johnson).

"The future of a country (make that church) is safe only in the hands of those to whom her past is dear" (W. R. Inge).

"Study the past if you would divine the future" (Confucius).

TWO KINDS OF HERETICS

From the beginning there have always been heretics who taught error and sought to lead God's people astray. (I Pet. 2:1-18). Those who pursued their wayward course to its conclusion were branded apostates and denied fellowship (Rom. 16:17-18). It should come as no surprise to us that there are heretics among us today...and that many of them are well on the road to complete apostasy. Only in heaven will such departures from the Lord cease to occur. Studying the history of our people is an enlightening experience. In doing so, we see a never ending stream of unfaithful men who lost their faith in the ancient gospel and began teaching a new and different message. Two different types of heretics are also seen: those who are respectable and those who are not.

Respectable heretics will admit their loss of faith. They will acknowledge that they have embraced a new doctrine. They will openly declare that they are no longer in sympathy with the Church of Christ. They will resign their posts as preachers or as teachers in Christian schools because they cannot in honesty continue in something they do not believe in. They will leave behind the church they no longer sympathize with and seek fellowship and positions among those who share their new beliefs; whether it be Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal or Unitarian. While this degree of honesty will not forgive their abandonment of the way of Christ, nor will it give them any advantage in judgment, at least they will not have compounded their sin and guilt by dishonesty.

Unrespectable heretics, on the other hand, will hide and deny their loss of faith. They will cloak their false ideas in the language of the old acceptable doctrine. They will protest and feign great hurt and dismay when they are charged with departures. They will cling to a paying position rather than gracefully leave for a new field. They will try to lead a band of disciples away from the faith, practice and worship of the church they entered upon becoming Christians into something new and different. They will generally do so with out being forthright and frank in so doing. To start a new congregation from scratch is too hard for such heretics. They will try to commandeer the meeting house of a church or a school built by those who did not share their new faith. In every departure, without exception, those leaving, always try to get control of the church's property. They don't want to have to raise the money, sacrifice and struggle to build their own meeting places. They want the prestige and respectability that goes with the property that has long housed a congregation of God's people. By securing the building, they hope that other Christians will not exclude and shun them as the heretics they are. There is a sense of conquest and victory if they can storm and take the fortress of the owners they would overthrow.

Although I regret to hear of any brother departing from the faith, I confess I do have a degree of respect for the man who forthrightly tells me, "I no longer believe what I used to believe. I am resigning my position and going elsewhere." But I have nothing but contempt for the apostate who lingers among us to rob from Christ all the members, and resources he can before he is driven out. Let us watch to see into which category those who are determined to impose unscriptural changes on us will place themselves. **JHW**

"Ignorance is the mark of the heathen, knowledge of the true church, and conceit of the heretics"
(Clement of Alexandria).

"The essence of true holiness consists in conformity to the nature and will of God" (Samuel Lucas).

"Men's hearts ought not to be set against one another, but set with one another, and all against evil only"
(Carytyle).

TWO KINDS OF CRITICS

There is a difference between those who see a problem and with good will, desire to help fix it and those who look for flaws and failures to justify attaching the person, institution or church they hold in low esteem. The former group help us grow. Their criticisms are to be cherished (Prov. 25:12). The latter crowd discourage and destroy those that they propose to help. Edmund Burke asked, "Is it in destroying and pulling down that skill is displayed? The shallowest understanding, the rudest hand, is more than equal to that task." Beaconsville wrote, "It is much easier to be critical than to be correct." David was the victim of men who "sharpened their tongue like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips" (Ps. 140:3).

A certain class of political liberals see no good in America and thus they magnify every fault and problem. They seem to hate the nation of their nativity and wish her ill in her undertakings. So do religious liberals treat the church. They see no good in her. They exaggerate every flaw and failure. They hold up her shortcomings for public ridicule. They treat their spiritual predecessors with contempt. They are spiritually arrogant and reflect an air of superiority toward the common folk of the church. They hold in admiration, the religious bodies around us who embrace doctrines and practices patently foreign to Scripture. They dare to lay their profane hands on the sacred things of the Lord's church, his bride; her worship, her doctrines, her practices. They destroy the church they inherited from their fathers in the faith. They do so, while assuring us that they are doing so for beneficial purposes and our own good. Such is a fair description of the change agents at work among our churches.

Such destructive criticism is not new. Through the years, wise men have observed it at work and passed harsh judgments against it.

* J. C. Sharpe understood that "Criticism is not religion, and by no process can it be substituted for it"

* H. C. Trumbull believed that "An over-readiness to criticize or to depreciate a minister of Christ is proof of a lack of devotion to Christ.

* Washington Irvin opined, "There is a certain meddling spirit which, in the garb of learned research, goes prying about the traces of history, casting down its monuments, and marring and mutilating its fairest trophies. Care should be taken to vindicate great names from such pernicious erudition."

* Addison rightly observed, "I never knew a critic who made it his business to lash the faults of other writers that was not guilty of greater himself...as the hangman is generally a worse malefactor than the criminal that suffers by his hand" Henry Longfellow wrote, "Some critics are like chimney-sweepers; they put out the fire below, and frighten the swallows from their nest above; they scrape a long time in the chimney, cover themselves with soot, and bring nothing away but a bag of cinders, and then sing out from the top of the house, as if they had built it."

Let this be our daily prayer: "Lord, save me from critical fault-finding habits into which so many people fall. Keep my heart tender, sympathetic and hopeful. Help me to be firm and steadfast in my loyalty to truth and always clear as to what truth is." (Unknown). JHW

"A cunning man is never a firm man; but an honest man is; a double-minded man is always unstable; a man of faith is firm as a rock. There is a sacred connection between honest and faith; honesty is faith applied..."
(Edward Irving).

"The worst deluded are the self-deluded" (Bovee).

"I believe that the Bible is to be understood and received in the plain and obvious meaning of its passages; for I cannot persuade myself that a book intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world should cover its true meaning in any such mystery and doubt that none but critics and philosophers can discover it"
(Daniel Webster).

FALSE EQUATIONS

“Equate” means to treat, represent, or regard as equal, equivalent or comparable. Experience tells us that many of the equations people try to make are in fact false. Reading the literature of the “change agents” working among us I am struck by the numerous false equations found therein.

* **Old does not equal useless.** They tend to discount, denigrate and toss out anything that brethren did before they (the change agents) came along.

* **New does not equal good.** New methods and approaches may or may not be beneficial. But some are clearly contrary to the revealed will of God and some are detrimental to the body. These folks have a bundle of new ideas and practices for our people. Old timers use to call them innovations.

* **Big does not equal right.** True, the change agents have captured several of our largest congregations. They aspire to build mega churches like their role models in the denominational “Community Church” movement have done. Success and growth are only good and right if they are based upon the Word of Christ (John 12:48).

* **Small does not equal failure or bad.** To read the criticism of the “progressives” the large number of our small congregations suggests that something is missing in our approach. They fail to factor in that the masses of humanity have always and will always reject the gospel call. They don’t understand the Biblical truth that “it is the remnant that will be saved” (Rom. 9:27).

* **Faith without obedience does not equal acceptance by God.** God says through James that it is dead and useless (Jas.2:24-26).

* **Grace plus nothing on man’s part does not equal salvation** as some of them say. Paul says it is grace plus faith (Eph. 2:8-9) that saves. Jesus said obedience must be factored in (John 12:48).

* **Youth and popularity do not equal being pleasing to God.** The Baby-boomers have now reached the age of leadership. They tend to ignore those who are older as they aspire to lead the younger. That they are wooed by the advertising industry and retailers does not make them special with the Creator. With omniscient eyes He sees the selfish, shallow, presumptuous fickleness many of them demonstrate in their conduct.

* **Applause of the denominational world does not equal approval of God.** That a brother writes books designed to please the denominational world and is praised by them for so doing is an indictment rather than an honor. Its like writing, “In the beginning the world evolved,” and being applauded by the advocates of evolution.

* **Advanced educational degrees do not equal Bible knowledge.** Most of the promoters of change proudly display their badges of academic achievement. But those who are steeped in the word of God know that many of them are bloated with human wisdom rather than filled with wisdom from Above.

* **Denial of intent to reshape the church of Christ into a denomination does not equate with reality.** By the fruits ye shall know them, said Christ (Matt. 7:16).

* **Pretense does not equal reality.** Pretending to love the church of Christ, to be faithful members thereof does not necessarily prove to be true. Again, one must look at the churches where these men hold forth to see just how they regard the church of our Lord. Results speak louder than pretense.

* **Using a new paradigm for interpreting the Bible does not equal a correct understanding of it.** Read their new book, *God’s Holy Fire* (ACU Press), and see just how faulty their “New Hermeneutic” learned from denominational scholars really is.

Because some dishonest business people use faulty scales to enrich themselves, the government maintains a Bureau of Weights and Measurements. Because of the false equations mentioned above, wise Christians will be extremely cautious of any brother, book or school that promotes “changes” for churches of Christ. **JHW**

“He gains wisdom in a happy way, who gains it by another’s experience” (Plautus).

“When thou art obliged to speak, be sure to speak the truth; for equivocation is half way to lying, and lying is the whole way to hell” (Wm. Penn).

THE MIXED MULTITUDE

When the Hebrews left Egypt, a multitude of Gentiles of various races and tribes went with them. They took advantage of the opportunity to escape Pharaoh's tyranny (Ex. 12:38). Not being Hebrews, they knew nothing of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had no knowledge of Joseph. They cared little about the covenant and promises God had made to the Hebrew patriarchs. They had no tradition of Jehovah worship. They saw an opportunity for freedom and grabbed it. As Moses led the vast horde of pilgrims across the hostile desert land the people murmured and complained, even rebelled against Moses. Among those who complained was that "mixed multitude." "And the mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceedingly: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all save this manna . . ." (Num. 11:46).

So today we have a mixed multitude in the midst of God's church.

* Some in the church have never obeyed from the heart that form of teaching (Rom.6:17-18). They found their way into church because their parents were members. They grew up going to a church of Christ. They were baptized as children, without any real conversion. It was not a matter of faith and conviction that brought them in, rather it was the thing to do. Other kids were being baptized. Mom and dad expected them to do the same.

* Others came into the church through marriage or because they were attracted to a personable preacher. Some were drawn by ball teams or addiction recovery classes that met in the church building. They came, they made friends, they found pleasant surroundings, they stayed. They were baptized to join, but never were taught, convinced and convicted.

* Some came from denominational churches. Since they had been baptized when they joined their previous church, they were accepted without question or further instruction.

* Some came to the church with proper instruction and immersion, but were never taught the "doctrine of Christ" (II John 9-11). They remain at the entrance level of knowledge, novices in the faith of Christ (I Cor. 3:1-2). Hence their thinking still contains many faulty views from their prior religious experience, education and the culture about them.

* Some started off well. They were properly taught and introduced into the body of Christ. They went to Christian schools so they could have the advantage of an education in a Christian environment, with Christian teachers and peers. But tragically while there, teachers who were no longer faithful to Christ were able to fill their hearts with doubts about the church and the faith. Some left school, crippled in their faith, others were so corrupted in their thinking that they abandoned Christ or left for some other kind of religion foreign to his Will and Way.

* Others in our mixed multitude started out well. They heard, embraced and obeyed the gospel of our Lord. Filled with zeal they wanted to preach or teach in a Christian school. Pursuing their higher education, they enrolled in secular or denominational schools where they were brain washed and poisoned against the simple gospel of Christ and the primitive church. Rather than leave the church, they cling to their membership. Many of them are useless in the local church. Some are even dangerous and harmful as they seek to share their defective views of Scripture, worship and the church.

From this mixed multitude we are hearing a clamorous call for changes in the church. Like those in Moses' day they long for the things of the world. Baptism is oppressive to them. They want to accept people on faith alone. They chaff at the idea of God's word being the law of the kingdom (Gal. 6:2). They want grace with no law at all. Following the thinking of the modern world, they insist that women should be given leadership roles in the church. They grow weary of simple, Bible-based worship and demand excitement and entertainment. They want solos, singing groups, choirs and the like. They want performance rather than preaching. They want acceptance by the world and can't endure being separate and different. They want the church to change so she will be acceptable to the other religious bodies about her. They murmur against preachers and elders who will not join them in their quest to change the faith, worship and practice of the church.

The mixed multitude with Moses lusted for the pleasant things of Egypt and wanted to go back and enjoy them; even if it meant slavery. Our mixed multitude, are willing to cast aside their freedom in Christ and go back into the spiritual chains of denominationalism. Moses' mixed multitude proved themselves unworthy of the opportunity God gave them. They were a source of constant agitation within the camp of Israel. Our mixed multitude are of the same spirit.

Only those who truly love and Christ, his Word and his church have a place among the Israel of God. Unless the mixed multitude are willing to submit to the Lordship and authority of Jesus, we would be better off if they leave us and return to their spiritual Egypt. **JHW**

WHY DON'T THEY JUST ADMIT IT?

Those caught up the change movement have already or are in the process of abandoning the faith of Christ revealed in the Bible (I Tim. 4:1). They despise the church of Christ. They no longer believe the principles of the faith; they no longer worship according to the Biblical instruction; they no longer want to identify themselves as members of the church of Christ. Many of them have repudiated, the idea of restoring the ancient faith and practice of Christianity found in Scripture.

Why then are these champions of change so determined to stay in our midst? Why do they protest so loudly when they are charged with departing from the faith? Why will they not just admit that they have abandoned their former relationship with the churches of Christ?

- * Perhaps it is a matter of pride. Sinful man hates to admit he is wrong or has been wrong?
- * It may be financial. It is often the case that members of congregations that been captured by agents of change are unaware of what is happening. If they understood that their young preacher has repudiated the faith, they would call for his resignation or leave the congregation or withhold their contributions. To protect their financial base they pretend they are faithful preachers of the word, knowing full-well they are not. To do otherwise would wreck their scheme by cutting off the flow of income (II Pet. 2:15).
- * They have a circle of influence among some churches and schools who while willing to tolerate a large degree of error and foolishness, would back away if a man declared he was not longer a part of the church of Christ. If such occurred the promoter of change would suddenly find himself with a shrunken circle of influence and fewer places to speak and influence brethren to embrace the doctrine of change.
- * Some will thus pretend because of family connections or friends. They know their parents, other close relatives and friends would be shocked, hurt or even alienated if they discovered the preacher had renounced the church of Christ. Hence to keep such ties intact, they will continue the charade of being faithful members of a church they no longer believe in.
- * Some, having already rejected the church in their hearts, are waiting to be sure the majority are going their way before they abandon the ship. They don't want to make a rash move and find themselves on a limb that is going to be sawed off.

It is obvious to those familiar with Scripture that none of these possibilities is scriptural or honorable. An honest soul would just admit, I no longer believe as churches of Christ believe, I am leaving for those who share my changed faith. But only *honest* souls would do this and accept the consequences. **JHW**

WHICH SAVES HOLY SPIRIT OR WATER BAPTISM?

Dear Marc: You say "Baptism is not necessary for salvation." Peter says "Baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21). Who am I to believe? Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Should I follow you or Jesus? Ananias told Saul, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins..." (Acts 22:16). Is it possible that you know more about how to be saved than did he?

It is quite true that Cornelius received the baptism of the Holy Spirit before he was baptized in water. You must read Peter's explanation of what happened that day and why, to see the true meaning of the record. He said, "If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:17-18). When Peter saw them baptized in the Holy Spirit, he understood that we Gentiles were welcomed into Christ's kingdom just as were the Jews. He then "commanded them to be baptized (in water) in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48). Look carefully at the two cases of Holy Spirit baptism found in the New Testament and in neither cases is Holy Spirit linked with forgiveness of sins.

I do hope this information is helpful to you. Continue to search the scriptures for in them you will find eternal life. **JHW**

LABELS

A few days ago a visiting Christian inquired, "Are you liberal or conservative?" Fifty years ago no one ever had to ask that of a gospel preacher. Today the question is quite relevant. These and other labels have become common in our generation. Labels are slippery, uncertain things. One man's liberal is another man's conservative. To an "agent of change," I am a conservative, even a radical. But to a brother who styles himself "non-institutional," I am a liberal. I see myself as a faithful Christian, loyal to Christ, honoring his Word, today just as I did 47 years ago.

In order to communicate clearly we need to attach specific definitions to the terms we use. Those of us who occupy the traditional position of Churches of Christ in America, see ourselves as conservatives who occupy the middle ground between liberals on the left and radicals on the right of the spectrum. We respect the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. We regard it as the absolute and final authority in all matters relating to the faith and practice of the church. We thus recognize Christ as founder, head and savior of the church. All the words and deeds of Christ are true and reliable. He is coming again to judge the world according to this Word (John 12:48). We are still committed to the concept of restoring the faith and practice of the church as it was in the beginning (Jer. 6:16).

The term "liberal" has various shades of meaning. In modern Protestant theological circles, a liberal rejects the notion of the Bible as a supernatural book, inspired of God. He does not view it as having full authority over the lives of Christians and the church. He rejects such items as the virgin birth of Christ, his miracles, the resurrection and ascension. To a liberal truth is relative, not absolute. Thus to him the beliefs and practices of the church can and should change with changing times

The liberals at work among us are not generally of this extreme stripe. Ours would never openly question the inspiration of the Bible, although they do hold a low view of its absolute authority for the church. They spend much of their time and energy knocking their predecessors and contemporaries in the faith who are determined to cling to the old paths of New Testament Christianity. They are constantly pushing the limits, embracing changes without too much concern whether they are Biblically approved. Like rebellious young folks, they are eager to abandon the past standards of their spiritual ancestors. As young folks are wont to do, they are always seeking something new or different. Like young adults away at college they have embraced exotic ideas and can hardly wait to get back home and show them off to the unenlightened folks on the farm.

Two areas that are red flag issues for our brotherhood liberals are their willingness to accept, or at least to tolerate, the use of instrumental music in worship and the assumption that the church of Christ is really, not the church of the Bible, but only a denomination. That being the case they are ready to extend the hand of fellowship to other religious organizations, which in their thinking are of equally value with us.

Radicals stand to the right of us. We share with them all the basic assumptions about Scripture, the miraculous and the Savior. The difference is in attitude and emphasis. Where the conservative tries to preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), the radical presents his message in a harsh, and often hateful way. The conservative loves his fellow-Christians, even those who are drifting toward liberalism or radicalism. Thus he will be patient in trying to correct them and win them back. Conservatives are slow to withdraw fellowship from those who are going astray while radicals seem eager to break fellowship. Conservatives are quick to welcome home the brother who has gotten into the ditch. Radicals tend to be unforgiving and very slow to let the prodigal come home. Conservatives regret having to do battle with fellow Christians, preferring to make war with enemies of the faith who are outside the family. Radicals seem eager to take the sword against a brother with whom they disagree.

Radicals eventually grow so disenchanted with the brotherhood that they separate themselves, claiming to be the only true representatives of the Lord's church. Over the last century, four such separations occurred.

While labels are unfortunate, they are part of our vocabulary of communication. Even the apostles labeled certain men as false teachers, false prophets and enemies of the cross of Christ (I John 4:1; Phil. 3:18). Our daily prayer should be that God will open the eyes of our hearts (Eph. 1:18) and enable us to discern between the good and the bad; between those teachers and writers among us who are faithful and loyal to Christ, his church and his Word and those who are radical or liberal (Lev. 10:10). Truth will always be found in the middle ground between those two extremes (Prov. 4:25-

LEADERSHIP BY CONSENSUS

Those who are promoting changes for the church want a new and (in their opinion) improved way of making decisions for the church. We hear them saying, "elders are not to rule over the congregation but govern only by consensus." Strange that the Holy Spirit did not have the advantage of their input when he wrote the Hebrew Christians to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them..." (Heb. 13:17). Granted, elders are not to be dictators or tyrants. Granted, they do not lord it over the flock (I Pet. 5:2-3). God describes them as shepherds and the church as a flock of sheep in their charge (Acts 20:28-29). Most shepherds do not guide their flock by seeking consensus of the sheep. They do not drive them, but they do lead them in safe and proper paths. They make the decisions necessary for the welfare of the flock.

The idea of consensus has gained popularity, with change agents promoting it as a vital part of their agenda for changing the church. They find it difficult to penetrate and gain control of a congregation whose elders are not easily deceived. Elders can refuse to hire a smooth talking, impressive preacher even if the congregation is taken with him. If they are uncertain of his soundness they can pass him by. Elders can dismiss a preacher who has embraced the errors of the change movement, even if the majority of the members are fooled by him. Elders can decide who will or will not teach a class; which brotherhood activities will or will not be promoted; which guest speakers will be invited to come. They can determine the direction the congregation will travel. Such is not good for the change agents who wish to commandeer a congregation for their new movement. To change agents, the solution for this problem is governance by consensus. We need only point out that such is a non-Biblical approach to directing God's people. This should be sufficient for all who truly love and honor Christ as Lord and head of the church (Eph. 1:22).

The following quote is most insightful and should be well-considered by all who want to see God's church survive and prosper.

"Ah consensus—the process of abandoning all beliefs, principles, values and policies in search of something in which no one believes, but to which no one objects; the process of avoiding the very issues that have to be solved, merely because you cannot get agreement on the way ahead. What great cause would have been fought and won under the banner of "I stand for consensus?" (Margaret Thatcher).

May the God of heaven bless every congregation with elders who are truly capable of leading His people in paths of righteousness and who will protect them from those who would do them harm. JHW

THE UNTOUCHABLES

A few years ago there was a popular TV series called the "Untouchables." It was about Eliot Ness and his fellow federal agents who broke the back of organized crime. While other governmental officials were corrupted, that band of men refused to compromise themselves. Thus they were called "the Untouchables." In the Christian religion there are untouchables.

* **God's Word is untouchable.** "Add thou not to his words lest he reprove thee..." (Prov. 30:6). "If any man added unto the words of the prophecy of this book, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book God shall take away his part in the tree of life..." (Rev. 22:18-19). "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God" (II John 9).

* **God's way of salvation is untouchable.** "Except ye believe that I (Jesus) am *he* (i.e. Messiah) ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "In no other name is there salvation" (Acts 4:11-12). Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto him: (Heb. 11:6). He is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Heb. 5:9).

* **The worship Christ ordained is untouchable.** It must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It involves singing (Eph. 5:19), prayers, offerings, communion with bread and fruit of the vine in memory of Christ (I Cor. 11:23-26) and instruction in God's Word (Acts 20:7). We have no right to add any additional element or to neglect or remove a single item in our worship. Those who do so will have to answer to God for their action. Those who respect God's untouchables will hear him say "Well done, good and faithful servant" JHW

SOME THINGS BAPTISM CANNOT DO

Baptism is a fundamental ordinance of the Christian faith. Christ commanded it (Acts 10:48). Salvation is conditioned thereon (Acts 22:16) It is a test of ones faith in God, for if we love him we will keep his commandments (John 14:15). However, with all its importance, there are some things that baptism cannot do.

Baptism cannot make a baby a Christian. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15). Infants are not capable of believing, therefore they are not proper subjects of baptism. The fact is that infants, young children and those who are mentally deficient do not need baptism for them are not lost. They belong to God by creation. Only when folks have sinned do they need baptism to wash their sins away (Acts 22:16). The disciples were called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). A disciple is a student. This then demands a level of growth and maturity before one is capable of being a Christian. Not only is infant baptism contrary to Scripture, it fails to accomplish what its practitioner's wish.

Baptism will not allow you to keep what you have illegally taken. Peter said we must repent and baptized (Acts 2:38). If you had stolen my car and then were baptized, repentance would demand that you return it. John the Baptist insisted that the News bring forth fruit worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8). Zacchaeus understood that he needed to restore that which had wrongfully taken if he was to become Christ's disciple (Lk. 19:8).

Baptism will not make a sinful practice acceptable to God. Homosexual relationships are condemned by God as abominable (Lev. 18:22). If those who are practicing homosexuals are baptized, they must cease their sinful conduct, else their baptism is in vain. Repentance must precede baptism (Acts 2:38). Baptism will not sanctify an illicit relationship. Thousands of couples are living together outside of wedlock. Simply being baptized will not make their relationship holy. They need to be properly, legally married to make their relationship acceptable to God.

Baptism will not free one of legal penalties and responsibilities for prior deeds. Most preachers have experienced the person who was afoul of the law showing up, desiring to be baptized. He fondly hoped that the fact of his baptism would persuade the judge that no penalty should be assessed. While baptism, sincerely sought, will bring him forgiveness in God's sight, he must still answer to the civil laws he broke, even if that means capital punishment for a capital wrong.

Success in baptizing large numbers of people will not make a false teacher right in God's eyes, nor should it in the eyes of the church. Frequently we see false teachers pleading that their success in conversions should make us tolerant of their error. Or they vainly hope that God will excuse their vagrant teachings in view of their many converts. Sad to say, some thoughtless brethren will seek to justify keeping or using a preacher who is unsound because of his ability to move people to request baptism.

Baptizing many converts will not legitimize or excuse a factious movement that has wreaked havoc upon and divided the body of Christ. Strife, factions, divisions and parties are works of the flesh for which men will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21). Christians are expected to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Sprit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). A method of evangelism that has disrupted numerous congregations is no less sinful because some of their workers report many baptisms in a year.

Baptism is a vital part of the Lord's system. It beautifully typifies the Lord's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-5). It is the appointed time, place and means wherein the blood of Jesus washes sins away (Acts 22:16). It puts us into the body of Christ which is the church (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22). But there are some things baptism can never do. Don't place your hope in these mistaken notions. To do so will only bring disappointment and disaster. JHW

***"He knows very little of mankind, who expects by any acts or reasoning, to convince a determined party-man"
(Lavater).***

"We are not helped in fighting evil by exaggerating its extent. In rejecting or refuting the exaggeration, men often make the truth a victim" (N. Thomas)

DISCERNING THE ISSUES

Those who lead God's people must be men of discernment, able to recognize the difference between truth and error, between the holy and the common and to teach and lead the saints in righteous paths. (Ezek. 44:23). To protect the infant church the Holy Spirit endowed some leaders with the gift of "discerning of spirits" (I Cor. 12:10). As the church of today is confronted by a host of false teachers who are clamoring for drastic changes in our faith, worship and practice we desperately need wise men who can discern what the real issues are.

* **The issue is not new songs.** All songs were once new. Every generation of Christians have learned new songs. Many Christian have written hymns that have were introduced to our people. Some proved acceptable and appealing and found a permanent place in our hymnals. Others did not. The choice of songs belongs to the elders and the congregation who use them in worship; certainly not to university professors. It becomes an issue when a few seek to impose their choice of hymns on the whole church and are willing to press their preference to the point of division. Faction and division are sinful (Tit. 3:10).

* **The issue is not short songs with few words or songs not printed in our hymnals.** All hymns, save the Psalms, are the products of uninspired men. Two hundred years ago no hymnals had musical notations and harmony lines.

* **The issue is not songs that originated among other faiths.** Most of the great hymns we sing were written by poets of other churches. The issue is the content of the songs. Do they convey Biblical truth? If they express true worship and do not promote error they are acceptable.

* **That lyrics of songs are projected on a screen is not the issue.** Remember, song books for each member are a fairly modern convenience. I have worshiped with churches in Africa where only the song leader had a hymnal. They were a luxury the rest could not afford.

* **Having a group skilled singers sitting together or having microphones is not the issue,** not so long as the singing is congregational. Back in the 50s some congregations, in order to improve their singing, encouraged their skilled singers to sit together near the front of the auditorium. But when the group becomes a choir performing as others listen that is an issue to be met.

* **Having more than one song leader stand before the congregation at the same time is not the issue.** The Bible says nothing about song leaders, one or more, standing before the congregation and leading the singing. I have seen two and even three song leaders standing before a church in mission fields where there were no trained and accomplished song directors. They needed the help and reassurance the others could lend them. If they sang different songs at the same time that would cause confusion. If they were there to perform for the entertainment of the audience, whether a solo, duet or trio, that would be an issue. Worship is not entertainment.

* **The issue is not casual dress worn at church.** God does not prescribe a fashion standard for his worshipers. We have a cultural and even religious tradition of "Sunday dress" for worship. Such is neither scriptural nor unscriptural. I prefer to dress up for church. But not every one shares that preference. In the ancient times, when many slaves were brought into the church, I suspect they did not have the option of dressing up for worship. So long as our dress is modest (I Tim. 2:9), and appropriate for Christians assembled before Jehovah, customs and conventions of the age and place will have a bearing on the degree of formality. **The real issue is having a casual attitude toward the church, the Word of God and his worship.** God rebuked the prophet-preachers of Israel who were "light" and treacherous (Zeph. 3:4). Proclaiming the gospel and worshiping Jehovah is serious business, and should be approached with proper solemnity. Preachers should leave the comedy routine to the comedians.

* **The issue is not raising the hands in prayer.** Ancient Christians sometimes lifted up holy hands when praying (I Tim. 2:8). A similar reference is found in Ps. 134:2. But if someone thinks by such outward actions we can generate a superior spirituality, they deceive themselves. Lifting up of hands is an outward posture in prayer just as kneeling, standing or falling on ones face. It has no special spiritual value. **An issue occurs when a preacher or praise leader calls on the congregation lift up their voices in simultaneous prayer,** (such as I recently witnessed) With many praying aloud there was confusion. That is an issue since God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He wants all things to "be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

* **The issue is not whether or not to have Sunday evening or mid-week services.** Those are wonderful practices; edifying, educating and exhorting those who attend. But God does not command three services per week. He ordained that we assemble on the first day to break the bread (Acts 20:7). Other classes and services are options that elders may use or not use. Many churches, operating in less favorable circumstances, such as mission areas, do not have them. Many of our churches in days past, when transportation was more difficult, did not have them. The issue is what do the leaders do or not do when their people assemble. Do they honor God by obeying His will to the very best of their

knowledge and ability?

***The real issue is not which translation a preacher, teacher or congregation uses.** A false teacher can promote his error from the King James Version as well as from the New International Version. All translations are the products of uninspired men. All have strengths and weaknesses. All stand in need of wise teachers to explain their meaning; even the tried and true KJV. It is the doctrine they teach that is the issue. Is it true to God's revealed will or contrary to it? That is the issue.

*** The issue is not were some of our earlier preachers limited in their education or unpolished in their methods.** Of course some of them were. They were human, men of their generation. Some of them had few talents and opportunities to improve them, but they used them in a remarkable successful way. But others had advanced education, were true Bible scholars and were polished orators. **The real question is do today's change agents have the love and respect for God's Word, and his church that those pioneers had?**

*** The issue is not have we have too much division and strife within the church.** The answer is yes. But such problems are not unique to Churches of Christ. All other religious bodies have their problems as well. Even one division is too much, especially if I am the one responsible for it. The question is who has been responsible for the divisions of the past? It is unfair to blame the wife whose abusive husband beats her for not maintaining peace in her home. Likewise it is unreasonable to blame the Lord's church because ambitious, misguided, carnal, contentious brethren fomented strife and division. They bear the blame, not the church which suffered from their abuse.

*** The issue is not shall we adjust to face our changing society and culture.** We have always adjusted in areas where Christ left us free to do so. We don't dress like our 19th century forebearers did. We have modern buildings. We have adjusted our methods for evangelism. We don't have 2-3 hour sermons. We have all the modern conveniences such as electricity, air-conditioning and indoor plumbing. **The issue is the kind of changes the change agents wish to impose upon our churches.** They wish to touch those things sacred and holy; such things as worship, how we are saved, the role of women in church leadership, the unique and separate nature of Christ's church. That God does not allow, nor can we stand idle while they profane that which is holy.

*** The issue is not are there some radical, vituperative, ultra-conservatives among us.** Yes there are. There have always been such folks. The church in general does not endorse, approve or support their methods or narrow views. **The real issue is are the change agents any better than those on the far right?** In dishonest fashion, they hold these radicals up as typical of all who oppose them. God's truth always lies between the extremes of legalism and liberalism, between radical conservatives and liberal change agents (Prov. 4:26-27).

*** The issue is not change.** Faithful brethren have and will always welcome changes from bad to good; from the mistaken to the correct; from unscriptural to scriptural; from poor methods to better ones; from ineffective means to effective ones that advance the Cause of Christ according to his will. **The real issue is the kind of changes the "change agents" would have us make:** changes from the Biblical way to non-biblical ways; changes from Christ's authority to that of the multitude; changes from the sacred to the worldly; from the apostolic pattern to that of our secular culture; changes from the teaching of men appointed by Christ (the Apostles) to men appointed by themselves to remake his church.

Only when we understand what the real issues are will we be able to deal with them in an effective way. May God give us preachers and elders who can discern between the "holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Lev. 10:10). Without them we will be overrun by the those who are enemies of the Cause of Christ. **JHW**

"I have seldom known any one who deserted truth in trifles that could be trusted in matters of importance" (W. Paley).

"Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct" (Thomas Carlyle).

*"Men are apt to prefer a prosperous error to an afflicted truth"
(Jeremy Taylor).*

A LESSON FROM NATURE IN AN AGE OF CHANGE

King Solomon found it useful to draw illustrations from nature to teach his moral lessons. Ants teach diligence, locusts team work, lizards audacity and conies wise planning (Prov. 30:25-28). Nature also provides Christian leaders useful lessons in this day when liberal proponents of change are surfacing throughout our brotherhood.

As **termites** delight to feed on the foundations of find old homes and eventually bring them to ruin, so the liberal preacher or disciple loves to eat away at the foundations of a congregation. Termites do their destructive work secretly and quietly. The unsuspecting owner never realizes their presence until serious damage is done. So the liberal does his work in a congregation. Many an unsuspecting eldership has labored under the false impression that they had a great servant of God in their midst. Thinking he was building up the body of Christ, they discovered later he had undermined their authority and subverted their leadership. Consequently the congregation fell into the hands of those who had abandoned the faith of Christ for a new gospel (Gal. 1:6-7).

As the **chameleon** can change his colors to match his environment, so the liberal can put on various faces as the occasion demands. If asked point-blank if he is teaching error, he can easily deny it or couch his answer in slippery words designed to fool his questioner. He can affect an air of being crushed that anyone would doubt his loyalty to the old Biblical ways. In the presence of strong conservatives he can appear to be one of them. But with a fellow liberal he can take on his hue. He is capable of preaching good sermons that have the ring of the old "Jerusalem gospel" but he can go into a home and cast doubt on the foundational truths of the religion of Christ. Speaking for a liberal church he can give them just what they wish to hear, and then do the same for a conservative congregation. To a liberal, truth is a malleable, subjective thing. He does not believe it to be hard and fast. Also he tends to believe that his agenda for changing the church justifies his being like the chameleon to achieve his goal.

Just as **mice** never wait for an invitation, so liberals will insinuate themselves in to a congregation and begin to make it their own. They rarely wait to be invited to come and change a church. They take it upon themselves to do so. Just as no thinking person wants mice in his home, no spiritual minded elder wants to have a liberal at work in the congregation he leads. Once ensconced they are hard to get rid of and they are destructive.

In delivering his lessons from nature, Solomon said, "Go to the ant...Consider her ways and be wise" (Prov. 6:6). Wise leaders will remember the termite, the chameleon and the mouse and be wise. **JHW**

CAN'T MEN LEARN FROM WOMEN?

Dear Mr. Waddey: I don't want to create problems and don't intend to push for change right now. However, the restrictions on women sound like statements from Paul to an individual church to go with the customs. Does it really make sense to limit women teaching in the church? I've heard teenagers and young men preach. I'm sure you have too. Couldn't your Mom, Wife, Grandmother teach us all great lessons? I've thought many times that men were shortchanged by this. I can learn from anyone. What about all the great religious books out by women. Sandra

Dear Sandra: Of course we can all learn from intelligent women. All of us have. I learned much about life and the Bible from my grandmothers, mother and wife. My daughters taught me some things I needed to know. Women have written some very useful books and articles

That however does not alter the fact that God has clearly specified in the Scripture that the husband is the head of the wife in the home (Eph. 5:22-23); that elders are to be men (I Tim. 3:1) and that women are not allowed to teach or have authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12; that they are to keep silent in the church assemblies (I Cor. 14:33-34). The question is not how intelligent our sisters are, but what is God's instructions about their role in the leadership of the church? A second question is do you believe and accept what the Bible says on the matter? I sincerely hope so. **JHW**

"Buy the truth and sell it not" (Solomon, Prov. 23:23).

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 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

SHOULD WE OPPOSE FALSE TEACHING?

Dear Bro. Waddey: The brethren who want to condemn and attack the change agents are *just as dangerous* to the cause of Christ, especially to those outside Christ, or babes who do not understand the aggressive way you and others choose to "teach." Such negative approaches have been damaging, and I will have no part in it. WD.

Dear Bro. WD: Thanks for sharing your thoughts. When a nation is under attack by an aggressor nation, several options present themselves. They can be neutral and refuse to fight and be overrun and brought under subjection, or they can fight to save their homeland. So it is in the Lord's kingdom. If all thought as you suggest then eventually there would be no Church of Christ, only denominations. Was Paul wrong when he said he was set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16)? Was he wrong to instruct Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith?" (I Tim. 6:12)? Why are we told to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3)?

I readily grant that we must not have a mean, hateful spirit. Those who love to fight for the fun of fighting are wrong. Those who are quarrelsome by nature are surely wrong. Those who get so consumed with fighting that they cease to practice the other aspects of the faith are misguided. I make a studious effort manifest a proper Christian spirit in all I say and write. I endeavor to avoid all rancor and hateful expressions. But to conclude that we must sit in silence while false teachers corrupt, and destroy the Cause of our Lord is a tragic mistake. May God help us in this hour of crisis. JHW

"Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (II Tim. 4:3).

WORTHLESS PHYSICIANS

Churches can and do die. The church at Ephesus was seriously ill (Rev. 2:4-5). The church in Sardis was already dead (Rev. 3:1) Scattered across the land are empty meeting houses that once housed flourishing bodies of Christians. For various causes those congregations died. Their empty buildings stand like burial monuments proclaiming their demise.

God gave his church teachers to minister and guide them to spiritual health and strength. Unfortunately, preachers are sometimes "worthless physicians" (Job. 13:4 RSV). Too often it is preachers who contribute to the death of congregations they are paid to build up and strengthen. In 45 years of observation I have seen the following lethal practices by those who should be builders, not destroyers of God's kingdom:

- * Fictitious preaching. God hates those who sow discord (Prov. 6:19) and churches should reject them (Tit. 3:10).
- * Pleasing sinners, both in and out of the family of God. Such men are unworthy to be servants of Christ (Gal. 1:10).
- * Preaching another gospel, a false one. Such preaching incurs the anathema of God (Gal. 1:8).
- * Preaching an unbalanced message. Solomon advised his students stay in the middle of the road of truth and avoid the ditches of the right and left hand (Prov. 4:26-27). Preachers need to heed this point.
- * Failing to lead the way in evangelizing. God leaves Christians here on earth that they might take the message of salvation to the lost. It is incomprehensible that some preachers see no need to seek and save the lost. They prefer to pet or paddle their brethren.
- * Preaching a partial gospel. Only the "whole counsel of God" will keep a congregation strong and healthy (Acts 20:27).
- * Failing to teach sinners what to do in order to be saved. It is shameful when sinners come and set through numerous services and never hear what they must do to be saved. Do preachers expect God to whisper the magical words of salvation in their ears?
- * By neglecting the more important, needed subjects. Just as a person needs a balanced diet to be healthy, so does a congregation. I once saw a baby that suffered from milk anemia. The mother had neglected to give it other needed nutrients. To be healthy a church must have more than milk for its spiritual diet.
- * Failing to make sharp distinctions between right and wrong, truth and error. God has always expected his teachers to "make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" and to teach that difference to his people (Lev. 10:10-11).
- * Casting doubt on the faith and preaching of our spiritual forebearers and the validity of the Restoration Plea. This seems to be a popular past time for some of our contemporaries. If their plea to go back to the Bible and restore pure Christianity was faulty, then what is the purpose of our continuing to perpetrate that which has so faulty a beginning?
- * Being problem-causers rather than problem solvers. If a physician makes your condition worse you don't need his services. Nor does a church need a problem-causing preacher.

May God give his churches good physicians, faithful men of God who love the church and dedicate themselves to serving her well, doing no harm, but only good. **JHW**

"A dogmatic spirit inclines a man to be censorious of his neighbors—Every one of his opinions appears to him written as with sunbeams, and he grows angry that his neighbors do not see it in the same light—He is tempted to disdain his correspondents as men of low and dark understanding because they do not believe what he does—" (I. Watts).

"He is most free from danger, who, even when safe, is on his guard" (Publius Syrus).

"No tempting form of error is without some latent charm derived from truth" (Keith).

CONCESSIONS WE MUST MAKE

In their effort to capture the hearts of young and naive disciples, the champions of change lay a constant barrage of criticism against the Lord's church. In so doing they aspire to cause sufficient discontent that brethren will turn to them for leadership. Also they would like for us to deny obvious problems so that we would appear, stubborn and intransigent. The fact is, some of the things they cite are true in part or in whole. They certainly are not the first to make these observations.

*Yes, there are too many divisions among us. Even one division is an evil thing. Whether it is local, within a congregation, or general, affecting the whole brotherhood, division is bad (Rom. 16:16). A distinction however must be made between those who "cause divisions" and those who are the victims of it. Interestingly, many churches have experienced division because of the work of the change agents!

* Yes, we do have some traditions. Some are biblical and must be observed and preserved (II Thess. 3:6). Others are quite harmless and in most cases beneficial. Some congregations have traditions that no doubt hinder them. The latter we must constantly work to eliminate.

* Yes, we do have some "sectarian-minded people". But we do not excuse them or glorify them. We try to show them a more excellent way, the way of loyalty to Christ, rather than to man or opinions. But we also have some "denominational-minded people" among us. They are those who have readily embraced the change movement. They see the church as a denomination. They see nothing wrong with denominationalism in contrast to the religion of Christ.

* Yes, some of our churches do have lack-luster worship services. The cure is to call them back to worship that is truly "in spirit" as well as in truth (John 4:24); to teach them to love God with all their hearts, souls and minds (Matt. 22:37). To provide them exciting services based on the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. 15:9) is certainly not an acceptable antidote!

* Yes, some of our churches are not as evangelistic as they should be. Changing our ways of worship, our beliefs, our church government or the nature of the church, will not change this. If all our neighbors who believe in Jesus are saved already (as many change agents believe), there certainly is little incentive to teach and try to win them, is there?

* Yes, some of our congregational leaders are not as effective as they should be. Some are too old, some too old-fashioned, some too cautious and some are out of touch with the flock. Such men need to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18). They need to educate, inform and improved themselves so they can lead effectively. Some should step aside and make room for more capable leaders. Interestingly, the same complaint can be made against many preachers. The one thing we don't need to do is throw away the Biblical standard for qualified "men" to lead and save our churches and elevate women to these places of leadership; not if we wish to continue as Christ's church (III Tim. 2:8-3:1).

* Yes, Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone and their Christian peers did launch the American movement to restore New Testament Christianity. But they did not found the church. Christ did that (Matt. 16:18). They simply planted the gospel seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) and it brought forth on our continent the same kind of church that it produced in Jerusalem and the Mediterranean world of the first century.

* Yes, many of our preachers are not learned university men, but it is precisely this type of men who have evangelized, planted most of our churches, and built them to their present level of strength. We appreciate the attainments and contributions of those scholars who were loyal and faithful to Christ, his Word and his church. But the fact is, many of our problems have originated with those who put worldly scholarship about the authority of Christ's Word.

* Yes, our fathers were slow to speak out against racial segregation. But their sons and daughters have done so. They chose however to deal with that issue as a moral, spiritual matter than as a political issue and have avoided posturing thereon.

* Yes, we all are part of history's stream and yes, our culture does influence our thinking, values and behavior. But are committed to honoring God's Word as an objective standard, superior to all of those worldly influences. We do not always perfectly reach our goal, nor do we always understand the Word as well as we should, but we never cease trying. We keep our minds open to any new insights or understandings we may have missed. We are ever ready to make any necessary adjustments that we may be conformed to the image of Christ (II Cor. 3:18). The promoters of change are likewise subject to these historical, cultural influences.

Having made all of these concession, we ask our agents of change, "What does this prove?" Such is the case with every generation of Christians in every society, and so will it be for every generation yet to come. We are the human side of the church; weak, frail, imperfect. We are always a work in progress. There is also a divine side of the church, perfect

as Him who founded it. That is the eternal, unchanging kingdom of our Savior, Jesus! By the way, do the changes agents think that they have somehow risen above the weaknesses we have conceded? "Wherefore thou art without excuse...for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1).
JHW

DANGEROUS LIES

- * To tell people that all snakes are the same is a wicked dangerous thing that can cause serious injury or death.
- * To tell a person that all spiders are the same is a deadly lie that can bring painful consequences. * To teach that all people are the same is an evil and dangerous thing. For a child to assume that all people are as harmless as his mother or father can be disastrous.
- * To teach that all religions are the same is equally false, destructive and dangerous. This is the lie of pluralism and multiculturalism. Buddhists worship their ancestors. We worship Jehovah the Creator. Buddhism has influenced the civilizations of the Orient. Christianity has produced Western Civilization. Buddhism is a religion of man, Christianity originated with God. Jehovah alone can save (Is. 43:11). Christianity is his one and only religion (John 14:6; Eph.4:4-5). All other religions are false and of no value to man (Jer. 10:14-15).
- * To teach that all churches (denominations) are the same is a dangerous lie. This too is the offspring of multiculturalism and pluralism. It is the mantra of denominationalism. It is now being preached by the promoters of change in our ranks.
- * It is equally false to say that one church is as good as another. Christ died for his church (Eph. 5:25). He purchased his church with his life's blood (Acts 20:28). He saved his church (Eph. 5:23). He adds the saved to his church (Acts 2:47 KJV). He established his church (Matt. 16:18). To tell men and women that a church established by men is equal in value to that built by Christ not only false it is destructive to the souls of men.
- * To teach that all changes are equally beneficial is false and destructive. Some are beneficial, some are harmless and some are destructive. Those that will help us be stronger, better Christians; that will help us be more in compliance with God's will we need. The harmless kind we can tolerate. But any change to the faith, worship and practice of the church that was ordained by Christ in his Word is sinful and must be rejected (Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2).

All snakes are not the same. Some are harmless, some are deadly. This truth everyone needs to know. People are at great risk who do not know the difference. One is not your enemy if he tries to help you understand which serpent is dangerous and which is harmless. Nor is he your enemy who seeks to help you discern between those who would help the church and those who would harm her (Lev. 10:10-11; Gal. 4:16). **JHW**

ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS

For every quality product made someone will come up with an imitation. At the supermarket or mall, it might not be of great consequence if you end up with an imitation, but there are areas where such could be fatal. In many third world countries greedy, evil people will package and sell things that are harmful under the label of something good. We all would be skeptical of medicines produced in those environments. But the most dangerous imitations are in the realm of religion. No one comes to the Father but through Christ (John 14:6). There is but one and only one "faith" that God has given our race (Eph. 4:4-5).

Those who teach another gospel are anathema to God! (Gal. 1:8)! That means under a curse. When the blind lead the blind they both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14). Because our eternal salvation is a stake, in matters of religion we must demand that which is genuine and reject all imitations, no matter how attractive and appealing or how cleverly they are packaged.

Christ has only one church. He has provided only one way of salvation. He has only one baptism. He has prescribed the worship he wants. He has set forth the doctrine which we must understand and subscribe to. Accept no substitutes. Reject those who would try to persuade you to try their new and different product. To do otherwise is to gamble with your eternal salvation. Contrary to the thinking of this world, those wishing to go to heaven prefer the old ways to the new (Jer. 6:16). **JHW**

DANGEROUS THINKING

As the post-Christian world rushes by us on its way to oblivion, many church leaders are being tempted to abandon the worship and practice of the church which Christ ordained. They are exploring a new, modern version that they hope will help them survive in the 21st century. Those who succumb to these Satanic wiles are not wicked men who want to destroy the churches they lead, but they are misguided and disaster will be the end if they take their eyes off the directions Christ has given us.

Among the excuses being offered are the following. Very likely you have heard some or all of them for they are now commonplace.

- * "If we are going to keep our young people, we must make some changes that will please them."
- * "If we are going to survive in this modern society, we have got to make some adjustments."
- * "If it brings us new members and more interest, it must be OK."
- * "Our people really like the changes we have made and we all feel good about it."
- * "We are getting more non-members to come to our services."
- * "Many of our Christian College professors have encouraged this approach."

All of these justifications for changing the worship and message and emphasis of the church are faulty because they place the opinions and judgement of human beings above the revealed will of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). We are to teach those converted to Christ to observe all things whatsoever Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20). Whosoever goes beyond the teaching of Christ and thus fails to abide within its limitations, has not God (II John 9-11).

If we modify each of the above excuses as follows they would then be worthy of our attention.

- * We must teach our children from their earliest years that we must always respect and observe the authority of the New Testament of Christ (Heb. 5:8-9).
- * To survive in our modern society, we must preach the everlasting gospel, for it is the only power of God for the salvation of mankind (Rom. 1:16).
- * We must get the gospel of Christ to those who do not presently attend our services. Only then can they learn the truth that will make them free and bring them into the church (John 8:32).
- * When our members have been properly taught and indoctrinated in the principles of New Testament Christianity, they will like our simple and ancient way of worship and feel good about being a part of it, knowing it is pleasing to Christ.
- * When our Christian schools only employ and retain men of unquestioned soundness in the Scriptures, they will encourage us to be faithful and loyal to the New Testament in our congregational teaching, worship and service.

Every elder and preacher among us, I exhort. "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). JHW

"No man was ever wise by chance" (Seneca).

"The men of the past had convictions, while we moderns have only opinions" (H. Heine).

"Study the past if you would divine the future" (Confucius).

"All errors spring up in the neighborhood of some truth; they grow round about it, and, for the most part, derive their strength from such contiguity" (T. Binnney).

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Across the land a multitude of our young preachers and academics types are clamoring for changes in the faith, worship and practices of the churches where they are employed. To all of those who are eager for such changes I propose the following pertinent questions.

- * Is there any Biblical reason why members of your congregation should not leave and place their membership with the nearest Baptist or Methodist Church?
- * If they should, can you think of any reason, consistent with your current teaching, you could use to persuade them to change their minds?
- * Is there any reason why your elders should not employ a Baptist or Assembly of God preacher when you move on?
- * Is there any reason you can offer why the church should not change its name to "Community Baptist Church?"
- * If the members of your congregation decided they wished to replace you with a woman preacher on what grounds would you object?
- * If your elders should invite a Dixieland Jazz band to perform for your Sunday evening service, would you object? If so on what grounds? A local denominational church frequently does this.
- * Would you object if your elders and congregation decided to call you "Reverend?" If so on what grounds?
- * Would you object if your elders decided to change the name of your congregation to Disciples of Christ or Christian Church?
- * Would you object if they decided to become affiliated with either of those two religious bodies? If so on what grounds would you object?
- * Would you object if a brother holding the Anti-Bible Class, the One Cup for Communion, or the Anti-Benevolent Home viewpoints began to spread his views among your members and urge them to demand changes with the congregation to comply with his teaching? On what basis would you object?

These questions should stimulate your thinking. We would be pleased to hear the answers of any of our promoters of change and share them with our readers. JHW

A SIMPLE CHURCH

Most of us like simplicity. It is hard to appreciate and embrace something that is complex and obscure. Let me tell you about a most unusual church in your community. It is called the **Church of Christ**.

* **This church has a simple faith.** It follows the Bible alone. It has no other creed or confession, no book of law other than God's Word. Paul wrote, "faith cometh of hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Every member is urged to search the scriptures for himself to know God's will (Acts 17:11).

* **It has simple worship.** No pomp and pageantry, no theatrical productions, no entertainment. Such was unknown in Bible times. Members of this church assemble on the first day of the week to sing hymns of praise (Eph. 5:19). They lift up prayers to God (I Tim. 2:8). They commune with a simple memorial feast of bread and wine (I Cor. 11:23-31). They present their freewill offerings to God (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor 9: 7). They study a lesson from God's Word (Acts 20:7). This simple worship is what saints offered in apostolic days. It is hard to improve on what the apostles did.

* **This church has a simple program of work** in which to engage. They endeavor to preach the gospel to every creature in all the world (Mk. 16:15). They remember to care for the poor (Gal. 2:10). They help each other to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18) and to be faithful to Christ unto death (Rev. 2:10). They assist each other to bear the burdens of life (Gal. 6:1-2).

* **They have a simple message.** They preach the gospel Christ gave them (Mk. 16:15). Christ, his death, burial and resurrection form the heart of their message (I Cor. 15:1-1-4). They teach converts to "obey all things whatsoever (Christ) commanded" (Matt. 28:20). They avoid speculation, social and political issues that have no bearing on their faith. There are no airs, no pretensions no mysticisms, just the plain message of God to humanity. Like Paul they emphasize the simplicity and purity of the gospel (II Cor. 11:4). JHW

FACTORS THAT DEMAND CERTAIN CONCLUSIONS

Mathematically, if you add the factors of three and four, of necessity you will reach the sum of seven. If, on the other hand, you take the factors of five and five you will certainly have a total of ten. So it is in today's religious environment.

If the elders of a congregation invite leaders of the change movement to come and speak for their flock and if they allow the agenda of the change agents to be implemented, it will naturally follow that they will cease to be a church founded on the principles of the New Testament. Rather they will change into a denomination as that is the sum of the change agenda.

If a preacher is enamored with the ideas and programs of the promoters of change, if he echoes their "language" in his lessons, if he frequents their lectureships, workshops and seminars, then the likely conclusion is he has embraced and become part of the change movement.

When members of the church of Christ announce that they can worship with those of the Christian Churches and sing along with their instruments in worship, when they knock and ridicule their own brethren, while heaping effusive complements on those of other religious bodies, then we can safely conclude that they are no longer faithful members of the church of Christ. These factors added together might prove them to be members of the Christian Church or some other denominational body, but certainly not the church one reads of in the Bible.

When a Christian college or university harbors on its faculty men openly committed to the change agenda, if they produce books that promote the program of change, if their lectureships and forums are filled with those recognized as the champions of the change movement, if large numbers of their graduates are found to be avid workers for the change agenda, then one can only conclude that the school is itself a part of the change movement.

Given these realities, every preacher, eldership, school administrator, every Christian should ask himself, "How do my factors add up?" When a crisis of faith confronted the Hebrews, Moses asked "Who is on the Lord's side" (Ex. 32:26). There was no neutral ground, a person was either firmly for the Lord's way or he was not. Today the church is likewise confronted by a major crisis of faith and we too must ask, "Who is on the Lord's side?" JHW

HERMENEUTICS: THE NEW AND THE OLD

In his book, **Return to the Old Paths**, Bro. Glenn McCoy notes that Alexander "Campbell had come to the conclusion that much of the error in religious practice was due to the lack of understanding of the relationship of the two covenants" (p. 130). This led to the presentation of his **Sermon on the Law**, delivered August 30, 1816 at the Red Stone Association Meeting at the Cross Creek Baptist Church. In that famous lesson, he clearly delineated between the Old and the New Covenants demonstrating that as Christians we are under and amenable to the Law of Christ, not that of Moses. Much of our success can be attributed to that understanding about the two covenants. Sad to say many of our college professors and their students who are pursuing the change agenda have not figured out this fundamental lesson. They go the Old Testament and pluck out such verses as they need to justify practices they cannot find in the message of Messiah. We remind them that Jesus said, "Go make disciples...baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). JHW

"A wolf never worries about how many sheep are in the flock. He knows they won't resist."

"An obstinate man does not hold opinions—they hold him" (Joseph Butler).

SATAN'S BAG OF LIES

We are engaged in spiritual war. The issue to be decided is whether or not Churches of Christ shall continue to be Christ's people patterned after the church revealed in Scripture, or shall they be changed into a denomination? Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), uses disinformation to confuse and mislead God's children. From our own ranks we read and hear the following lies:

* "The church cannot survive in the Postmodern age unless we make serious changes adjusting our message and practice to be acceptable to Postmodern people." The church, having survived the power and pressures of Judaism and pagan Rome, and the hundreds of philosophies that have come and gone since her birth, will survive this latest creation of human wisdom. She stood alone in the ancient world proclaiming Christ and those seeking salvation flocked to her and she must continue to do so today. By adjusting her message and practice to please the world she will be swallowed up and perish (Gal. 1:10).

* "We cannot pass judgment on the beliefs and practices of other churches. Jesus passed judgment on the Pharisees and their false views (Matt. 23). Paul had no hesitation to condemn numerous religious leaders by name such as Hymenaeus and Alexander, Philetus, even Demas who forsook him. He also had no reservation about challenging doctrines that were contrary to the faith he had receive from the Spirit of God (I Tim. 4:1-3).

* "All who believe in Christ as God's Son are equally acceptable to God, regardless of their denominational affiliation. This flies in the face of Christ's prayer for the oneness of his people (John 17:20-21) It clashes with Paul's exhortation that we all speak the same things and that there be no divisions among us (I Cor. 1:10). It clashes with every verse that condemns false doctrine, and false teachers. It denies Christ's declaration that those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the will of the Father in heaven (Matt. 7:21).

* "Doctrines and practices unique to the Church of Christ are merely traditions and cultural expressions; not Biblically based and therefore essentials." Yet each of these points; one non-denominational church, baptism by immersion for remission of sins, male leadership in the church, weekly communion on the Lord's day, vocal praise without instruments of music are derived from the New Covenant of Christ and are plainly taught therein.

* "The Bible was not intended to be an absolute standard or pattern for the church!" Yet twice the Holy Spirit clearly says, that we must hold to the pattern revealed to us (II Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5). The question is shall we believe the Ph.Ds. or the Spirit of God? In judgment there will be two categories of Christians. Those who did their best to follow the instructions God gave and those who chose to do things their way. Which group do you want to be in?

* "The Bible does not need defending." This is a favorite assertion of liberals who are subtly working to undermine respect for the absolute authority of God's Word. Even though God's Word, will stand forever (Matt. 24:35), people's perception of it can be distorted, their faith in it can be destroyed! Paul was set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16).

* "The church does not need protecting, God will not allow it to be destroyed." The Jerusalem church is gone and all of those of the first century perished. Perhaps they could explain what happened to the thousands of churches that were gradually swallowed up by the apostasy that became Catholicism, or those which once existed where Islam now reigns supreme. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that the church was in danger of false teachers (Acts 20:28-31). Churches have been destroyed in thousands of places. Congregations that once flourished as Churches of Christ are now Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches. Just last week a preacher called to informed me that his congregation "no longer considered themselves a Church of Christ."

The purpose of this lie is to convince the unthinking that they should do nothing to resist the efforts of false teachers to reconstruct the church according to their own pattern.

These are just a few of Satan's lies. They are the kind many of our churches are hearing from preachers who have abandoned the old paths for the new ways of change! They now serve a different master and teach a different gospel (Gal. 1:9). They shall receive a different reward from those who are faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). **JHW**

"Dare to be true; nothing can need a lie" (Herbert)

"Vanity makes men ridiculous, pride odious, and ambition terrible (Steele).

JUST DO THE RIGHT THING

There are people among us who have determined to impose changes upon the brotherhood of churches of Christ. They argue that we are hopelessly out of date and that in order for us to survive in the 21st century we must change. Most of those who are leaders of this change movement teach in our larger Christian Universities or are their graduates. Generally they are younger men who are associated with larger city churches. Among their tools for promoting their program of change are a number of books being circulated among our people. Two recent titles that are good examples of the radical nature of their program are "**The Crux of the Matter**" by Douglas Foster, Jack Reese and Jeff Childers, and "**The Transforming of a Tradition**" edited by Lynn Anderson and Leonard Allen.

In the old days, when integrity and honesty had high currency in our nation, a leader or employee who lost faith in a cause or company of which he was part, was expected to be open and forthright about it. He would declare himself and offer his resignation. If his company or church wanted him to stay on with his new convictions, they could ask him to do so. Today, such old-fashioned morality is passe'. Politicians stay in parties they no longer believe in and preachers stay in churches they despise. Early in the 1800s, John Mulkey, a Baptist preacher who lived near Tompkinsville, KY, came to the conclusion that he no longer believed the doctrines of the Baptist church and that he was going to take his stand on the Bible alone and be a Bible Christian. Being a man of integrity, he stood before his congregation and announced to them his new convictions. He informed them that he was resigning and leaving their church and invited any who wished to do so to join him. Virtually the entire congregation followed him. The handful that remained graciously gave the building to them. It stands there to this day. Mulkey did the honorable thing.

Those brethren circulating among us, who are agitating for change, should follow Mulkey's example and "do the right thing."

- * Admit that you no longer are in sympathy with the churches of Christ as they have believed, taught and practiced for the last 200 years.
- * Admit that, compared to the great majority of the preachers, elders and members, your views are "liberal;" that is you hold new, different views not in harmony with those of the past.
- * Acknowledge that following the Bible means something quite different to you than to the rest of us and your spiritual forebearers.
- * Admit openly that you do not see or accept the church of Christ, as a distinct body of religious people, to be the church which Christ built and is head of (Eph. 1:22).
- * Admit that in your opinion that churches of Christ are nothing more than a human denomination, having no more value or standing before God than any of the 1200 other denominations in the land.
- * Admit that the changes you propose are drastic and will totally alter the faith, worship and practice of congregations that embrace them.

The above being true, you should do the honorable thing and openly disassociate yourself from the brotherhood of churches of Christ and not seek to seduce and lead away members by smooth and fair speech and pretense (Rom. 16:18).

Those who have attached themselves to colleges and universities, established, built and funded by dedicated members of the churches of Christ should do the right thing and resign their positions. They should seek employment in denominational schools whose views they share. To try to take over by stealth, institutions that by right belong to folks who hold a decidedly different faith, is dishonest and dishonorable. This includes, teachers and administrators alike.

JHW

"Some people are more nice than wise" (Cowper)

"True honesty takes into account the claims of God as well as those of man; it renders to God the things that are God's as well as to man the things that are man's (C. Simmons)

CONSERVATIVE IN BOTH FAITH AND PRACTICE

Churches of Christ in America stand at a cross-roads today. Three alternatives stand before us. We can easily turn left down the broad road of liberalism which ends in spiritual annihilation. There scores of other groups have gone, losing their identity and reason for existence. We can turn right down the road of radical legalism in reaction against the menace of the left. This road will lead us into a box canyon where several other groups of brethren wandered in past years. There, cut off from the world, we will bite, devour and consume one another while we congratulate ourselves on how holy and separate we are. We will multiply our opinions, traditions and shibboleths to our honor and glory. The world will be lost, the church will be crippled and disabled. The third alternative is the road straight ahead. It is to Jerusalem. It is the old path. It is the way that leads unto life.

If we are serious in our quest for eternal life, we have but one choice; the way of truth that stretches straight before us. We want to go that way; we want our brethren to go with us. We want every gospel preacher and every congregation in the brotherhood to go. If we are to realize this goal, we are going to have to do some clear thinking, conscientious study and hard work to change current trends that are surfacing around us.

Our Problem

A practice gap has arisen among us. Too many congregations and preachers are strong on the conservative message, but weak on the practice. A similar problem affected Judaism in Jesus' day. He said of Jerusalem's most notable teachers, "They say and do not" (Matthew 23:2). This practice gap has left us vulnerable to the accusations and charges of the Devil and his helpers. Finding a soft spot, they have hammered away until they got the advantage in numerous congregations.

Our message has generally been on a high plane, while often our practice failed to measure to it. We must raise our practice level to meet the New Testament standard. Tragically, we have people among us urging that we lower our doctrinal standard to our inferior level of practice. This is spiritual suicide. We must, with the help of God, restore the practice of Christianity along with the faith.

We must remove those moral, ethical and spiritual blemishes that give the enemy ground to criticize our congregations. But we should have done this long ago because Christ desires it. He wants the church to be glorious, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

Some Recommendations

We must involve our brethren in the true mission of the church in an active, exciting way. We must become evangelistic. Soul-winning is one of our primary functions and reasons for existence. Yet this one area of our work receives least attention in many congregations. Only 3-5% of our people ever convert a soul. Few are actively engaged in evangelism. It is a fact that churches on fire for souls, intensely evangelistic, have few problems with liberalism. It is the dead, lifeless congregation that experiences the problem. Remember, a high rate of unemployment in the nation inevitably causes problems and trouble. It affects the kingdom of Christ similarly.

We must also get actively involved in mission work in other nations. When the church fails to meet this essential purpose for existence, she has forfeited its right to exist. Serious commitment to evangelism tends to drive us closer to God and His word, which simultaneously protects us from error.

We must be genuinely concerned for the benevolent needs of the unfortunate both within and without the church (Gal. 6:10) and do something positive about it. This is the pure religion of Jesus (James 1:27). We can get so involved in our own private lives and be so insulated from the realities of life; so busy with "church work" that Lazarus can die at our gates and we not even know it. Our lack of concern for the poor, the suffering, and the aged often causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of (Romans 2:24). This alone will provide dozens of jobs for the saints in every congregation.

We must educate and inform ourselves. First preachers must inform themselves of the issues at hand; of the persons, papers, congregations and schools involved. We cannot afford to be ignorant. Think what it cost Israel in Hosea's day (Hosea 4:6). We must have elders who are capable of dealing with the problems of today. They must be aware of the issues, conscious of the seriousness of them and prepared to face the problems and deal with them promptly should they arise in their flock..

We need to properly distinguish between the three problems we currently face.

1. **Theological liberalism.** There are some who question the inspiration and authority of the Bible; the miracles of the Scriptures; the deity of Christ; his virgin birth and resurrection; the creation of the cosmos and man by God and other fundamental beliefs of Christianity. Proponents of this error are primarily outside of our fellowship, but their destructive work can and does affect some of the teachers in our Christian Schools and those pursuing higher education at secular and denominational schools.

2. **Denominationalism.** This is seen in the willingness to embrace denominational practices such as instrumental music, women in church leadership roles, Pentecostal type of worship, compromising with Christian Churches; belittling the Lord's church and numerous other things. This is primarily the result of failing to respect and follow the authority of the New Testament. This is where the agents of change fit in.

3. **Radical extremism.** This reacts against the above in a blind, violent way. It suspects all brethren of heresy or at least weakness towards it. It pictures itself as the only true and faithful element left for the Lord. It agitates for an immediate break in fellowship rather than a solving of problems. It confuses traditions and cultural expressions with New Testament doctrine and seeks to bind them on all. It delights in making new rules and regulations, especially prohibitions of anything new or different to the old way of doing it. Scalp-hunting and witch-hunting of all alleged heretics is typical fruit of this tree. As a car can wreck in the ditch on either side of the road so can the church. It will be no consolation to boast that you did not crash into the left ditch of liberalism while you lie dying in the right hand ditch of radicalism.

4. One other category must be included which is probably the most serious of all. That is the alarming **lack of awareness and concern** that exists in most congregations. This is every bit as dangerous as the raw liberalism is.

We must then **educate all the members of the flock about the issues involved.** Never take for granted that our people know and understand the doctrines involved in the crisis facing us. We have always said that each generation must restore for itself New Testament Christianity. Are we practicing what we preach? In the year before us, preach a sermon on every fundamental point of doctrine that distinguishes the Lord's church from human organizations. Deal especially with the problems of denominationalism, Pentecostalism, fellowship, instrumental music, the oneness of the Church, the sin of heresy, church discipline, the authority of the Scriptures and any other question where weakness is found. Let every church have an indoctrination program for young and old and let it be pursued with determination so that no error can make an inroad. Elders should have a policy that only sound preaching will be heard from the pulpit. They should insist that the whole counsel of God be preached (Acts 20:27). False teachers and questionable men must not be indulged even for a moment (Galatians 2:5). When we preach, we need to preach to the needs of the people in language they can understand and not on abstract themes from the theological museum. Also, we must avoid the language of the seminary that leaves minds clouded and convictions undecided. Plain Bible preaching will solve most congregational problems.

Furthermore, we need to **supply our congregations with sound reading materials** to strengthen their faith and warn them of heresy. Good tracts and gospel papers will go far in our battle. Recommend good books and help brethren in securing them. A wise brother has said, "Brethren can't do better until they know better." This preventive medicine will be far more effective than trying to cure it after the disease strikes.

We need to **strengthen our edification efforts.** God knew man's need for social fellowship, help and encouragement. He gave us the congregation to meet these needs. Many congregations have so little Christian fellowship that members suffering malnutrition in this area, have been attracted to liberal congregations that offer warm fellowship. With proper fellowship, we know each other's needs and can help bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Lack of fellowship means lack of communication. When problems arise and false teachers attempt to subvert the church this lack of communication means mistrust, suspicion and doubt... an open door to trouble.

We must **raise the "spiritual factor" in our congregations.** Cold, lifeless, ritualistic, tradition-bound churches are ripe for trouble. This is not a normal atmosphere for Christians to live in. Not finding sufficient food in such an abnormal environment, they begin to seek it elsewhere and are often deceived by spiritual charlatans. Spiritually sick churches are easy targets for liberal penetration. We need strong thriving, busy churches whose members live close to God each day to stand the test of these trying days. Our worship must be a rich rewarding experience that not only is scripturally correct but spiritually uplifting.

One area of practice that needs a strong Biblical emphasis is that of **our attitude towards those of other races**, especially the Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. Our practice has not always measured up to our message and the liberals have scored us repeatedly on this cause. Let us eliminate once and for all any racial distinctions in our congregations and in our lives. There is no respect of persons with God and there can be none with us (James 2:9-10). Liberals have made headway among some black brethren because of our unchristian practice in this area.

We must be **militant against the devil and those of his workers** who seek to capture the Lord's church. Rather than meekly protesting as we see the kingdom attacked, maligned or subverted, we need to be aggressive against the enemies to drive them out. Of course, God's method for this defense is church discipline. We should mark them that cause divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine we have learned and turn away from them (Romans 17:17). This will not only remove their influence from that particular congregation, but if publicized, it will alert others as to who the false teachers are. We can never protect ourselves unless we know who these heretics are, where their breeding grounds are, and what their organs of communication are. Like weeds in our garden, we must deny liberalism a seed bed to grow in; and if a sprig appears, root it out before it has a chance to "take over" Let our discipline be sympathetic and consistent without partiality (I Timothy 5:21).

James summarizes all that we have said in 1:22, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." Like the men of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day, let us rise up to build Zion's walls with sword on our side and trowel in our hand, prepared to resist the foe at whatever point he makes assault, but never neglecting to build the walls.
JHW

IS ONE CHURCH GOOD AS ANOTHER?

This is a valid question that millions of folks have pondered. To help put it in focus ask yourself: Is one medicine as good as another? Or one doctor? Is one car as good as another? Or one airline? When you are traveling, is one direction as good as another? When balancing your checking account is one answer as good as another? Is one political candidate as good as another? Is one school as good as another? Is a counterfeit bill as good as a genuine piece of currency? Or a forged check of equal value with a good one? Of course the answer to all of these questions is no. One is not necessarily as good as the other; in many cases one is downright inferior or even worthless.

Only in the realm of religion would we even consider such a statement to have any merit. In any other area, to affirm that one thing is as good as another would cause us to be laughed off the platform. Christ purchased a church (Acts 20:28); he built a church (Matt. 16:18); he is savior of a church (Eph. 5:23); he is head of a church (Eph. 1:22). That church is undisputedly of ultimate value and benefit to all who become members of it. New Testament writers speak of it as an exclusive, unitary church. They call it "the" church. They tell us there is one body or church (Eph. 4:4-5). Across the centuries, men and women have established hundreds of churches of their own design and making. Who would say that any one of them is of equal value with that church which Christ built? Christ's church existed long before any human denomination, sect or cult was created. Our eternal destiny depends on our being members of the church which is God's saved family (Eph. 5:23). It behooves us therefore to be members of that church which Christ built. Paul referred to this body when writing to the Romans, saying, "All the churches (i.e., congregations) of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). No other church is equal in value to that of Christ. To learn more about Christ's church, visit the **Church of Christ** near you. JHW

"Popular opinion is the greatest lie in the world" (Carlyle).

"The men of the past had convictions, while we moderns have only opinions" (H. Heine).

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE YEAR 2050

Futurists study the past and present and tell us what the future might possibly be. They analyze trends and predict future changes, for good or bad. Wise businessmen consider such projections when investing for the future of their companies. I am no prophet, but I invite you to make an imagination trip to a large American city in the year 2050. Our purpose will be to visit a Church of Christ and worship with them. Given current trends and projections at work among our brethren here are some things you might possibly find.

You may find a woman teaching the adult Bible class, preaching or even serving as an elder. Already professors are telling us that we have misunderstood the verses that seem to forbid such. They tell us we have too long denied our Christian ladies the privilege to use their talents to the glory of God. A few trend-setter congregations already have their women teachers and preachers.

The minister or ministeress may well be adorned in a lovely clerical robe. Our objections to such practices will likely have been determined by change agents to be based only on our rural, frontier heritage and our narrow, unscholarly approach to interpreting the Bible. The preacher may well be identified as pastor of the church and have "Rev." affixed to his or her name. They would argue that such matters are too trivial to dispute over and our refusal to use them was just our tradition.

There might even be a guest speaker from the Catholic, Baptist or Pentecostal church. They no will longer think of the church as an exclusive body. To them all denominations are equally pleasing to God.

You may well find the service to be unfamiliar in tone and content. There could be a dramatic presentation, and possibly even an "interpretive spiritual dance." The service would likely be demonstrative with bodily gyrations, shouting and applause. The music likely will be contemporary and may well include instrumental accompaniment from a piano or organ and possibly a rock band. Rather than join in congregational singing, you will be expected to sit quietly and listen as the soloist or praise group present their performance. The choir will then sing their selection and finally the congregation will be invited to join in a hymn or two. Such features are already being discussed and rationalized and some are already implementing some or all of them.

The lesson of the hour may well consist of a brief story or parable related by a clergyman or woman. Little emphasis will be placed on the Bible, as "proof-texting" will have long ago been rejected. Nothing will be presented as absolutely right or wrong. Postmodern thinking will not allow such utterances. Doctrine will have no place in the lesson. Promoters of change concluded that doctrine doesn't matter and that it is doctrine that makes people disagree and divide. The story will come to a close with a call for those who want a relationship with Jesus to come and be saved by grace through faith. They will be led to pray the sinner's prayer and receive the blessing. Baptism will no longer be considered as essential to salvation since they have concluded that obedience plays no part in salvation. It may however possibly be retained for church membership.

Communion might be observed following dismissal. It will be offered in the fellowship hall, during the pot luck meal. It will be a joyful and festive celebration of the good life they have in Christ. This is already being advocated by some. There may also be a Saturday evening service with Communion for those who do not wish to assemble on the Lord's Day. The leading lights of our change movement have rejected the idea of a Biblical pattern that must be followed. They have concluded that Communion can be observed on other occasions than the first day of the week. The prevailing thinking in that element of the church is that we must give the people what they want if we expect to get them into our churches. Since other religious bodies are doing this with success, we would be foolish not to follow their suit.

Bible classes will offer alternatives for every taste. There well may be a class devoted to reviewing contemporary books,

or perhaps classic literature with relevant themes. Others may offer health tips for Christians, or the challenges of aging. There could be an armchair travelers class which views travel logs. A class could study classic movies and television shows. There could be arts and crafts. A course in social activism might cover such topics as ecology, AIDS ministry, the challenges of leisure time, money management and other timely subjects. It will truly be a "felt needs" program. For those who are elderly and traditional in their thinking they will still have a few classes that study the Bible.

If you are currently 50 or older, and a faithful Christian, very likely you would be totally repulsed at such an incredible situation. Your blood pressure would rise and your stomach would churn. You probably would get up and walk out. I would! Such a group would be a church of Christ in name only, even if they were directly descended from a faithful church of today. If you searched hard enough you likely could find a congregation that would still worship and serve in the way you are familiar with. It probably would be small in size and likely on the outskirts of town or in a rural setting.

You may be wagging your head and saying "You are crazy! Such is so farfetched as to be insane." But my dear friend, the things I am seeing as future possibilities are already being done here and there by those who are clamoring for change. The section on the Bible classes is straight from the bulletins of local denominational churches. Our change agents are following these churches in all other areas and it is only reasonable to think they will embrace such programs as well.

As in all futuristic projects factors may arise that will nullify the prediction. For example if our brethren should wake up and realize just how wrong and destructive the change movement is; if they should show the promoters of change the door; if they should repent and turn back to God with humble and obedient hearts; we might well see Christ's church, as we have known her, surviving and flourishing in that distant day. May God grant that this be the case. **JHW**

SING AND BE HAPPY

Imagine, a church with no choir, no soloist, no piano or organ performance, no band to entertain; just a congregation of Christians singing heart-felt praises to God. "How quaint," you may say. You may feel pity that they cannot afford an organ or organist to perform for them. But to view it thusly is to misunderstand.

Churches of Christ **sing** psalms, hymns and spiritual songs without instrumental accompaniment because that is the way the earliest Christians worshiped. Our goal is to worship as they did without addition or subtraction. Such unaccompanied singing is called **acappella**, which means "as in the church," and refers to the ancient practice of the Christians.

Jesus' final charge was that his disciples "observe all things whatsoever (he) commanded" (Matt. 28:20). Should you take the time to read the New Testament of Christ through, you would discover that no command or example exists for Christians to worship God with instruments of music. We are told to sing and make melody in our hearts (Eph. 5:19). The closing words of the Bible warn against adding to or taking away from what is written (Rev. 22:18-19). When we sing to God, we neither add to nor take from his holy will. Since we are not under the Old Testament (Heb. 8:7-13), there is no value in looking there to justify the use of instrumental music.

If you are weary of choirs, soloists and musical performances and long to lift your voice up to God in songs of worship and praise, visit a Church of Christ near you. **JHW**

SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

A continuing challenge to the Lord's church is that of maintaining fellowship between brethren when matters of disagreement arise. Paul provides us with divine guidelines in Roman chapters 14 and 15. It is important to note that **he is speaking about disagreements over matters of opinion which are inconsequential in themselves**. He uses as illustrations the eating of meat and the observance of special days (Rom. 14:3,5). These things are neither right nor wrong in themselves. It would be a mistake to seek to apply Paul's advice in this context to disputes about serious doctrinal matters or questions of Christian morality.

I. If a weak brother holds some peculiar but harmless view, we are to receive him, but not to quarrel about his eccentric opinion (14:1). Rather than concentrating on the point in dispute, we should concentrate on receiving a brother whom Christ has saved. In 15:7, Paul says, "Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God." Christ saved me in spite of my ignorance, superstition and false notions. Surely we can fellowship a brother who is in the same condition we were when first saved.

II. We have no right to criticize another man's servant. A servant answers only to his own master (14:3-4). Each Christian is a bond-servant of Christ (Rom. 6:18). As such, he answers to Christ for his thoughts and deeds (II Cor. 5:10). It is wrong for us to meddle in another brother's matter (I Pet. 4:15). We are not masters of our brother's conscience. If Christ will accept him with his kooky views or habits, it is not our prerogative to try to force him to change.

III. Whatever course we follow in life, we must be fully persuaded in our own mind that we are doing right (14:5b). This is our personal duty, and we must respect the same in other brethren. The preacher or the elders of the congregation cannot make every decision for us personally. We must think and act for ourselves and be responsible to our own convictions of conscience.

IV. Remember that it is impossible for Christians to live isolated lives. Our lives, of necessity, involve others (14:7-8). The first consideration is how does our belief or action affect Christ? Does it please him? Secondly, we ask, how will our conduct affect others, especially our brothers in the church?

V. We have no right to judge other brethren, because we ourselves are men under judgment (14:10-11). If we ponder the seriousness of the this point, we will be sobered by the need to work on our problems. This will leave little time for most of us to be examining our brethren's words and deeds. Judging of Christians is God's exclusive right (Jas. 4:11-12).

VI. Each one of us must answer to God for our faith and practice (14:12). It is a great temptation to preachers to want to make other brethren answer to them personally. Such is unwarranted. If God is pleased to accept a disciple, so must we.

VII. Rather than criticizing our brother, we must concentrate on placing no stumbling block before him (14:13). This rule would defuse most brotherly disputes. Granted, it is not nearly as much fun for some folks, but it is far more productive for the kingdom.

VIII. Christian freedom and Christian love most always go hand in hand (14:15). While a given thing may be lawful, our love for our brethren and the church will cause us to limit ourselves rather than hurt them or endanger our fellowship: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom. 13:10).

IX. Our weak brother's soul is more important than our liberty to do a given thing (14:15b). Like Paul we must be willing to become all things to all men if by any means we can save them (I Cor. 9:19-22).

X. We must make sure that our good conduct is not evil spoken of (14:16). The author once lived in a community where it was considered a great sin to fish on Sunday, even between worship services. Although such violated no scripture, he abstained for their sake and what it would do for his reputation. We must always "take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17).

XI. The kingdom of God is more important than all non-essential items such as what we eat or drink (14:17). It is more important than our opinions, traditions and culture; more important than preachers, elders and people. Things of secondary importance must never be allowed to disrupt the unity of the body (Rom. 16:17-18).

XII. We must pursue those things that make for peace between disciples, things that will edify the church (14:19). Unity in God's family is not a natural occurrence. We must seek peace and pursue it, said Peter (I Pet. 3:11). All must abound in edifying the church (I Cor. 14:12).

XIII. Strong brethren must carefully avoid causing a weak brother to stumble and sin. "For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ" (I Cor. 8:11-12). Thoughtlessness in such matters could cost us our soul.

XIV. We who are strong must never flaunt our freedom in the face of a weak brother (14:22). It is always wrong to provoke another of God's children by our conduct (Col. 3:21).

XV. We must never encourage a weak brother to violate his conscience. For him to do so is sin (14:23). This is a cardinal point that must never be forgotten.

XVI. The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (15:1). Rather than scorn and shame the weak brother, we who are strong are responsible to try and salvage him.

XVII. Rather than think of our rights and privileged, we must always seek to "please" our brother in a way that would strengthen him, even as Christ did (15:2).

XVIII. We must receive every child of God on the same basis as the Lord accepted us (15:7). We were weak, ungodly sinners (Rom. 5:6-8). We were walking in ignorance and error, yet his grace and love saved us and nurtured us from infancy to the maturity wherein we stand. Oh, how the church desperately needs that same loving concern manifested to all her children. May God hasten the day when these precepts will guide us in every brotherly relation. JHW

It does not require great learning to be a Christian and to be convinced of the truth of the Bible. It requires only an honest heart and a willingness to obey God" (Wm. Barnes).

"Be thou faithful unto death. and I will give thee the crown of life" (Jesus).

WHAT 1,000 FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS CAN DO TO HELP THE CHURCH

It is so refreshing to find brothers and sisters who see the extent of the danger facing us and want to do something about it rather than just wring their hands and talking about it. Perhaps you are one of them. The 1000 helpers we need can be men or women....young or old, preachers or not. They just need to be willing to pray with us for God's intervention and assistance. Their prayers are needed for those who are struggling with the enemy in their local congregations. We need prayers that God will raise up helpers in every community across the nation and in our mission fields around the world. I frequently get e-mails, phone calls or letters from Christians whose congregations is bring torn to pieces by this problem. They are distraught and discouraged. They need our prayers and encouragement to keep on keeping on.

As to specific ways to help:

* A helper could make duplicate copies of our monthly **Christianity: Then and Now** and distribute them within his congregation and mail them to the other congregations in his area. That could be a city, county, region or state, depending on his resources and the number of congregations involved. A copy shop can duplicate the paper for something like .20 per copy or maybe less. It could be done on a copy machine owned by the congregation or by some businessman who wants to help.

* Or the helper could provide the funds and I would mail the churches from here. It costs us \$.50 per month to mail two copies to each church....addressed to Minister/Elders. We have a directory of Churches of Christ in America and can tell you how many congregations are in a given city or state and furnish the addresses. Some are providing the funds so we can mail churches in their area.

* The helper could persuade his congregation to underwrite the cost of the mailing to their city, county or state....or some other state.

* He or she might persuade the ladies' Bible class to take this as a project or recruit several individuals to pitch in and help on a regular basis so we could blanket a chosen area.

* The helper could assemble his own monthly packet of materials from various sources and mail them to the preachers and elders of his area. One brother in Ft. Worth area does this.

* The helper could talk to individual Christians and persuade them to pitch in and help us mail the paper from here.

* There are some tracts that need to be written and printed. The helper could assist us in providing the funds to print one or more titles. We need a tract to cover every aspect of the change movement.

I have taken it upon myself to read and review the books written by the change agents and those of our brethren who are responding. When I write the reviews I send them out to those who are helping. Eventually they are used in the paper and on the website. These you can share as you wish. Perhaps you can send them to your web contacts, fellow-Christians and preachers. You might wish to help provide the funds to purchase these books for review.

Among the projects we need to attend to are getting the CTN paper to our missionaries overseas. I say this because historically, false teachers always make a run for mission outposts. New converts, with no depth of knowledge and experience are easy targets for them. It will take approximately \$300 a month to mail all our missionaries.

We need to get it to all the churches in Canada. Probably we have no more than 200 congregations there. The cost is .75 per congregation per month. Perhaps you know a good preacher or congregation up there who shares our concern. We could work through them since postage from the US to Canada is quite high.

We need to be able to send the paper to preacher students in our colleges and schools of preaching..

Since the change movement seems to flow from our Christian Schools, we are sending it to every church in the vicinity of those schools. This is not to say that all of the schools in those cities are promoting the change agenda, but we are trying to practice preventive medicine to stop the spread of a deadly contagion. We need to vaccinate even healthy people. We need to provide copies of my books on the Change Movement to every student preacher in all of our schools. A \$50 gift would allow us to send a complimentary copy of **Sacred Principles on Which We Stand** to ten student preachers.

Another project that needs attention is to include pertinent tracts and inserts in our mailings. Using the bulk mailing permit we can have up to 3 ½ ozs. in each piece we mail. I have already included a tract, a sermon and the Strategy sheet in earlier mailings. My thinking is, if we can put into the hands of preachers and elders materials that would help them fortify their members' faith, they will be encouraged to order quantities to give to each family. For example Bro. Wayne Jackson has an excellent tract on **Choirs and Solos in Worship**. We could send that along with each set of papers mailed for .30, the cost of the tract. A thousand tracts would cost us \$300 plus postage. Other good tracts need to be sent from time to time. We are now mailing approximately 9,500 congregations each month. .

I want to stress again that we do not want to form any kind of organization. We just want to find sound and faithful Christians who will work together for the common good of the kingdom of Christ. Each will answer to his own elders and Christ. We will help each other, keep each other informed and plan our efforts for the best results. I don't wish to form a clique or faction or to build a fiefdom for myself and I am sure you feel the same.

May God bless and use us to his honor and glory. May it be that when we finish our course on this earth, the church will be stronger and larger than when we first became members of it. **JHW**

TACTICS THAT HAVE NEVER WON A BATTLE

Those who have an interest in military history will agree that there are four things that have never won a battle: 1) **Ignoring the threat**; 2) **Just talking about the danger**; 3) **Seeking a compromise with the enemy** or 4) **Surrender**. Battles are won by preparation, sacrifice and engaging the enemy.

Today, Churches of Christ here in America are facing a wave of error that will destroy us, if unchecked. A sizeable number of our leaders are **ignoring the problem**, hoping it will go away. Many preachers are **talking about the problem**. They express serious concern but are not prepared to take up their weapons and take the field. A significant number of weak leaders are willing to **strike a compromise** with those who are pressing for change in our faith and worship. They reason that it is better to compromise than to lose some of their younger families or to have a rupture and split in the church. They think that maintaining a united body is more important than insisting on points of doctrine. Of course, they will lose all in the long run. In a few cases, leaders and their flocks seem eager to **surrender** themselves to teachers of error and a new way of belief and worship. These are generally folks who never had a clear understanding of what it means to restore New Testament Christianity or have long since abandoned commitment to that plea. Once they begin their long journey away from the old paths of God's Word, the end is denominationalism.

We must understand that an entire religious movement can be swallowed up by a determined group of innovators. One need only look at our denominational neighbors. The Methodist church of today has little in common with the church founded by John Wesley. The Presbyterians bear little resemblance to the church bequeathed to them by John Calvin. The Disciples of Christ have little similarity to the churches planted by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. If we do not rise to the occasion and meet the challenge of those set on changing us, we will face the same future as those bodies. Remember, as among nations, battles are won by preparation, sacrifice and engaging the enemy. Anything else will end in certain defeat. **JHW**

AN APPEAL TO PREACHERS AND ELDERS

A war is raging. The enemy is working day and night to undermine the authority of Christ's Word and impose their ideas on His church. Many of our soldiers seem unaware of the fact. They go about their business as if all was rosy in the kingdom; seeing no threats of danger at all. Others are trying to avoid the conflict like the draft dodgers who fled to Canada during the Viet Nam War. If the church is to survive for generations yet to come, the soldiers of Christ must arise.

Arm Yourself. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). Christ considers his preachers and elders to be soldiers in the army of heaven. They are not peacetime soldiers with weekend duty. They are involved in a mortal struggle with the prince of the powers of the air (Eph. 2:2). Daily they must face his hosts of wicked spirits (Eph. 6:12).

Take Your Place in the Lines. Christ's expectation is that we be good soldiers (II Tim. 2:3). He expects us to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12). There is no place for slackers, dodgers, malingerers, deserters or on-lookers in the army of Christ. We are on active duty with a lifetime enlistment (Rev. 2:10). We must faithfully march forth with the King of Kings (Rev. 19:14). One of the great problems facing today's church is that many preachers and elders have not the will, the desire or the sense of loyalty to their King to take their place in the lines against the forces of evil.

Use Your Sword. To be of any significant value in war, a soldier must have a weapon, know how to use it and have the courage to engage the enemy. Christ has provided us a powerful and effective weapon, "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Not everyone that owns a Bible is prepared to use it effectively. Not every soldier has the fortitude to stand in the gap and defend the kingdom against her enemies (Ezek. 22:30). Read your Bible, teach it and wield it effectively against every false teaching that appears before you.

"Quit Ye Like Men." These words of Paul (I Cor. 16:13), remind us of the serious nature of our conflict. Christianity is not debate club or child's play. Neither is our war a game. It is a titanic struggle for the souls of men; for the heart of a nation. It is a mortal conflict with the devil and his angels. It is a war for the heart of our civilization, our culture and the church. At stake are the minds and hearts of our children. Faith and courage are essential elements in good soldiers.

Never Surrender. Victory is our only option. As Paul wrote these lines, he had in mind those Roman soldiers who enabled Rome to rule the civilized world of his day. They were invincible because they were trained to never surrender. If defeated today, they were trained to regroup and fight again tomorrow. In every war there is a problem keeping the fighting spirit of the troops at high level. Surveying our Christian soldiers, it is evident that some have grown weary of the strife, some are discouraged by the success of our enemy. Some have been wounded, or have grown old in the conflict. As it was during the Viet Nam conflict, some have been persuaded that to continue the battle is wrong, useless or hopeless. In the dark dreary day of World War II, courageous Winston Churchill addressed the students of his alma mater. His subject was the war, which at that time was going badly against England. The eloquent leader summed up his speech with these stirring words, "Never, never, never surrender." So it must be for those of us privileged to serve in the army of Christ. There are thousands of foes without, arrayed against us with deadly intent. Sadly there are traitors and turncoats within the church. They are devoting their energies to undermining the authority of our King. They are subverting the faith, worship and practice of the church by sowing discord among the citizens of the kingdom. In the face of all these enemies, of our Lord we must "Never, never, never, surrender." JHW

"Courage from hearts and not from numbers grows" (Dryden)

WHO WILL LEAD THE REMNANT?

Like a toxic cloud, apostasy is settling over significant numbers of our congregations and schools. One need not be a prophet to predict that where this occurs, a separation is inevitable. Faithful Christians, who love the church and respect the authority of the Scriptures, will not be able to stay and be part of a congregation that has cast aside the Will of Christ and determined to chart a new course. God always has, and always will, have a faithful remnant who will be true to His will and way (Rom. 9:27). Because they remain faithful, they shall be saved. The question is, who will provide the leadership to rally those brethren who refuse to be led into denominationalism?

Four options come to mind.

- * Without strong leadership, they will be left as sheep without a shepherd to wander aimlessly until they are finally scattered and lose their identity.
- * Some will be left to seek fellowship in non-institutional churches (They used to be called anti orphan home and anti-cooperation churches). They are far more conservative than many of our congregations. Some of them have moderated their approach on their issues over the last few years. Visitors will find their preaching and worship very much like ours before agents of change appeared on the scene.
- * Some will be tempted to follow those ultra-conservatives brethren that for years have been railing against anything and anyone they did not personally have a controlling hand in. There is a sprinkling of these preachers and congregations across the country. Yes they are conservative, and they reject the new currents of change, but they have one wheel in the ditch and history demonstrates that they will never provide leadership that will give the church growth and victory.
- * Hopefully wise and good men, sound in faith, conservative in commitment, level-headed and able to discern and avoid either extreme of liberalism or legalism will rise up. Only such men can provide the Biblical leadership to help us restore the church of the 21st century to a solid Biblical base.

A little historical background will make this point clearer. In the years following the Civil War our brotherhood experienced an upheaval and apostasy almost identical to that we are experiencing today. Those determined to change the church styled themselves "progressives" while those who sought to maintain the Biblical faith called them "digressives." So effective were the digressives in promoting their views and so naive and complacent were many good men that before the dust had settled they had swept away some 85% of our churches and most of our schools. The issues then were: how can we determine what God allows?, man-made organizations to do the mission work of the church, instrumental music in worship, placing women in roles of leadership, fellowship with denominations, classifying the Lord's church as a denomination, choirs, soloists and other similar things. There was a significant circle of well-educated preachers who espoused the theological liberalism popular in that day. Among other things, they questioned the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

The digressives had two primary camps. J. H. Garrison led the theological liberals. They had a large influence in the Christian schools that were taken. Isaac Errett through the **Christian Standard**, led the moderates. They promoted all the agenda except the flagrant liberalism of Garrison's followers. Among those who opposed the digressives, David Lipscomb was the most prominent leader. He led moderates who wished to maintain the Restoration Movement on its original Biblical course. Through the pages of the **Gospel Advocate** paper and the Nashville Bible School (Now David Lipscomb University), he was able to keep his followers on a steady course that avoided extremes. Daniel Sommer of Indianapolis pursued a radical approach that not only opposed the digressives but Lipscomb and the moderates. Sommer's legacy has been a seed bed for an unending cycle of "ultra-conservative" splinter groups.

Those preachers, congregations and schools that followed the leadership of Bro. Lipscomb prospered and multiplied in a phenomenal way. By the 1960s our churches had spread to every state in the Union and in more than a hundred foreign nations. Brethren conducted numerous schools, providing educations for our children. Scores of good works were undertaken, providing care for widows, orphans, unwed mothers, the aged. We had numerous gospel papers all,

of the centrist view and several publishing houses that provided good, dependable literature for our people.

Today we have already lost much of what we had gained. Some of our Universities and Colleges are under the influence of the new digressives. Many of our gospel papers have either been discontinued or have suffered serious decline in circulation. The international radio and television outreach that we once were proud of is no longer a distinctive voice for the New Testament church. Many campus and youth programs have weakened rather than strengthen the faith of their young charges, leaving them vulnerable to the sirens of change. From every quarter we heard of churches pursuing a new course, and the conflicts that pursuit causes.

Our liberal digressives have their leaders. The question is who will lead the surviving remnant? Will faithful leaders arise soon enough to save the greater number of our churches? Or will we tarry and hope until major losses are inflicted? Our current agitation is not going to be a year or a five year tussle. Such changes within religious groups take years to run their course. The conflict that was mentioned earlier spanned well over 50 years and resulted in a divided brotherhood. The digressives emerged as the Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches. Those clinging to the Old Paths as Churches of Christ.

Granted, no man, editor or school can appoint themselves to be leaders of our people, nor can any group elect them to that position. Granted every congregation is autonomous and independent. But now as in the past, men will arise to provide leadership, be it good or bad, others will voluntarily follow. Our liberals are providing their leadership in a most successful way. We have a radical reactionary group eager to lead those who reject liberalism. What we desperately need is for wise men, rooted and grounded in God's Word, faithful and loyal to the New Testament Church, to step forward and issue the cry to arms. Only that kind of leadership will save the day. We need not one, or a dozen but thousands, of loyal soldiers of Christ to lead us in this hour of crisis. JHW

THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE LIKE A GOAD

In the last half of the 19th century our brotherhood was troubled by a change movement that was virtually identical to that we face today. Moses Lard, brilliant preacher and writer of that era, painted a vivid picture of the change agents he was forced to deal with. Perhaps it will open the eyes of some of our contemporary brethren who are reticent to acknowledge the departures of some of their dear friends.

"The spirit of innovation is a peculiar spirit. While coming in, it is the meekest and gentlest of spirits; only it is marvelously firm and persistent. But when going out, no term but fiendish will describe it. It comes in humming the sweetest notes of Zion; it goes out amid the ruin it works, howling like an exorcized demon. At first it is supple as a willow twig; you can bend it, mold it, shape it, to anything; only it will have its way. But when once it has got its way, then mark how it keeps its footing. It now calls for reason, argument, for Scripture, but no more has it an ear for reason, for argument, for Scripture than has the image of Baal. Argue with the spirit of innovation indeed! I would as soon be caught cracking syllogisms over the head of the Man of Sin. Never! Rebuke it in the name of the Lord; if it go not out—**expel it!** This only will cure it" (Moses Lard, *The Work of the Past, Symptoms of the Future, Lard's Quarterly, Vol II*, p. 262).

Please my brethren, listen and learn. Better to keep the robber out of the house, than to have to fight him inside the house.
JHW

"Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to him" (Emmons)

STAND ALONE IF YOU MUST

If the church of Christ in America is to survive the storms of change it will be because hundreds, hopefully thousands of individual Christians will stand up in opposition to the encroaching error. It is surely comforting to have others by our side when the battle is hot, but there will be times when such is not the case. If the enemy is to be confronted and the cause saved in your community, it will take that one man or woman with sufficient courage and conviction to stand up and say, "No" to the proponents of these unscriptural changes.

In the course of sacred and human history, individuals willing to stand alone made the difference.

* There was Noah who stood alone in his corrupt society and was thus chosen to preserve a remnant of humanity when God destroyed the race.

* Abraham was a lonely pilgrim in Canaan, waiting for the promise of God to be fulfilled.

* Moses spent years in solitude in the wilderness of Midian. Alone, he set out for Egypt with an assignment that would stagger most men. Alone, he confronted Aaron and the feckless crowd of sinners at the foot of Sinai. Alone, he mounted the steep slopes of Pisgah.

* Jeremiah kept a lonely vigil in Judea when most of his people were tossed to and fro in mass confusion. He was hated and persecuted for his loyalty to God.

* Ezekiel was alone in his camp at Telabib in Babylon. He had to face the hard-headed and stubborn Hebrews with a message they did not want to hear.

* Jesus faced the Sanhedrin, Pilate and the howling mob....alone, in order to save humanity and make possible the establishment of his church.

* Paul stood alone before the powers of Judaism and Rome...never wavering in his testimony.

* It was men like Wyckliff, Tyndale, Huss, Luther and Knox who each in his own day and place challenged the corrupt and hostile power of church and state to break the iron grip of Catholicism and to free the hearts of men to serve the living God as Scripture directs.

* In every generation there will be situations where the faithful child of God must face the choice, either to stand alone or to allow himself to be swept along with the worldly crowd. That God has always had a faithful remnant is a theme that is found throughout the Bible (Rom. 9:27). All men recognize the strength and merit of the individual who stands and fights for that in which he believes. "There are men of conviction whose very face will light up an era..." (Fields). Andrew Jackson, known for his unswerving courage, said, "One man with courage makes a majority."

As the stormy winds of the change movement envelop the 21st century church of Christ, many faithful Christians will be forced either to surrender or stand alone against a determined band of apostates. As the Bard of Avon exhorted, "But screw your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail." JHW

"A man in the right, with God on his side, is in the majority though he be alone (H. W. Beecher).

"Music is the best sense, does not require novelty; nay, the older it is, and the more we are accustomed to it, the greater its effect" (Goethe).

The first law that ever God gave to man, was a law of obedience; it was a commandment pure and simple...From obedience and submission spring all other virtues, as all sin does from self-opinion and self-will (Montaigne).

A PRAYER FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH

In a day when Christ's precious church is being ravaged and torn by agents of change who reject his authority and rebel at his prohibitions, we offer up the following prayer. Please join us in daily prayer for the welfare of the Lord's church.

Holy Father: We pray that you will bless **the men who stand before your congregations as preachers** of your gospel. May they take seriously their privilege and duty to represent You to your people. May they preach "the whole counsel of God," taking no liberties with it and omitting nothing that is needful for your people. Give them the courage to be faithful even in the face of opposition. Please raise up a new generation of young men who love your church, your Word and your Son.

We ask that you bless **the elders who lead your people**. That they will lead wisely, seeing that your flock is properly feed and protect from those who would do them harm. Give them wisdom and discernment that no one be able slip into their fold and steal away the hearts of your people. May their congregations grow strong and flourish under their supervision and guidance. May they not be intimidated into compromise by those who clamor to be like the world about them.

Please bless **those who teach our classes**. May they understand the importance of indoctrinating your people in the truth; showing their students the right way to serve you and pointing out the dangers of the wrong.

Be with **those who work with our young people**. There are tremendous allurements to draw them away from faithful Word to the allusions of entertainment and emotionalism. Please help them be faithful stewards looking after their charges. May they fill their young disciples with love for Christ and his Church and an appetite for the knowledge of your Word. May they lead them to understand that discipleship in Christ means service to God and humanity, taking the gospel tot he lost and not just having fun.

Please bless **our sisters in Christ**. They are under tremendous pressure by the world to embrace the ideas and lifestyle of the Feminist Movement. While we are grateful that they have opportunities in higher education and the business and profession world, may they not seek to bring the standards of the world into your church. Please help them to be content with the role you have prescribed for them in your holy Word. Help them to understand, that great will be their reward in heaven if they are faithful to your standards.

Father we pray for **those who lead and teach in our Christian schools**. We are truly grateful for the many contributions they have made to the progress of your kingdom in days past. It appears that some of them have forgotten their proper roll as helpers to your church. Please Father help them to reject those who seek to use them to impose harmful changes to your spiritual family. May they be faithful in teaching the ancient truths of the gospel and in strengthening the faith of our young people and preacher students.

Dear Lord, we pray that you will **protect your people** from those who have embraced the doctrines of men and are seeking to interject them into your church. Please Father, defeat those who would destroy your people by their false teachings; Confound their schemes and projects. We pray that they will repent and return to the safe boundaries of your Holy Word and once again be true soldiers of Christ. But if they refuse to do so, please dash and destroy their plans to change your church into a church of their own design.

Please bless your people, one and all, that they will awaken to the dangers before us and rise up to defend the walls of Zion against her enemies. May every preacher be willing to take his place in the battle lines. May every elder be a strong leader of the home-guard. May every member shout "No with an emphatic voice when false teachers seek to lead them astray.

"Help us Holy Father to be strong in evangelism, benevolent to everyone in need and determined to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. May we please you in all ways and in all things is our prayer. Through our Lord Jesus. Amen" JHW

The End

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