

# 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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## "SHALL THE SWORD DEVOUR FOREVER?"

Victor M. Eskew

***...some of the battles that have divided sound brethren should not have reached their present magnitude. What a shame when brethren are so divided that innocent, sound brethren get caught in the ungodly crossfire of in-fighting.***

David was now the official king of Israel. However, Abner, the captain of Saul's forces, was not in submission to David. He assisted in the establishment of Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over all but the house of Judah. *"But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; and made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David"* (II Sam. 2:8-10).

The division was strong between the two groups. Fighting would occur from time to time between David's forces and the forces of Ishbosheth. II Samuel 2:12-17 records one of the battles. Joab, David's captain, met Abner, the commander of Israel in Gibeon, *"And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David"* (II Sam. 2:17).

That day Abner fled from the field of battle. A man by the name of Asahel pursued after him. Three times Abner warned this young man to cease his pursuit. Three times Asahel defied the warning. Ultimately, Abner smote and killed the young Asahel: *"...wherefore Abner with the*

*hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him, and he fell down there, and died in the same place..."* (II Sam. 2:23).

This death was grievous for Joab, for Asahel was his brother. Therefore, Joab and his brother Abishai pursued after Abner to destroy him (II Sam. 2:24). When they found Abner, his troops from Benjamin were gathered as one troop with their commander. It seems as if more bloodshed was inevitable.

It was at this point that Abner called out to Joab and asked him a sobering question: *"Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren"* (II Sam. 2:26)? Abner probably did not know the full extent of the casualties of war at that time. He did know that many had lost their lives. He also knew that both he and Joab could lose their lives. Too, this battle could cause the sword to continue to devour God's people for many, many years. Thus, he asked the question: "Shall the sword devour for ever?"

In 1977, this writer graduated from high school. At the time, my interest in spiritual things increased greatly. Two brotherhood lectureships were conducted in my home-

town. I sat at the feet of great men of God. These men stood very tall in my eyes. Their proclamation of the Gospel impressed and mesmerized this young Christian. It was a joy and a privilege to hear the lessons they presented and to gain so much knowledge and insight from these men who had studied the word of God for years and who had labored diligently in the kingdom of heaven.

Since that time, the sword has devoured many of these good brethren. Today, they are split into so many groups that it is impossible to number them all. It has gotten to the point that one cannot move from one camp to another without being inconsistent and without being alienated from good brethren with whom there is no disagreement. It seems like it is time for the army of God to stop and to give ear to the question asked by Abner. *"Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?"* A similar teaching was expressed by Paul in his brief epistle to the churches of Galatia. *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another"* (Gal. 5:14-15).

Joab, fortunately, gave heed to

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**Shall the Sword...**



*Guest Editorial*

## THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE FACILITATES THE COMMUNITY CHURCH TAKEOVER OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

*Gary McDade*

### WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE?

The *Christian Chronicle* is published by **Oklahoma Christian University**. It is Edited by **Bailey B. McBride**. **Glover Shipp** is the Senior Editor. It is published monthly and has a worldwide readership.

### WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY CHURCH?

Currently, the best known expression of the Community Church is the model of **Bill Hybels** out of Barrington, Illinois, near Chicago called *The Willow Creek Community Church*. However, a Baptist preacher named **Rick Warren**, while denying cloning Willow Creek, has built *The Saddleback Community Church* in Orange County, California, which closely parallels Willow Creek, and has written a more understandable guide for duplicating the Community Church entitled *The Purpose Driven Church*.

These are denominational churches loosely affiliated with the group from which they came which merely have shrouded themselves with the name "Community Church." The cardinal rule among them is to appear non-traditional. They are characterized by a casual dress code, "contemporary" music, non-distinctive public speeches which endeavor to focus the attention of the assembly on a celebration-type atmosphere, inter-denominational acceptance, small group organization, personal testimonies, praise teams, and in their inception stages a brazen acceptance of financial support from churches they intend to take over.

### HOW DOES THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE FACILITATE THE COMMUNITY CHURCH?

*The Christian Chronicle*, March 2000, speaks in the most glowing and favorable terms of the Community Church with only the exception of a very few scant references to the contrary. Of the six articles on the subject, only one writer ventured to ask a few questions, and even he dared not speak one word of criticism, just alarm while advising a "wait and see" posture. Also, of the writers selected, one has helped plant a Community Church in Searcy, Arkansas, another presented the view that "this change is our historical commitment to nondenominational Christianity," another said he believes their purposes to be "God-given," and yet another currently is the minister for a Community Church in Amarillo, Texas. The three pages devoted to the Community Church are clearly weighted in favor of it. Additionally, the editor of the feature, **Lindy S. Adams**, provided the Web site addresses for Willow Creek and Saddleback, facilitating their use. Two of the writers are professors at **Harding University**, one is adjunct instructor for **Harding Graduate School of Religion** in Memphis, one is president of **Rochester College**, two are self-styled church growth experts, and, as mentioned earlier, one is a minister for a Community Church. The selection of people to write the articles (with connections to schools supported by churches of Christ), who will not oppose the Community Church, facilitates the movement by lending the impression of acceptability to the articles.

### TELLTALE MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE EDITOR

The editor of the feature is laboring under at least two misconceptions regarding the church of Christ.

One, in the introduction Adams wrote, "...the church they worked diligently to create..." Men did not create the church of Christ. It is of divine origin (Eph. 3:9-11; 4:1-5; 5:23-25). Without doubt, this misconception is why such liberties are being taken with regard to the church. The view seems to be if men created the church of Christ and it is not now what men want it to be, then just simply change it to fit the wishes of men today.

Two, denominational church growth models can be adapted and altered to cause the churches of Christ to grow. The church of Christ is not a denomination (I Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:4). The one responsible for its growth is God himself (I Cor. 3:6-9). The method of its expansion is the preaching and teaching of the word of God (Mark 16:15; Acts 6:7). The church growth expert who teaches at Harding and has helped start *Covenant Fellowship Community Church*, wants the readers to believe these Community Churches are "still within the 'Church of Christ mainstream'." How can anyone expect that to be so when they do not even so much as retain the name Church of Christ? Their attempt at worship and congregational organization is a departure from the truth, yet they demand their followers to insist that they are center of the strait and narrow road.

A Christian may have no fellowship with the unfruitful (I Cor. 1:10; Eph. 5:11). Their means and methodologies have nothing to offer the Lord's people (I Thess. 5:5). Light and darkness have no communion (II Cor. 6:14). Brethren need to wake out of sleep, get back to teaching and preaching the word of God, and Christ will give all the light needed to advance his cause (Eph. 5:14).

### HOW TO DEFEAT THE TAKEOVER

In closing, four suggestions are offered on how to defeat the takeover.

One, by exposing the error of the Community Church and those favorable to it. It is right to be "set for the

defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order, hold fast the faithful word, exhort and convince the gainsayers, stop the mouths of the gainsayers, and rebuke them sharply (Titus 1:5-13). Jude 3 still calls for an earnest contending for the faith.

Two, by refusing to fund the Community Church movement by withdrawing personal and financial support from those congregations and schools promoting the Community Church. Philippians 1:5 and 4:15 proves that those whom we support financially, we are fellowshiping. If one is contributing into a church treasury, he is in fellowship with that which is supported out of that treasury. When the leadership of a local congregation is dedicated to the planting of Community Churches, all of the members of that congregation are responsible for the planting of the Community Churches. By withdrawing personal and financial support from that congregation, the take over will be thwarted. The Community Church begins as a parasite feeding off a thriving organism. A paradoxical phenomenon is occurring with the Community Church. Older, established churches of Christ are funding the vehicle of their demise when they support the Community Church. It is very sad to note that if this continues, the children and grandchildren of members of the churches of Christ will not know the truth about the church of the Bible because the Community Church advocates are changing everything about it under the pretense of church growth.

Three, by evangelizing the lost (Matt. 28:19, 20). No matter what the problems and challenges faced by the churches of Christ, the Gospel of Christ must continue to be preached to a lost and dying world. Many problems and challenges besieged the early church, yet the Gospel was advanced to the point that Paul could write in Colossians 1:23 that every creature under heaven had the opportunity to hear it. The method authorized by God to reach lost souls is preaching (I Cor. 1:18-21). Imagine if *The Christian Chronicle* were dedicated to such a noble purpose instead of promoting the latest denominational craze. The millions who could be taught the Bible through that

paper (who are instead being coaxed into error), make these developments all the more a shame.

Four, by edifying those who are Christians (Eph. 4:15,16). Paul said that by edifying, “*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*” (Eph. 4:14). Through edification, the Christian dons the whole armour of God in which he stands against the methods of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

1511 Getwell Road  
Memphis, TN 38111

### Shall the Sword...

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the inquiry of Abner. “*And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more*” (II Sam. 2:27-28). That day the battle ceased. The bloodshed ended. Innocent lives were spared. Would that many of the preachers and leaders within the church would have the disposition of Joab. Far too many brethren are being alienated. Hatred and wrath fill the pages of sermons, journals and lectureship books. Brethren are growing weary of the fighting. The world is dying in a lost condition. “*Shall the sword devour forever?*”

This writer realizes that there are some issues that cannot be compromised. Against these, we must stand and fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12). He also knows that some of the battles that have divided sound brethren should not have reached their present magnitude. Pride, stubbornness, and hatred have filled some hearts. Good brethren have bitten and devoured one another. It has almost reached the point that a preacher can only serve within the local congregation. The moment he ventures into other pulpits, he will be marked and avoided by some. What a shame when brethren are so divided that innocent, sound brethren get caught in the ungodly crossfire of in-fighting. Paul’s words to the Corinthians are

most applicable today. “*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another; I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal*” (I Cor. 3:3-4)?

“*Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren*” (II Sam. 2:26)? This is a question that needs to be asked to conservative brethren within the churches of Christ today. Sadly, some will boldly answer: “The sword will never depart as far as we are concerned.” A bitter end and much destruction will be the result of such an attitude. This writer longs for the day when the Bible greets among us can stand arm in arm proclaiming the saving message to a lost world. It was that unity that encouraged this writer to become a preacher of the Gospel. When that unity exists once again, more youth will rise up to become soldiers of the cross of Christ.

PO Box 330421  
Atlantic Beach, FL 32233

## CONTRIBUTIONS

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WHEN YOU MOVE,  
SEND US  
YOUR CHANGE OF  
ADDRESS

# THE ONLY AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Roger D. Campbell

**D**o you believe in heaven? The Bible clearly teaches that heaven exists, and that it is totally free from corruption (I Peter 1:3,4). Do you believe that a person can be saved, that is, receive the remission of sins while still living on the earth? The Bible teaches that the remission of sins is, indeed, available through the blood of Jesus (Eph. 1:7).

If we really desire to be saved and go to heaven, where can we turn to receive proper instruction? Put another way, what standard should you and I accept as a guide to follow in our religious activities? Anyone that has even casually observed the religious world of our day recognizes that religious division and confusion abound. Why is that? At least in part, such a scenario can be explained by the fact that people follow different standards of authority in their religious practices. Such is not only the case in our country, but in other nations as well.

## JESUS' QUESTION ABOUT AUTHORITY

During the last week of His earthly life, Jesus was teaching in the city of Jerusalem. At that time, He also performed miracles and "cleaned up" the Jewish temple by running out some of the Jews that were corrupting it. During that week, on one occasion some of the Jewish leaders asked Jesus, "*By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority*" (Matt. 21:23)? Jesus' response included these two questions: "*The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men*" (Matt. 21:25)? None could deny that John the Baptizer had baptized a lot of people. Our Lord's inquiry focused their attention on one issue: Where did John get his authority to baptize people? In fact, Jesus' second question made it plain that there were only two possibilities: either John's baptism came from heaven (meaning that it came from God), or else it came from men. There is a great lesson here for all people of every gener-

ation to learn. What is the lesson? In matters of religion, all that we believe, teach, and practice comes either from God or from men. There is God's way, and there is man's way. There is God's teaching, and there is man's teaching. There is God's wisdom, and there is man's wisdom. What shall it be for you and me?

## SOME POPULAR FORMS OF HUMAN AUTHORITY

When it comes to making religious decisions, how do people of our day make their choices? What is it that they use to determine what course of action is right? How do they decide which things are acceptable, which matters are required, and just what is forbidden? Many, perhaps in some cases not even realizing it, appeal to human standards of authority.

There are instances when it is obvious that people do in religious matters just what they personally want to do. Do you remember what the children of Israel did when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from the Lord? They put their gold together and made a golden calf, which they proceeded to worship (Exodus 32). Before they engaged in this idolatry, God had already plainly told them that they were not to worship other gods, nor were they to make any idols (Exodus 20:3,4). Now here is a point of great importance. The children of Israel fully understood that God had forbidden them to practice idolatry. Yet, they did it anyway. Why? The bottom line is, they did it because they wanted to! Their action, however, did not please God. In the realm of religion, simply because we like something or want to do it, that does not make it right in the sight of the Lord.

Other religious people of our time depend on or follow their feelings. A number of years ago the catchy words of a popular song were, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right." Is that true in our religious practices? Are our feelings a safe

guide to follow? The apostle Paul, before he became a Christian, persecuted the disciples of Jesus (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1,2). Why would he do such a thing? Many years after his conversion to God's Son, Paul gave this explanation about his pre-Christian activities: "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 26:9). Why did Paul make havoc of God's church? Because he was convinced that that was the right thing to do! He had strong convictions, and he zealously acted on those strong feelings. But, was the Lord pleased to see Paul trying to destroy Christianity? Of course not. This example plainly shows that a religious person can take action that is based on his/her feelings, yet that action can be displeasing to the Lord. The lesson? Our feelings are not a safe guide to follow in matters of religion.

Some religious people are devoted to the creeds of men. Sometimes religious groups call their creeds "manuals" or "catechisms." Just what is a "creed?" The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo," which is from "credere," meaning to believe, trust, or entrust [Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary]. A human creed basically sets forth or puts into writing the religious beliefs of those people that write it. Do human creeds serve as a safe standard to follow in our service to the Lord God? A number of times in the Bible we read that God does not want men to add to or take away from the message of His word. He told this to Israel (Deut. 4:2), and a form of that charge is found in the very last chapter of the Bible (Rev. 22:18,19).

What is the truth about creeds? First, if a human creed says more than the Bible says, then it says too much. Second, if a creed says less than the Bible says, then it does not say enough. Third, if a creed says exactly the same thing that the Bible says, then there is no need for the creed in the first place — just stick with the Bible. Fourth, human creeds often contradict one another.

Fifth, human creeds often contradict the message of the Bible. Sixth, human creeds are not authorized by the Lord. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible that gives any human or group of humans the right to come together to write a creed, which is nothing more than man-made doctrine. Jesus' apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Human creeds are a popular, but false, standard of authority in religion. We need to cast aside the writings of men and go back to the Bible. Why is that? Please read on.

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE SON OF GOD

In reference to His Son Jesus, God the Father proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). According to this statement, whom does the Father want us to hear? Jesus. Later, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). According to this verse, who has all religious power or authority? Jesus does. Jesus went on in that same conversation to tell His apostles to go and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all that He commanded (Matt. 28:20). What is it that the people of all generations need to hear? The teaching of God's Son. What is it that all men need to follow in religious matters? Same answer, the teaching of the Christ.

The Bible declares, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). What is the clear message of this verse? If we want the Father and Son on our side, then we must abide in, that is, keep or follow the teaching of the Christ. The Lord Jesus' teaching includes not only what He personally taught while living on the earth, but also what He later taught through His inspired messengers. That message is recorded for us in the New Testament. Jesus' doctrine is the teaching of the New Testament. That, good people, is the only proper authority for any human to follow in religion!

Jesus once said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? What was

His point? Simply this. If we are going to claim that Jesus is the Lord of our life, then we are obligated to do what He says. It is through the Gospel that God calls or invites people to Jesus for salvation (II Thess. 2:14). Some day, that same word will

judge us (John 12:48). The Gospel of God's Son, that and that alone, is God's standard of authority for all that we believe, teach, and practice in religious matters.

4865 Bates Pike SE  
Cleveland, TN 37323



## CAN THOSE WHO TEACH AND PRACTICE DIFFERENT DOCTRINES BE UNITED IN CHRIST?

**D**oes unity demand we lay aside differences of opinion and accept one another? Yes, unity demands we lay aside our personal differences; i.e., things that are optional and do not involve Bible doctrine/teaching. We must yield "our way" for sake of unity.

However, laying aside religious differences does not mean we ignore or overlook Bible doctrine. It does not mean we accept one another regardless of what each one may believe, teach and practice. We have only fooled ourselves if we think we have unity under such circumstances. Such is not "unity." We may have formed a *union*, but we have not achieved *unity* — not the unity the Lord desires. By inspiration, James wrote, "But the wisdom that is from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy**" (James 3:17).

To lay aside religious differences means that all that is contrary to the Bible must be laid aside, repented of and forsaken! Men do not have the liberty to follow their own thinking. Two verses vividly show this is the case. "There is a way which **seemeth** right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Jesus prayed for everyone to be united in him in John 17:20-21. He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That **they all may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that **they also may be one in us**: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Considering these verses, how can anyone be thankful there is so much religious division today? Many are pleased with all the division so people can have the "church of their choice." That may sound good to men, but is the opposite of everything the Bible teaches. Such freedom does not come from God.

Faithfully following Christ is not like going to a restaurant with a smorgasbord where each one chooses what he likes. In Bible unity, there is only one choice on the menu. That is God's Way. We either accept God's Way or reject it. We either have unity God's Way or we have no unity at all. Jesus prayed that everyone conform to the church of His choice, not the church of our choice.

Jesus died for His church, singular, only one (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4). His church teaches and practices His doctrine, wears His name, is united in Him. His church does not fellowship those who teach contrary to His doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18).

Won't you be a member of the Lord's church where true unity is found? Swap man-made **union** for Jesus-made **unity** (Eph. 4:3-6)!

— Garland M. Robinson

# THE ULTIMATE NEED IN THE BROTHERHOOD

*Dub Mowery*

Not only does the scripture at First Peter 2:17 emphasize that we are to fear [reverence] God, honor the king [civil authorities], and to honor all [entire human race]; but we are also to *love the brotherhood*. When our Lord promised to build His church, He had reference to its universal aspect. Indeed, love is a supreme need within the great brotherhood of the church of our Lord. This is not the superficial kind that ignores false teaching and the practice of the same.

Brethren, we have so much in common not to be united. The Apostle Paul emphasized this great truth to the brethren at Ephesus. Even though he was at that time a prisoner (Eph. 6:20); nevertheless, his letter to that local church revealed his concern for its welfare. He stated at Ephesians 4:1-3, *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* We should take note that there must be an effort to "keep the unity of the Spirit." By way of the inspired Word, the Holy Spirit has spelled out what that unity must be. In that immediate context are these words: *"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."* We need to get down on our knees and do some soul searching. This is especially needed as we contemplate the strife among brethren.

What the Apostle Paul was writing by inspiration unto the church at Ephesus should be heeded in every level of our relations with fellow Christians. That includes: fellowship between two or more brethren, unity within a local congregation, and the bond of peace within the brotherhood of the churches of Christ. Our beloved Paul further elaborated upon the seven cardinal truths in which we hold in common, those are: *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph. 4:4-6). We do not hold all seven of these great truths with anyone outside of the church of Christ. Others may recognize some of these, but not all seven of them.

In the words of the illustrious apostle Paul, I plead with my fellow

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a modern day  
Diotrephes in the  
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brothers and sisters in Christ: *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Eph. 4:31-32).

In the past, there was greater peace and harmony among brethren. This was certainly so when I obeyed the gospel of Christ more than a half century ago. It has been 52 years ago this past March since I preached my

first sermon. The Lord has blessed me with relatively good health in that I am still preaching full time at the age of 71. In November of this past year, I had surgery on my right lung to remove two malignant nodules. Now, I am not a smoker! Nevertheless, I was not sure what was in store for me. Thankfully, the cancer was in its early stages and there will be no need for chemotherapy or radiation.

This gives me a feeling of a new lease on life. I am more determined to motivate my brethren to sit down and reason together. Not in an attitude of compromise in matters of faith, but in a genuine love for one another. There is no college among brethren, no publication, no project, or even a congregation having the right to exist by rejecting or compromising Biblical truths. And there is not any brother that has the right to hold power over the church by rejecting any principle of the New Testament. No, we do not need a modern day Diotrephes in the church of our Lord. But we do need brethren who love the truth of God's Holy Word — those who are willing to sit down together with open Bibles, with the attitude of not having all of the answers.

Presently, I am preaching for the Pritchett church of Christ in east Texas. It has existed since 1854. Although we are small in number, our facilities are adequate to host a group of brethren who are willing to sit down and reason together with open Bibles.

This wrangling within the Lord's church must cease! Prior to His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, the Son of God expressed His concern for unity among His disciples. He said: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"* (John 17:20-21).

160 Gage Road  
Big Sandy, TX 75755  
nativeheritage@peoplepc.com

# THE FOLLY OF PRIDE

Marvin L. Weir

Numerous warnings sound forth about pride in the Old Testament. The things “*written aforetime were written for our learning*” (Rom. 15:4). Consider these Bible warnings:

Prov. 11:2, “*When pride cometh, then cometh shame; But with the lowly is wisdom.*”

Prov. 13:10, “*By pride cometh only contention; But with the well-advised is wisdom.*”

Prov. 16:18, “*Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*”

Prov. 29:23, “*A man’s pride shall bring him low; But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor.*”

Jer. 49:16, “*As for thy terrible-ness, the pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah.*”

Obadiah 3, “*The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?*”

Even from a casual reading of the Holy Scriptures, one should observe that pride can contribute to spiritual death! No person is exempt from the sin of pride. This sin can overtake and overcome even the most righteous (like Moses, Psalm 106:32-33), and thus the warning to beware of pride that comes from man’s heart and defiles him (cf. Mark 7:21-23).

The power of pride is an amazing thing. Pride can be the cause of heartache and anguish in human relationships. Pride can destroy a home. Pride can cause Christians to sit on opposite sides of the church building and refuse to speak to one another. Pride can be the reason one will not admit that he has made a mistake — has sinned — is wrong! Pride can sabotage friendships that have existed for years. Yes, pride is the devil’s tool that will keep many people out of Heaven.

Let us observe two ways that pride can contribute to one’s spiritual death. First, *pride keeps many people from obeying the Gospel plan of salvation*. One can read his Bible every day and still not believe what he reads. Folks do this all the time! For instance, the Bible says, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). Yet, one who has been taught man-made creeds will say, “I just don’t believe

*It is usually the case that when one is overcome with pride that the hole he is digging just gets deeper and deeper. The sad truth is that some brethren today believe that they are above reproach and correction.*

baptism is necessary for one to be saved. Baptism has nothing to do with one’s salvation.” Does this mean that Peter was confused when he said, “*...wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water: The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...*” (I Peter 3:20-21)? I think not!

One reads in his Bible about Jesus promising to build His church (Matt. 16:18). He continues reading and discovers that Paul speaks of “one body” and “one faith” (Eph. 4:4-5). But then this same person defends the right of numerous denominations to exist! He also

argues that man should attend the church of his choice. Does he read this from his Bible? I think not!

Second, *pride keeps many brethren from admitting they made a mistake or committed a sin*. What is amazing is that some brethren have held certain doctrinal positions for years but now are compromising or casting aside these positions because of pride. Some of these brethren have made both verbal and written statements regarding the right and wrong of certain matters. And yet, because of a moment’s reckless folly, the use of bad judgment, or the practice of inconsistency, these brethren’s pride will not allow them to confess their mistake, repent, and change their course of action. It is usually the case that when one is overcome with pride that the hole he is digging just gets deeper and deeper.

The sad truth is that some brethren today believe that they are above reproach and correction. In an earlier verse we referenced, Jeremiah stated that the pride of one’s heart will deceive him (49:16). Solomon stated that one’s pride will bring him low (Prov. 29:23). Pride is also guaranteed to bring “shame” (Prov. 11:2) and “destruction” (Prov. 16:18). Again, one can read his Bible and no longer believe what he reads!

In the past few years, some brethren (including preachers) and institutions (Universities and Schools of Preaching) have demonstrated that they believe themselves to be beyond reproach. They, because of past success, evidently now believe that they are untouchable. Is it not amazing that some who know better will continue to defend a false position simply because they do not want to swallow their pride? As Obadiah said, “*The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?*” The answer: Pride and God will bring one down to the ground. Let us beware of the folly of pride!

815 42nd St. SW  
Paris, TX 75460



## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

the Scripture references to show them why we don't use mechanical instruments of music, it means absolutely nothing to them. After all, they have "so much more fun" these days with their full bands and orchestras at their places of "worship". But these quotes from some of THEIR leaders on the subject just might make a difference. Will you please send me a copy of the article itself, so I can make more copies to have on hand when I need them? I would certainly appreciate it. Many thanks!" ...**Anniston, AL**. [NOTE: all back issues can be found at [www.seektheoldpaths.com/stop.htm](http://www.seektheoldpaths.com/stop.htm). You can search these issues and print whatever you need. —Editor] "I enjoy the *Seek The Old Paths* paper. I read it through. Can't wait until the next issue. Keep up the good work. Thank you" ...**Flint, MI**. "We receive STOP and really like it and appreciate getting it" ...**North Central church of Christ, Flint, MI**. "Return to sender. Not accepted" ...**Linary Church of Christ, Crossville, TN**. "Hope this note will find everyone there doing fine and enjoying the life that we have been given in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. I've been reading the Old Paths and enjoy reading the Truth that is written in your paper. I've been getting them from a brother whose girlfriend has been sending them to him. There are two of us who would like to ask to be put on the mailing list. We are in prison so we don't have any money to donate for the continuing publishing. Sure wish we could though. We would be very thankful if you would send them to us" ...**James Phillips & Jerry Hawkins, Brent, AL**. [NOTE: we are happy to add you to the mailing list. Glad to be of help. —Editor] "Dear brethren at *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you so much for sending me your newsletter. It is a great encouragement to me, especially the instrumental music articles. My parents were converts to the Lord's church about 47 years ago. Dad was raised congregational, mom Methodist. Unfortunately, they still hung on to a doctrine of their former practice (instrumental music) and carried it over to the Lord's church. I would have been raised in an instrumental "church of Christ" if it wasn't for the providence of God that there weren't any in our area of Michigan. So I was raised in a local acapella church of Christ. The whole time mom and dad hid their preference for instruments in the worship services from us kids. I didn't realize how instrumental they were until 1985 or so when they apostatized to an instrumental church in a nearby college town. (I was instrumental at the time too but I have come back to the truth). Mom and dad justify their use of instruments in worship with at least two arguments: 1) If I enjoy the Psalms, learning from them and receiving comfort with their words, I must also accept the instrumental music located in them, and 2) II Chron. 29:25-30 says they worshipped the Lord with the instruments of David, so we should too. I tell them that the II Chronicles passage also sacrificed animals and we don't need to do that anymore, we have Jesus' sacrifice. My question is: Should I read the Psalms, enjoy and receive comfort from them? Do I have to accept the instruments in worship in the Psalms? I don't follow the law of Moses, so I don't do animal sacrifices like David did. My parents refuse to listen to me. Mom keeps saying she's using her talents for God by playing music so any argument against instruments insults her. They only want to please themselves with the instrument, ignoring what the New Testament says. Thanks for your help" ...**Name withheld, MI**. [NOTE: The book of Psalms is a part of Scripture. All 150 of them are inspired. They were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). So yes, keep reading and learning from them. Great lessons are derived therefrom. However, as you've stated, they do not govern worship in the Christian age. The fact that someone would appeal to them to find authority for mechanical instruments shows that there is no authority to be found for them in the New Testament. The Old Testament, all 39 books which includes the Psalms, were done away in Christ. They were nailed to the cross which shows they were done away (Col. 2:14). Since the church began in Acts two, people live under the New Testament. The first century church sung psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, but they

did not play an instrument when they sang (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Even secular history bears this out. The playing of instruments were not introduced for hundreds and hundreds of years after the time of the apostles. What David and others may have done in their day does not give us authority to do the same in our day. He lived under the Law of Moses. We live under the law of Christ. As far as using one's talent is concerned, I know several good sisters in the Lord that have a talent in the kitchen. The meals they prepare are greatly appreciated by many. But their cooking ability does not give them authority to use it in worship. Cooking is not an act of worship. Their talent can certainly be used as an act of Christian service in feeding the needy. But it is not a part of worship. The point for all to understand is that we must honor the Lord by doing what he has commanded us to do. He plainly said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Those who are rewarded by the Lord are those who obey him (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey him (Heb. 5:8-9). When we do what we want to do or what we like or what we feel good about, we have left a "thus saith the Lord" and substituted our own feelings. —Editor]. "Please keep up the good work. We so desperately need faithful men to stand up for the truth" ...**Wanda Clements, Sun City, AZ**. "I love *Seek The Old Paths*, and at 85, I'm still learning from it as well as the Bible. May God bless your efforts and those of your staff and writers in exposing error. In my youth, I never would have believed so many congregations would go off into unscriptural practices. It saddens me so much. I hope my small check will help defray some of the expenses of publication. Keep up the good work. I pray for your work and that of all the writers who have taken up the challenge" ...**Murriel Windham, Las Vegas, NV**. "A friend of ours in Tyler, Texas has sent me a copy of your leaflet, *Seek The Old Paths*. We enjoyed it very much and would like to be put on your mailing list" ...**Billy & Mary Hassell, Ferris, TX**.

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**  
<http://www.seektheoldpaths.org>

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