

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THREATS TO GOD APPROVED LEADERSHIP #1

Tom House

At last year's "Seek The Old Paths" lectureship, it was my privilege to address a splendid audience on this very subject. It was very encouraging to witness its kind reception. Since some of the prepared material was not covered in the lecture due to time restraints, Bro. Robinson asked if I would be interested in submitting the entirety of the material for a series of articles for the S.T.O.P. publication. The following is the answer to that request.

I know of no more timely subject than the one presently before us. Considering the present trends which face the Lord's church; her soundness and purity threatened; and considering the fact that the church is only as strong as its leadership, the importance of this subject is paramount.

The basis of this subject is founded upon these premises:

1) There is a Divine Authority. The first verses of the Bible establish the very existence of this authority. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). "And God said, Let there be a firmament..." (Gen. 1:6) "...and it was so" (v.7). The same is repeated throughout the first chapter of Genesis in the creation of all things. When God pronounced something he wished to be accomplished, it was. Such is the essence of supreme authority.

2) There has been a delegation of this authority. A prime example of

the delegation of authority is seen in Christ. The Lord states in Matthew 28:18, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This authority was not assumed by the Lord, nor was it somehow won; it was 'given.' The Lord would also add, "...My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17). Again he states, "...when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). (Note also John 12:49).

3) As Jesus had been given authority, He would Himself delegate authority to certain ones to fulfill His mission. Those to whom this authority has been delegated must have met Divine stipulations in order to be approved as a delegate of the authority. Jesus himself recognized his role as one who must submit to authority. In John 5:30 he states, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." This must be a disposition shared by those who have had authority delegated unto them by the Lord.

4) It is important to recognize that there are those who will use any means at their disposal to undermine the authoritative stipulations, or the

approved leadership, and by so doing, they will have undermined the Divine Authority. The apostle Paul identified some of this disposition when he wrote to the Romans about "...unrighteous men who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18-23).

Although having noted the example of Christ as one unto whom authority has been delegated, God has also delegated certain authority to men, and thereby establishing various types and degrees of leadership among men. God has ordained elements of leadership in the *spiritual* and the *secular* venues of human society; and on occasion, some of these leaders have served in both avenues with His approval. (Example: Melchizedek, of Genesis 14, was both a king and priest, Heb. 7:1). There is, however, a matter which must be understood; there is a clear distinction between what man perceives as leadership approved of God, and a leadership which is actually approved of God. The criteria establishing the distinction between what is or is not approved, and that which clearly identifies the characteristics of God-approved leadership, is God's Word. Whatever man perceives as being acceptable forms of leadership, or as acceptable behavior for a leader; if it contrasts with the Divine

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Threats...



Colossians 3:17 reads, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” Since we argue that this verse demands Bible authority for all we SAY and DO, a couple of questions have been raised regarding church buildings and preachers.

“Where is Bible authority for the church to own property and/or a building in which to meet? I find no specific Bible authority for such.”

It is correct to state that we do not have “specific” authority for “church buildings.” However, the Bible authorizes in both a “specific” and “generic” way. For example: the Bible “specifically” authorizes preaching to all the world (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). But, it does not “specifically” tell us HOW that is to be done. We therefore call upon “generic” authority to aid us in carrying out the “specific” command to preach to all the world. We have “generic” authority from God to use whatever means we have at our disposal in carrying out the command to preach. Generic authority authorizes PA systems, radio, TV, newspaper, etc. Generic authority authorizes many different means of travel in getting to places in order to preach: walk, horse, train, car, plane, boat, etc. Both electronic devices and motorized vehicles expedite the command to preach to all the world. These means and modes are “expedients” which help us carry out the “specific” command to preach.

It is also obvious that any “generic” means we use in carrying out a “specific” command must not violate any other principle of Scripture. For example: we are not authorized to rob a bank in order to have the money to buy a ticket to travel. We are not authorized to steal a car which would provide us a means of transportation in going to preach.

God gave Noah a “specific” com-

mand to build the ark. He was not specifically told to use a hammer, saw, axe, etc. However, these things were expedients which would help him carry out the “specific” command to build the ark. They were authorized under the heading of “generic” authority.

We have “specific” authority to “sing” in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). There is also “generic” authority in carrying out the command to sing. This is the area in which we have authority for song books, pitch pipe, a song leader, etc. These things expedite the command to sing; and, they do not violate any other principle of Scripture. Some want to include “mechanical instruments of music” under the heading of “generic” authority as an expedient in carrying out the command to sing. But, instruments of music are not expedients because they violate Scripture. That is, they “add” an additional “kind” of music to that which God authorized. The Bible does not authorize “playing.” It authorizes “singing.” Some argue that pitch pipes or song books stand or fall together — that they are the same. This is not correct because a pitch pipe or song book adds nothing to singing, but a mechanical instrument of music does. When a song book or pitch pipe is used, there is only singing — nothing more, nothing less. But, when a mechanical instrument is used, there is more than singing. There is an additional “kind” of music. Therefore, mechanical instruments are additions, not aids or expedients.

Well, what about church buildings? Where does the Bible specifically give authority for the church to own a building? The Bible nowhere gives “specific” authority for the church to own a building. However, that does not mean the church has no authority to own a building. If it did, then we ought to get rid of our buildings. The church, on the other hand, has “generic” authority to own a building.

The church has “specific” authority to assemble and worship on the first day of the week (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7). In carrying out the “specific” command to assemble, we can use whatever means at our disposal in obeying that command. This is “generic” authority. Assembling demands a place to assemble. The church, therefore, has “generic” authority to provide a place to assemble. Since the Bible does not “specifically” specify HOW this is to be done, we are left with “generic” authority to use our good judgment in seeing to it that the church has a place to assemble. The church therefore can borrow, rent, own, etc. Neither of these means violates any other principle of Scripture AND, expedites the command to assemble. Therefore, there is Bible authority (generic) for the church to own a building.

NOW, how elaborate and expensive can or should the building be? This must fall under the realm of human judgment since God has not specifically mentioned the details of the place the church meets. In my opinion, many congregations spend far too much money on human comfort and eye appeal. I believe so much of the Lord’s money is wasted and could have been (and should have been) used far more wisely in spreading the Gospel than on “creature comforts.” However, this realm is human judgment — human opinion. Each congregation will have to answer for how they spend the “first day collection.”

“Where is Bible authority for a full-time paid preacher?”

The Bible authorizes us to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). This is done through preachers and teachers, including every Christian.

The Bible authorizes the financial support of preaching and preachers (1 Cor. 1:18-21; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:3-14; Phil. 4:14-19). A preacher is not “paid” to do the work of preaching. He is financially “supported” in his work as a preacher. A faithful preacher will preach (using the ability God has given him) whether he is financially supported or not. He will use whatever means and opportunity to sow the seed of the kingdom. However, the Bible “specifically” authorizes his financial support (Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:3-14).

The Bible does not “specifically” address the subject of HOW LONG a preacher can remain at one particular location before he must move on. It mentions that Paul was in Corinth 18 months (Acts 18:11). He spent two years at Ephesus according to Acts 19:10. Acts 20:31 mentions he spent three years in Ephesus. Acts 14:3 says Paul and Barnabas was a “long time” at Iconium. We know that while many disciples were scattered because of persecution, the apostles remained at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The apostles were preachers. We also read of apostles at Jerusalem in Acts 15. From the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) to Acts 15 was more than 10 years.

So, how long can a preacher stay at any one place and preach the Gospel? The Bible does not say. And, neither should we say or make a law God did not make. Just because a preacher lives or stays in one particular city, does not mean that he limits his work with just one group of people. Though he may preach at the same congregation from week to week, he also works in the community and sur-

rounding area as he preaches the Gospel. He makes trips to other areas and preaches also. Paul did this while living in Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

Shall we call a preacher that lives at one certain place a “located preacher” or “professional preacher?” If a preacher preaches at one location for an extended period of time, does that make him a “professional?” Since there is authority for the financial support of those who preach the Gospel, then as long as one is preaching the Gospel, he can be financially supported. A preacher can work to support himself, Paul did (Acts 18:1-3; 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12). But, he also had the right to not work and the church support him (1 Cor. 9:6-12). Was he a professional preacher? I don’t think so. He was simply a preacher and used his ability to preach. In order for him to have more time to preach, churches supported him so he would not have to work (2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16).

It is not right for a preacher to be lazy and just live off the brethren. It is not right for him to think of himself or promote himself as a “professional”

and a “notch above” any other Christian. It is not right for him to think that because he has a “degree” or an education in the field of “ministry” (so-called), that he somehow deserves special treatment. This kind of “preacher” is a leech on the church and a hireling. He is worthy of shame, not support. That which enables him to preach is an education in the Bible. And, that education does not have to come from a man-made school of “higher learning.” It comes from many long hours of burning the mid-night oil in hard study. I feel sorry for those who think that unless a preacher has a degree from one of “our” schools that he cannot preach and is not worthy of support. Shame. Shame!

A new web site for audio lessons by James Boyd can be found at www.aburningfire.net. He says, “I hope to have about fifty or more lessons available at any one time, and then each day delete one and replace with a new one.” Check it out!

Where In The Bible Will I Find THAT WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE?

Gary Colley

Though it is often said, “We are not to judge,” this thought is not taught, nor is it to be found, in the Bible. Most of the time those who use the phrase “judge not” are trying to justify themselves in doing things the Bible condemns. These seem to think NO ONE IS TO JUDGE IN ANYTHING, especially in religion and politics.

It is true that we are not to judge without and before knowing the facts of a matter. The Bible says, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged,*” BUT SOME CONVENIENTLY REFUSE TO READ THE REST OF THE CONTEXT. Jesus further said, “*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*” (Matt. 7:1-2). Jesus is teaching that as we judge, we will be judged, but He is not teaching that we are not to judge at all! For sure,

Jesus never condemned Himself, as some do today who JUDGE THAT WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE. Jesus did no sin (1 Peter 2:20-22). Jesus never contradicted His own teaching. He again said, “*Judge not according to the appearance, but JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT*” (John 7:24) [emphasis added G.C.].

Did Jesus teach some not to judge, while teaching others to judge? Not in the least! Take for instance the passage these use to say, “We must not judge,” and see how they have twisted our Lord’s words. In this same chapter (Matt. 7), Jesus taught the following.

We must judge the hypocrite (v.5).

We must judge the unholy (v.6).

We must judge the narrow way from the broad way to be saved eternally (vs.13-14).

We must judge those who are

false teachers (v.15).

We must judge the fruits of the unrighteous (vs.16-20).

We must judge the wrong of religious folks (vs.21-22).

We must judge the consequence of rejecting Jesus’ teaching in our life (v.24).

We must judge whether our house is built on the “rock” of Christ’s teaching or the “sand” of men’s doctrine (vs.25-27).

We must judge whether our way of living will stand the test of God’s judgment (vs.25,27).

We must judge the difference between the authority of Christ and that of the scribes (vs.28-29).

YES, WE ARE TO JUDGE. Shame on the person who wants to change the teaching of Jesus to suit his or her own desires!

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Authority, then those perceptions diminish into the realm of utter insignificance.

As the force of this discussion is centered on the premise of dealing with those things which threaten God's approved forms of leadership, it is first necessary to establish some foundation for the discussion. I believe it to be of some importance to have a brief understanding of the *forms of leadership* which God authorizes. It is also important to bear in mind, that there were different purposes and designs for particular forms of leadership as based on a particular need for a particular people at a particular point in time. The failures or successes of each of these forms of leadership would obviously depend upon whether or not those in the positions of leadership would comply with God's criteria for approval.

God has, through the ages, set in place certain people to be leaders. The Bible student is familiar with the *'patriarchs,'* which were heads of families, and were the means through whom God's will would be revealed unto the families. Some of the more familiar names of patriarchs would be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As Jacob had become God's chosen one through whom the 'seed' promise would be generated (and his name being later changed to Israel, Gen. 32), the record shows that all of those who were his descendants would bear his name. As the generations passed, the Israelites found themselves in Egyptian bondage. As God would have it, a man by the name of Moses would be chosen to face Pharaoh and ultimately lead the people of Israel out of bondage. Upon Moses' death, a devout man by the name of Joshua would lead the people to take the land which had been promised to Abraham and his descendants. As the people of Israel would possess the land promised to them, and would, through time and dedication, become a formidable nation, God would select certain ones referred to as *'Judges'* to rule the people (Judges 2:16). The Judges would be responsible for guiding the people in matters of social, civil, and spiritu-

al affairs. The Lord would be with the judge to deliver the people from their enemies (Judges 2:18) as long as the people would 'hear' the judge. Yet the record shows that the people would not 'hearken' to the judges (2:17) and when the judge died, they returned to their corruption and idol worship (2:19). Hence, a rebellious spirit threatened God's approved leadership, and undermined the strength and influence of the nation.

Then as one proceeds through Biblical history, as prophecy had declared, the kingdom of Christ (the church) would be established. During the infancy of the church, the Lord chose 12 men (*apostles*) to serve as spirit-empowered leaders. The men selected to serve in this honored capacity would have to meet a certain criteria. They would have to be eye-witnesses to the majesty of Christ (Acts 1:21-22). These men would be sent to declare the message of Christ, to establish congregations of the Lord's church throughout the world, as well as to endow believers with spiritual gifts in order that they may sustain those things which they said as they proclaimed the Gospel. The work of these great men would be the target of many of the Jewish elitist, who from the very beginning of the church, would with vicious tenacity attempt to stifle the mouths of the apostles from preaching the Gospel (Acts 4; Acts 5:27,28). There would be many other efforts by those outside the church to undermine the apostles' work and authority.

In like manner, there would be those within the church who would question the authority of some of the apostles. Paul's apostleship, for example, was scrutinized by some who perceived that he may have been something less than what he claimed. Yet he made the point to the Corinthian brethren that he was not behind the chiefest of apostles in any thing (2 Cor. 12:11-12). He further defended his apostleship to the Galatians when he noted that his apostleship was not of, or by men, but by the Father and the Son (Gal. 1:1). In 1 Timothy 1:1, he proclaims that he was an apostle by virtue of the commandment of God. Yet while there would be those who would attempt to undermine his claim (in the record to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 12:12), he noted that he had 'wrought' the signs

of an apostle among them while he was there, leaving no room for question.

The authority of the apostle John was tested when the evil Diotrophes purposefully rejected John's letter regarding the receiving of brethren who were transient through the area. Although Diotrophes had disregarded John's authority, he mentions that if he were to come into the area, he would 'remember' Diotrophes' deeds. That is a clear declaration of his apostolic authority. It seems to indicate that a certain encounter with Diotrophes would be eminent and would not be pleasant for the one with the diabolical disposition. Such is similar to the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:2 when he warned that if he returned, he 'would not spare.'

However, the sad fact remains; these men, selected by the Lord, would meet their deaths in some of the most heinous methods known and devised by man. Yet bear in mind, even though their antagonists might feel a certain victory for having stopped the mouths of these men by their execution, their message is eternal in nature, for they are the very expressions of the authority of Christ (Matt. 24:35) and will be the words by which all men will be judged (John 12:48). Incidentally, there would be those in the first century who would claim to be apostles, yet would be without qualifications, and would be without the power to sustain their claim (Rev. 2:2). There are those today who make the same baseless claim to be apostles of Christ, claiming to possess equal or superior authority to those who were apostles of Christ. (For example, the Mormons). By virtue of their claim, their continual efforts to lessen the authority of God's approved leaders undermines the authority of Christ; but to their own peril.

Next month we will observe that after a period of time, certain men (who would meet divine specifications) would be selected to oversee each autonomously governed congregation of the Lord's church as its spiritual leaders. These men are called *elders*. We will examine various threats to their leadership today.

Part 2 next month
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Are WE Responsible?

Dennis (Skip) Francis

Are we ourselves responsible for the entertainment mind-set of some “liberal” brethren, albeit inadvertently? Though many an article has been written in “sound” publications concerning this, what hasn’t been addressed is one way the church is responsible for fostering that very state of mind.

I have, over the years, observed the growing trend among “our schools” and other “para-church” groups to develop and use **choirs** and **choruses** in so-called “entertainment settings.” The idea seems to be that I can use God-prescribed elements of worship as entertainment, as long as my “intent” is not to worship God. There is, however, a very difficult line to be drawn between when I am worshipping and when I am not. For me, the minute I hear the first notes of a psalm, hymn, or spiritual song, my heart begins to worship and my mouth wants to sing!

Recently, an article by Jack Simons¹ decried the practice of making the Lord’s supper into a common meal, which had been practiced by the Skyway Hills Church of Christ of Pearl, Mississippi, under the heading of “Special Sunday Communion.” In that article, the writer said, “*It is blasphemy to relegate the worship of God to common practice or to mingle it with such!*” Though many a sound proclaimer of God’s word can recognize this principle in relation to the Lord’s supper, there are other areas where we seem to be lax in application.

Addressing music in Colossians 3:16, the apostle Paul wrote, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” This, along with its sister passage in Ephesians 5:19, gives us the principles we are to exercise when we use music in worship to God. Several principles should be obvious in these passages.

First, our music should be filled with “the word of Christ” so we can effectively “teach and admonish” one

another. This would preclude the use of popular “Christian” songs that do not teach what the Bible teaches, as well as the use of secular songs in our worship.

Second, our music should be both horizontal and vertical, that is, to “one another” as well as “to the Lord.” The expression “one another,” paralleled in Ephesians 5:19 (yourselves), comes from the same Greek word *heautou*, which is described by Strong’s as a “reflexive pronoun.”² A reflexive pronoun is one that indicates the same persons as senders and receivers of the message, in much the same way as a mirror is “reflective.” Some scholars have these as “reciprocal pronouns,” while others “reflexive pronouns used reciprocally.” No matter what the definition, however, one cannot fulfill the action required by only listening. For one to participate in the act of worship specified (singing), one must both teach and be taught, admonish and be admonished, speak and be spoken to. Special groups: choruses, choirs, solos, and such like, cannot fulfill this requirement.

Third, our music should be vocal, or “a cappella.” Colossians 3:16 has “singing,” while Ephesians 5:19 has both “speaking” and “singing.” You simply cannot “sing” or “speak” with a musical instrument, nor can you “teach and admonish” with an instrument. An instrument of music is an “add” to vocal music, not an “aid” to vocal music.

Fourth, our music should be understood in order to “teach and admonish.” The unintelligible noises and sounds made by so-called “vocal bands” simply will not comply with that need. “Hums,” “pops,” and the imitation of musical instruments, simply cannot teach and admonish.

Worship can be done both privately and publicly. It can also be done in smaller settings than the entire congregation. One principle we need to grasp here is that whenever we worship [and/or perform worship acts, editor], in our closet, in our home, or any other setting, we must worship as God has prescribed.

If we sing songs, hymns, or spiritual songs at home, we must use the principles previously established: 1) let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, 2) all Christians present should sing, 3) do NOT use mechanical instruments of music and 4) SING (do not make unintelligible sounds).

Bro. Guy N. Woods, answering a question on the use of instruments of music with sacred songs at other times and places than our usual worship services, had the following to say:

The third commandment of the Decalogue forbade the taking of the name of the Lord in vain: “Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Ex. 20:7) The phrase “in vain,” translates a Hebrew term signifying that which is done in a flippant, frivolous fashion, without due regard for, or attention to, the sacred nature of the same. Those who utter the names of God, Christ, and give utterance to other sacred matters such as are involved in our songs of praise for “pastime,” violate, in principle, the foregoing commandment, and are guilty of profanity.³

What Bro. Woods addressed in this context also applies to the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for “pastime” (entertainment).

What constitutes worship — the attitude or the action? Though men will indeed decry the use of the instrument, or the choir, in our formal worship times, they will still support such in our “off duty” times. We need to remember that the Lord said our worship was to be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This refers to both attitude AND action! When we begin an action the Bible authorizes as worship, then that is what it is! →

Some may say, “But, I can drink grape juice at home without it being the Lord’s supper.” Brother Woods pointed out, though the grape juice has no religious significance when not a part of the Lord’s supper, the sacred themes characterizing religious songs always have religious significance. “The holy names of God, Christ, heaven; the doctrine of grace, redemption, and salvation; the hope of heaven and of eternal life — frequent themes in our song books — do possess spiritual and religious significance, *everywhere*, and at *all* times. Any use of them, therefore, must either be sacred or profane.”⁴

It has always baffled me why, if we are entertained by listening to someone else perform an act of worship in song, we aren’t entertained by listening to someone pray, or watching them give or partake of the Lord’s supper? The word “perform” is key to

this understanding; when someone “performs,” they are entertaining, not worshipping, thus their act is profane.

The argument has been made: “If we can listen to a special group on Saturday night, why not on Sunday morning?” Here we might learn a lesson from the past. Many men supported bringing the instrument into the children’s Bible class in the past generation, and then were forced to remove themselves from fellowship when the next generation wanted to bring it into the worship hall. This is what we are experiencing with the choir and chorus of today and this is the very argument that men are using to attempt to bring the choir into our “formal” worship.

No matter how much “good” we perceive these choirs, choruses, and special groups doing, we still have a difficult time with Colossians 3:17,

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Brethren, concerning choirs, choruses, and other “special music,” where is BIBLE authority for it?

ENDNOTES:

1. Jack Simons, “Seek the Old Paths,” Vol. 13, No. 10, October 2002.

2. James Strong, “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.”

3. Guy N. Woods, “Questions and Answers, Open Forum” Freed-Hardestman College Lectures, FHU, p.359, Para. 1.

4. Guy N. Woods, “Questions and Answers, Open Forum” Freed-Hardestman College Lectures, FHU, p.359, Para. 2.

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Religious Pluralism vs. The Word of God

Steven E. Yeatts

We live in an age where truth is considered to be relative, where the idea of morality is scoffed at as old fashioned and where the ideas of “do your own thing” (radical individualism) and finding the “church of your choice” (religious pluralism) prevail. The mere suggestion that there is an absolute standard for truth regarding religious matters is sure to draw the fury of certain family, friends, neighbors, and strangers who have foolishly adduced that religious liberty is an inexorable (unyielding) right. However, Jesus said, “...*IF ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31b-32).

Religious pluralism has found a stronghold in America because of a societal environment that prefers therapeutic “sermons” and psychological counseling in place of objective Biblically-based sermons on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:25). Perpetrators are constantly looking for a psychological diagnosis to explain their sinfulness, instead of looking to extrude the sin from their lives by humbling themselves to God through

obedience to His Son (Heb. 5:8,9). The fast-food restaurant approach to religion (“have it your way”) has infiltrated the mind-set of so many that often any attempt to engage them in an honest, objective, and meaningful debate from the Scriptures is an exercise in futility.

I have encountered those who assert that any church that says it is the only church is a false church. When pressed for Scripture to substantiate such an “antichrist” claim, they of course, can produce none. When shown from numerous clear Scriptures the beauty of the oneness of the church (body) of Christ (Matt. 16:18; John 17:20,21; Eph. 1:22,23; 3:21; 4:4-6; Col. 1:18), these “religious” folks will resort to illogical positions that from one Head (Jesus Christ) has come many acceptable bodies, each teaching different doctrines, each wearing different names, and each desiring all others to become a member of their church, which they have assured you is not an essentiality to go to heaven in the first place (who could believe such? — Sadly, MANY!). Indeed, religious pluralism [a.k.a. denominationalism, cults and apostatized brethren] is a

divisive, devilish idea which makes no attempt to justify its inconsistencies because religiously dumbed-down people demand no such Biblical explanation, but are instead content in their ignorance, illogic and ecumenism (2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:7).

Unity-in-diversity was sounded forth years ago as the battle cry for some who claimed membership in the Lord’s body, but who saw a chance for physical growth (more folks in the pews) by opening the door to religious pluralism in a post-modern society by diluting the truth of God’s Word until their doctrine was unrecognizable from the denominational bodies down the street whom the “unity in diversity” lemmings championed as their brothers and sisters in Christ. The motto of the religious world is that from One (Jesus) came many churches teaching many opposing doctrines, but our Savior asserts that from Him came only one church, and thereby true religious unity (Matt. 16:18; 15:13; John 17:20-21, Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

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THE LIBERAL AND THE MODERN DAY PHARISEE

Ron Suiter

Articles on Liberalism have been coming off of the presses in the last few years due to the fact that it is a real problem. Paul wouldn't have written about the false doctrine of his day if it weren't a problem. As the church (in the universal since), we must wake up and educate ourselves so that we, nor our fellow Christians, fall prey to Satan's relentless assault on the Body of Christ.

This article isn't about any certain doctrine. It is about the charge liberals make against those who wish to follow the Bible and allow it to be their strict guide in doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17). They claim we are guilty of the same sin as the Pharisees of Christ's time — legalism. Their charge of "legalism" is misinformed. The true definition of legalism is that one is saved by law alone. That is not what the agents of change mean when they use the term. What they mean is holding any view on any doctrinal issue and saying that salvation is dependent upon obedience to that doctrine.

I have heard with my own ears the president of the Center for Christian Education (old Preston Road School of Preaching) say that "The Bible didn't die for you" and "Doctrine does not matter" (1 Tim 4:6,16). We as sound Christians need to see through this smokescreen. This error is easily untwisted (2 Peter 3:16) by looking at one verse — "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The question to be asked is "Which ones?" The only answer is, "All of them."

What was the sin of the Pharisees in Matthew 23? If you think it was (as per the liberal's definition) legalism, you are wrong. If it were, Jesus would have said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, Legalists!" Their sin was one of hypocrisy. You see, a hypocrite claims to be one thing, yet in reality is another (usually the opposite of what they claim to be).

If the action of tediously following God's law is (or was) sinful, then

Jesus is guilty of advising the Jews to sin with His blessing in Matthew 23:1-3. The fact is that the Pharisees had the Law of Moses properly interpreted, but they weren't applying it in their daily lives. They did what made them appear righteous to their fellow Jews, but were actually "dead men's bones" (Matt. 23:1-5,27). Jesus later says in Matthew 23:23-24 that they were guilty of hypocrisy because they "neglected the weightier matters of the law." Does this mean they were okay to ignore the "less weightier" matters? Of course not. Jesus then says, "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." To paraphrase what He is saying, You did well on the details, but you missed the big picture. The next verse is a much-misused verse. Are we to strain out the camel, and leave the gnats? Thank you, but I'll pass on the gnat milk-shake. In context, we must strain out the gnat and the camel. To only strain out the camel and not the gnat would not alter the Pharisees actions of hypocrisy. It would only shift their hypocrisy to the other end of the spectrum.

In the context of Matthew 23, the Pharisees claimed to be the most godly, but were in fact some of the most godless Jews of the day. They did what made them appear righteous to the religious world. They practiced the parts of their religion that had the outward appearance of righteousness.

Look at "Christianity" in America, which for the most part is denominationalism. Denominationalism's main allurements are the appearance of being a Christian. The denominationalist goes to church and even professes verbally to be a Christian. But, the denominational world is patterned after the sin of New Testament Pharisees. They paint with broad strokes and ignore the details, thus they claim to achieve unity in diversity. They agree upon the "core" of doctrine that makes them appear to their fellow denominationalists to be righteous, but neglect the "less weightier" or as they say "fringe" or

"peripheral" doctrines which divide them. This is also the attitude of the modern day liberal who espouses a "new hermeneutic."

The crux of the matter is that the charge made by the liberal that those who are striving to hold to the doctrine of the Bible are deserving of the same condemnation the Pharisees received from Christ, is incorrect. You can see from the Scriptural evidence that it is in fact the liberal, who keeps only that part of Christianity that makes him popular with modern American "Christendom," who is guilty of the same sin of the Pharisee. To claim to be godly and not live accordingly is hypocrisy, and will lead your soul to hell (Matt. 7:13-29).

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