

Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 16, No. 7

July 2005

THE CHURCH AND ITS DETRACTORS

Wayne Jackson

A "detractor," in the sense of this article, is one who attempts to weaken, diminish, nullify, or alter the will of God Almighty, as the Lord has revealed his plan for the redemption of fallen humanity. The tendency toward "detraction" seems to be characteristic of many whom the Creator has endowed with freedom of choice, but who abuse the gift. Such was the case even among angels in heavenly realms (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

AN HISTORICAL PATTERN

At the dawn of human history, sacred writ warned that there ever would be conflict between truth and error. The Lord's "protevangelium," the so-called "first gospel," is evidence of that reality (Gen. 3:15). The Old Testament overflows with examples of those who have dedicated themselves to detracting from God's redemptive plan, as well as distracting and deflecting those who are committed to Heaven's order of spiritual service.

Moses and Aaron had their Korah, who led an anti-authority mob into a black hole of the wrath of God (Num. 16:1ff). Ahab and Jezebel sought to detract from the ministry of Elijah, and the wicked couple came to a bloody end on account of it (I Kings 22; II Kings 9). Jeremiah's detractors claimed that Judah would never see captivity (Jer. 14:13), and they treated the prophet shamelessly, but seventy years of Babylonian incarceration demonstrated other-

wise.

The church of the living God is glorious beyond one's ability to express adequately (Eph. 5:27). Purposed in eternity (Eph. 3:10-11), and carefully prepared across the eras of Old Testament history (Gal. 3:24; 4:4), it burst onto the scene of human activity on Pentecost Sunday in the spring of A.D. 30, fifty days after the death of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:1ff).

But it was not long before even this blessed organism had its misguided revisionists. Judaizers attempted to affix circumcision as an appendix to the Gospel (Acts 15:1). Some, with Greek ideological baggage, denied the Savior's promise of a resurrection from the dead (Matt. 22:31-32; I Cor. 15:12). Others tried to distract from the simplicity of Gospel revelation with a corrupt, Gnostic-oriented (special knowledge) dogma (I Tim. 6:20-21).

Ominous New Testament prophecies foretold of even more sinister times that lay in the future, when sound doctrine would be forsaken with reckless abandonment (II Thess. 2:1ff; I Tim. 4:1ff; II Tim. 4:1ff). History has demonstrated the fulfillment of those inspired declarations in a monstrous apostasy from the primitive faith that has unfolded in the various sects of "Christendom."

Finally, though, a new day dawned — first in Europe, then in America. Honest folks kindled a passion to throw off the shackles of those "dark ages" that were burdened by the oppressions of the Roman

Church. Too, they yearned to go beyond the well-intentioned, though misdirected, efforts of Protestantism. Under the instruction and leadership of talented and dedicated men, multiplied thousands embraced the primitive Gospel without the encumbrances of sectarianism.

"RESTORATION MOVEMENT" DETRACTORS

Typically, the "restorers" eventually had their detractors as well. In the mid-1800s, Jesse B. Ferguson disrupted churches in the Nashville area. He taught that there is no "hell," and that people possess the ability to communicate with the dead. H. Leo Boles compared Ferguson to a "meteor" that briefly lights up the sky, but leaves only "darkness in its wake."

A few years later, voices of outright modernism and theological liberalism, began to swell in a chorus of confusion and digression. R. C. Cave of St. Louis denied the historicity of the virgin birth of Jesus and the Lord's bodily resurrection, as well as a variety of additional errors. Alexander Proctor and George Longan capitulated to the radical theories of German rationalism.

Restoration leaders who contended for faithful obedience to Christ were dubbed "legalists." Radicals claimed that the "pious unimersed" were saved, and changes

(Continued on page 51)

Detractors...



Guest Editorial

GOOD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN WE TEACH THE LOST

Roger D. Campbell

Teaching the Gospel to lost people is like a lot of other activities in life: the more experience we gain in doing it, the more skilled we become at it. Put another way, practice improves performance.

What child of God would not agree that it is “good” to teach the Gospel to those that are lost outside of Jesus? Surely no member of the Lord’s church would be opposed to the idea of teaching the lost. The “glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15) is God’s message of salvation through Jesus. All men everywhere need that message! We are convinced that good things really do happen when we teach the Gospel to lost people. What are some of those good things?

1. *When we teach the lost, we are doing what the Lord instructed us to do.* Jesus gave the charge to go and teach or make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). He commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to every person in the whole world (Mark 16:15). When you and I take part in this effort, we are doing what all Christians are supposed to do. And, there is no doubt about it, it gives us a sense of satisfaction, a great feeling, to know that we are doing what our Lord wants us to do.

2. *When we teach the lost, we are giving them the chance to hear the only message that can save their soul.* The Gospel is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). That message alone is called “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13). When we teach the Gospel to lost people, we provide them with an opportunity to obey from the heart the only doctrine that can set them free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Could

there be a more kind, loving gesture on our part? What could be more beneficial to a human being than hearing God’s truth? Good things happen when we teach the lost!

3. *When we teach the lost we are increasing the odds of more people being saved and going to heaven.* A farmer knows that no sowing means no reaping or harvest (Gal. 6:7). An insurance agent knows that no effort to sell insurance means no purchasing of insurance. In the same way, no sowing of the word of God means no spiritual harvest of souls. But there is another mathematical factor involved in teaching the lost. It is this basic rule: in general, the more we teach, the better the odds of finding people that will receive the word. And, the more saints that are involved in teaching the lost, the better the chances of contacting people that will obey the Gospel. Suppose that in a congregation of 50 members, only one person works to try and teach the lost. Let’s say that on the average he tries to teach one person per month. That means that in a one-year period, this church has tried to reach a whopping total of 12 people (1 x 12). It is wonderful that an effort is made to reach those 12 people, but what if every member of the congregation would get involved? If all 50 members would try to teach one person per month, well, the church has gone from trying to reach just 12 people in one year to reaching out to 600

(50 x 12).

In our above illustration, by no means are we suggesting that we should restrict ourselves to trying to teach just one person per month. God forbid. But the point is clear, is it not? It is good to try and reach 12 people. It is better to try and reach 600. It is better yet to try and reach as many people as we possibly can, anytime and anywhere! It just stands to reason that the more members of the church we have teaching on a frequent basis, the better the chances of running across honest souls that will obey the truth and be saved! Heaven will be more populated because of diligent efforts to teach the lost.

4. *When we teach the lost, we become better teachers as a result.* The more we teach, the more comfortable and confident we become as teachers. The more we teach, the more effective we become as communicators. The more we teach, the more we are prepared to set forth logical arguments in a clear fashion. The more we teach, the more we are able to anticipate the questions and reactions of the hearers. The more we teach, the more we are forced to study the word of God, and in the long run, that is going to benefit us, those we try to teach, and anyone around us that we may want to influence. Teaching the Gospel to lost people is like a lot of other activities in life: the more experience we gain in doing it, the more skilled we become at it. Put another way, practice improves performance.

The conversion of a lost soul to the Lord Jesus requires the good seed — the word of God (Luke 8:11), an honest and good heart on the part of the hearer (Luke 8:15), and a sower. Brothers and sisters, you and I must be the sowers that go everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

Let us all make a commitment to try and do all we can to reach the lost. Let us pray earnestly for them, prepare diligently to teach them, and work tirelessly to reach them. Our God will bless us as we do that. Remember, good things happen when we teach the lost!

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Detractors...

(Continued from page 49)

were initiated in the worship format of the local churches (e.g., the incorporation of choirs and the use of instrumental music).

The “progressives” clamored for fellowship with denominational groups and intermingled happily with a variety of sectarian causes. Finally, as every student of restoration history knows, a distinct rupture came, resulting in the “Disciples of Christ” or the “Christian Church,” standing aloof from brethren who were determined to adhere to New Testament doctrine alone.

Those who wish to be conversant with what has happened to our glorious brotherhood over the past century and a half, should read Chapter XIII, “The Rise of Liberalism,” in Earl I. West’s incomparable series, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Vol. 2, pp.259-291). The comparisons between the era brother West describes (1849-1906), and the current “change agent” aberration, are more than striking! In this connection it would be well to remember Santayana’s admonition, that those who do not learn from the mistakes of history are destined to repeat them.

One of our notable preachers in the first half of the past century was G. C. Brewer (1884-1956). When his autobiography appeared in the year following his death, it contained this warning regarding the smoldering embers that ultimately would be fanned into a roaring, destructive flame.

It does not cease to astonish us that Christians generally, and preachers especially, are now holding views and making arguments that we opposed and refuted when advanced by denominationalists forty, fifty and a hundred years ago. Like Paul, we are going to have to declare again the gospel which we preached.

THE “CHANGE AGENT” DEFECTION

Distinct movements generally emerge gradually; hence, it is very difficult to date the advent of such

with precision. This assuredly is true of that arrogant and insidious swell that has come to be identified as the “change agent” conglomerate.

In terms of its make-up, the “change agent” confederation scarcely can be viewed as homogeneous. It doubtless contains an element of sincere, though immature, Christians who, due to their novitiate status, or perhaps a long-standing exposure to superficial instruction, are swept to and fro easily by varying winds of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

It always is difficult (if not mostly impossible), to judge motives in individual cases. Be that as it may, many believe that it is neither unkind nor unrealistic to suggest that this body largely consists of malcontents. They appear to be a collection of unstable souls led by those whose common passion is for renown. Their goal may be achieved (in their minds) only by redesigning the apostolic pattern of Christianity, each according to his own notion of how things ought to be. As someone has noted, the highest form of vanity is the quest for fame.

When Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett joined together more than two-score years ago, in an effort to restructure the brotherhood of Christ by broadening its scope of “fellowship,” they were considered by most respected brethren to be fringe-element oddities, rather than a significant threat to the Lord’s cause. Through their respective journals, *Mission Messenger* and *Restoration Review*, they chipped away at the biblical concept of being vigilant to restore the New Testament pattern of doctrine and practice. Now, in a radically different brotherhood, they virtually have been enshrined in the “digressive hall of fame.”

Eventually, others began to raise voices of criticism regarding what they dubbed as the “stale” dogma of “Church of Christ traditionalism.” The “church of the fifties” became a favorite slogan associated with their assault. Magazines like *Integrity*, *Image*, and finally *Wineskins*, joined the dissident movement, each contributing its own measure of discontent.

“Christian Scholarship Conferences” began to be conducted on certain college campuses and, quite undisguised, appeals were made

throughout our brotherhood that we should ignore many of the doctrinal differences that have kept us separated from the denominations. By means of the Internet came the misdirected theology of the “grace-centered” gurus who claim to have discovered a refreshing concept heretofore unknown among our people.

In the initial stages of this baby-boomer rebellion, the “restoration plea” merely was questioned — under the guise of honest investigation. Then, bolder voices emerged, openly challenging elementary propositions of the faith — issues that had weathered countless battles with sectarian antagonists. Now, we are far beyond that. The fundamentals of the faith are brazenly ridiculed as a new breed of brotherhood “entertainers” do stand-up comedy routines with the church of the Lord as the focus of their barbed assaults.

Almost no point of doctrine now goes unchallenged. The inspiration of the Scriptures is disputed. A college professor asks his students, “What difference does it make if the Bible contains contradictions?” Graduate Bible courses question the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and repudiate the New Testament testimony that the prophets wrote the documents that bear their names.

Several of our influential universities are hotbeds of liberalism, and perhaps none is without at least some “hot spots” of potential danger. A widely-traveled, popular speaker boasts that “the Bible and evolution agree on almost all issues.” Men in our classrooms and pulpits have gullibly embraced several egregiously compromising theories that accommodate Charles Darwin’s basic thesis.

Bizarre views concerning the work of the Holy Spirit abound. A Texas professor authors a volume on the workings of the Spirit, compiling information from Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Stott, *et al.*, and a brotherhood news journal praises it as a collection of “outstanding insights into the Holy Spirit” that will open one’s daily life to “explore the presence of God.” Church members are claiming special revelations from the Lord. A preacher in Texas tells how God spoke to him and told him that he was taking too much pride in his

preaching. Thus, one must suppose, the New Testament documents have been supplemented. Sue, Harry, Dick, and Tom, now join Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

The Gospel plan of salvation has been gutted. In spite of clear passages (e.g., Acts 2:38; 22:16), some allege that baptism is not essential to salvation — or even if it is, the convert need not understand that it is. Others contend that for the honest seeker, “sprinkling,” instead of immersion, may be a perfectly viable option.

The use of instrumental music in Christian worship is being accepted increasingly, and the Lord’s supper

has become a “love feast” that may be observed any time the notion strikes. The rush is on for an expanded role for women, irrespective of the New Testament restrictions relative to this matter. Everything is up in the air; nothing is certain any more. Relativism rules the day. Postmodernism has become a maggot in the brain.

Finally, there now is a resurrection of the “no eternal punishment” movement, that has even wormed its way into our schools.

CONCLUSION

There is a real war today within

the body of Christ. It is a shameful thing, a heartbreaking thing; but digressive brethren initiated it. The faithful have but two choices — do nothing, or do something. If we wilt, and let the detractors have their way, they will capture our schools, our church facilities, our children, and, yes, maybe even our souls! It is time for devout children of God to oppose this apostasy — lovingly, firmly, and steadfastly — before we find ourselves in a “church” that we no longer recognize, and from which the Savior has departed (Rev. 3:20).

*Christian Courier, June, 2005
Volume XLI, Number 2
7809 N Pershing Ave.*

BIBLE AUTHORITY MUST BE RESPECTED

Marvin L. Weir

God is the Creator and man is the created. The created is never **greater** than the Creator. Isaiah noted that man was created to glorify God (Isa. 43:7). The apostle Paul admonishes, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (I Cor. 10:31).

The majority of people today refuse to abide by Biblical authority because they desire to glorify themselves! So many folks prefer to do what **they** want to do, and they fully intend to do it **their** way. This type of attitude spawns religious division and promotes denominationalism. It also produces liberalism and modernism within the Lord’s church.

The Bible plea is “*...that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10). The Holy Spirit instructed the Colossian brethren in saying, “*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*” (Col. 3:17). All unscriptural religious division today is the direct result of people refusing to abide by the authority of the Scriptures.

God’s law has been absolute and binding in every dispensation. Those in denominations and liberal members of the Lord’s church absolutely

abhor the principles taught in the Old Testament regarding Bible authority. They have nothing but disdain for Bible examples that clearly show the wrath of God upon those who reject and spurn a “*thus saith the Lord.*”

Since God is “*no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34), we know He communicated with both Cain and Abel regarding an offering acceptable unto Him. God has respect for Abel’s offering, “*but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect*” (Gen. 4:4-5). Man has never been given permission to deviate from what God has specified! God expected folks under the Patriarchal dispensation to be submissive and obedient to His will.

The Mosaical dispensation reveals to us the story of Nadab and Abihu. The Scriptures read, “*And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD*” (Lev. 10:1-2). There is no getting around the fact that Nadab and Abihu were killed because they took the liberty to do that which God “had not commanded them.”

God’s will is still to be honored and respected in the Christian age.

Jesus makes it clear that what we say must agree with what He demands that we do if we are going to be with Him in Heaven. The Lord warned, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). Again, the Master admonished, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)? Remember that the words of the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:17 were “*whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*”

If we abide by the teaching of Christ, it does not allow us to hear and do not! James clearly states that we are to be “*doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (James 1:22). Jesus teaches that the “wise man” who hears His word and respects and follows it is building upon the “rock,” but that the “foolish man” who hears and does not abide by His word is building upon the “sand” (Matt. 7:24-27). It is said of the one who refused to abide by a “*thus saith the Lord*” and built upon the sand — “*and great was the fall of it.*”

The standard of authority by which we are to abide is not “majority rule” (Matt. 7:13-14; Exodus 23:2), the Pope of Roman Catholicism, or some man who founds his own

church. Christ is the head of His church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). Jesus has been given **all** authority “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). This leaves **no** authority for the Pope nor any other man or woman. As the Scriptures teach, “For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa. 119:89).

All people will be judged by the word of God? Not the word of man. Jesus teaches, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). It is

true that Christ has become unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9).

The great battle that is being fought today is over the authority of the Bible. Bible authority must be understood, taught, and put into practice if we are to please the Lord. Bible authority is **not** full of comfort

for those who insist upon worshipping as they please, but for those who want to go to Heaven it **is** their refuge and source of strength.

We need more folks like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 who searched the Scriptures daily!

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Annie Bryant	\$25
Anonymous	\$170
Anonymous	\$170
Anonymous	\$275
Anonymous	\$250
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Central Church of Christ, Denison, TX	\$20
Newman Leonard	\$50
John H. Brown	\$50
Ron & Ruth Shandor	\$50
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$50
John H. Lawyer	\$20
Beginning Balance	\$ 5,843.40
Contributions	3,700.15
Debits	
Postage	1,356.48
Supplies	170.41
Ending Balance	\$ 8,016.66

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "ISSUE ORIENTED?"

Tom Wacaster

Occasionally, I hear someone make the comment that those who are adamant regarding issues that face the Lord's church are "issue oriented." Funk and Wagnalls defines "issue" as "a matter of importance to be resolved." Webster says it is "the point or matter depending in a suit on which two parties join and put their cause to trial." Oriented means "the determining of one's position with reference to circumstances, ideals, etc" (Funk and Wagnalls). Hence, to be "issue oriented" is to "determine one's position and put that cause to trial or to the test."

Since the Christian has the obligation to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21), it stands to reason that there will always be "issues" facing the Lord's church. And, since we have the obligation to "...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15), we are therefore "oriented" in giving a defense for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

While it is possible to become so imbalanced that we are cynical about the Lord's church and its future, we must also face the fact that so long as the church exists, we are going to have to face the issues that come our way. To do otherwise is to abdicate our responsibility.

A negative connotation has been attached to the words "issue oriented." This "label" is used by critics to hush the mouths of those who still love the truth while making the unsuspecting believe that there is something inherently evil in dealing with issues. None would be so bold as to suggest that all issues should be ignored, since even the most liberal change agent will take us to task on the issue of being issue oriented.

The question arises, then, as to "when" our dealing with issues becomes imbalanced. I suggest to you that any issue, and every issue that comes down the pike, is an issue that cannot be ignored and must be dealt with forthrightly. If the truth is at stake we cannot and will not remain silent. The only alternative is to ignore the issues and allow the church to be swept into apostasy. It is my studied conviction that at least one reason why the Lord's church is so troubled today is that too many brethren have simply grown weary of fighting the battle. Consequently, false teachers have crossed the threshold and are in the midst of the flock having a heyday. Meanwhile too many elderships and preachers sit back and do nothing for fear that they might be perceived as being "issue oriented."

Yes, it is possible to become so consumed with the issues that face the Lord's church that we become cynical and never hold out any hope to God's people. But the desire to provide hope and peace cannot drive us to ignore the issues that would in fact rob us of that hope and peace by leading us into error.

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HAND CLAPPING IN WORSHIP?

Ron Boatwright

People may be sincere in their hand clapping in worship, but they are sincerely wrong just as the vast majority of the religious world is sincerely wrong and will lose their souls in eternity.

Today we are living in an entertainment crazed society that is expecting to be entertained. Hand clapping, whistling, and yelling are done at plays, ball games, the theater, and at other forms of entertainment to show our approval and satisfaction of the entertainment. This influence of the world has crept over into the church where people today want to clap during the worship or at a baptism to show their approval of the "entertainment" they are receiving. We are not in the worship service to be entertained, but to give our worship to God.

Do we realize how great God is? We are told "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psa. 96:9). We are to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). Since Our God is awe-inspiring, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him" (Psa. 33:8). Hand clapping is done when we have been entertained but it shows utter disrespect and lack of reverence for God in our worship services. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psa. 89:7). The vast majority of the denominational world thinks their worship to God is acceptable, but Jesus says, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). When we ignore what God says and do things our way, our worship becomes vain. If we expect to be pleasing to God and go to heaven, we must pay attention to what God says in the Bible as to how He is to be worshipped.

We must show the utmost reverence to God if our worship is to be acceptable to Him. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly

fear; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). If our worship is not acceptable to God, then the end result will be disastrous as we spend eternity in the burning fires of Hell.

God has given us warnings in the Bible concerning unacceptable worship. One example is that of Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1-2). Just as Nadab and Abihu were severely punished by being consumed by fire for their unauthorized worship, we today will be severely punished eternally in Hell for our unauthorized worship as we offer strange sounds of hand clapping to the Lord. Do people today realize that because of their disobedience, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31)?

We are told, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). To do all in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do all things by His authority. Where in the Bible has God authorized hand clapping in worship to Him? It is not there. If the Lord wanted hand clapping to be included in our worship, He would have authorized it, but He didn't. Hand clapping in worship is not authorized just as playing a mechanical instrument of music is not authorized in worship to God.

If we are going to clap in worship, why don't we also whistle, yell, scream, and holler to show our approval? Why not boo when we don't approve of something? Or why don't we clap during the Lord's supper or as a prayer is being led? We

are not in worship to applaud the words or actions of men. Our worship to God is not for our entertainment. We are not the spectators, God is. God is the one being worshipped and glorified, not us. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). We glorify and honor God when we do what He tells us, how He tells us, when He tells us, the way He tells us, where He tells us, and for the reason He tells us. We are to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Jesus says that those who worship God "must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). But hand clapping in the worship service is not in truth (according to truth). We are to "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). Hand clapping is not decent and in order. It is totally out of place in worship.

People who clap their hands in worship may, "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:2-3). People may be sincere in their hand clapping in worship, but they are sincerely wrong just as the vast majority of the religious world is sincerely wrong and will lose their souls in eternity. It will be too late on the Day of Judgment if the Lord says to us "depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

Going to Heaven must be our number one priority in this life. Let's make sure we are worshipping God "in spirit and in truth", the way He has authorized.

God has not authorized hand clapping to be included in worship to Him.

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PAUL & THE MODERN PREACHER

Rusty Stark

And the Modern Preacher (MP), who was sound and faithful in his message, dreamed a dream. In his dream he found a cell phone. Checking the numbers listed in it, he came across one that said The Apostle Paul (AP). In dreams, things seem possible that are not possible in real life. So the Modern Preacher dared to hope, and he dialed the number. What a surprise when he was actually connected to Paul the apostle. It was, after all, just a dream.

MP — Oh, Paul, what an honor! I never expected to actually get to talk to you. And this comes at such a good time.

AP — I also am glad to talk with a fellow preacher. But why does the timing of this call seem so good to you?

MP — Because this is a crucial time in my life and in my family. I'm having to make some decisions about my career as a preacher. In fact, I'm not sure I can continue to preach.

AP — Oh that *is* bad! Are you ill or injured?

MP — No, you misunderstand, brother Paul. It's not a physical problem, I'm just so discouraged. In fact, I've been thinking about selling insurance or something.

AP — Oh, so you don't mean that you *can't* continue to preach, you mean that perhaps you don't *want* to.

MP — That's not what I mean at all. Of course I want to preach. But I am so discouraged that there is no joy in it anymore.

AP — You are saying you don't enjoy spreading the Gospel of Christ? How could that possibly be? The spread of the Gospel gave me my chief joy, even when I was in prison for it (Phil. 1:18). Do you still have faith that the Gospel is God's power to save men (Rom. 1:16)?

MP — Of course! No doubt about that.

AP — Then how could you not have joy in preaching it? Do you still love the souls of men?

MP — Yes. But it costs me so much in sacrifice and effort. I want men to be saved, but there is a limit to what any man can endure.

AP — You know, I may not be the best person for you to complain to about how many sacrifices you have made for the cause. Have you gone hungry to preach (II Cor. 11:27)? Have you suffered shipwreck (II Cor. 11:25)? Have you suffered the loss of all things (Phil. 3:8)?

MP — No, nothing like that, but nobody wants to listen anymore. People actually get angry with you when you try to teach them the truth. It's not like it was in your day.

AP — Oh really? Let me show you some scars. This one here on my scalp, it's from when they stoned me and left me for dead in Lystra (Acts 14:19). Look at my back — I can't even begin to tell you where all these scars come from. I've been beaten at least eight times for preaching the gospel (II Cor. 11:24-25). I know something about people who don't want to hear.

MP — Yes, but full-time preaching is so hard on my family. Everyone is constantly looking at my wife and kids as if they're in a fish-bowl. Some people seem to want to see something wrong.

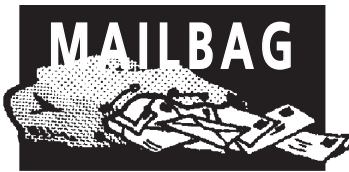
AP — Is your family engaged in behavior that would possibly cause others to stumble? Do you want your children to have freedom to do wrong without being corrected by God's people? Why complain that they are under pressure to do right? That kind of pressure has got to be better than the pressure that Satan and the world brings to bear on them to get them to do wrong.

MP — Yes, but I have had to move my children from school to school. And, every time we moved they had to make new friends. It's so hard on them. I've actually been fired twice just for preaching the truth. Since you never had a wife and children, you just can't understand how hard it is on them.

AP — I don't want to downplay the sacrifices your family makes. It is always hard for a loving person to watch his children suffer sadness. But perhaps you need to be thankful you have them instead of using them as an excuse to shirk your duty as a preacher. You need to remember the value of a soul. Our Master gave up his life for souls. Can we do any less? *It sounds like you are saying that taking men and women to heaven is not worth the sacrifices you and your family have had to make.*

MP — But you just don't understand, brother Paul. Why should my family and I make all these terrible sacrifices? I've given up so much, I've been treated so badly. And you can't imagine the kind of salary my brethren think a preacher should be able to live on. That's why this insurance thing looks so good. I have the chance to make serious money for the first time in my life . . . *bzzzzz*. Paul, Paul! Can you hear me now? *bzzzzz*. Hmm. What happened? We must have been disconnected. Could he have...? No, Paul wouldn't have hung up on me, a fellow preacher. I'll try to call him back tomorrow. Maybe he could give me some leads for some people who need a good whole-life policy.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

four children that could use your prayers. Please add me to your *STOP* mailing list and your pen pal list also. Please pray for my family. Thank you and God bless you" ...**Joe Sabella 245975, O.S.R. Unit A-1-11, PO Box 514, Granite, OK 73547.** "I borrowed *STOP* from my friends at church and really liked it because I see so many of these things starting in the Lord's church in many places. I would love to start receiving this monthly publication please. Thank you for alerting us of these false teachings that are entering the church of Christ" ...**Debbie Vickers, Tuckerman, AR.** "Thank you for sending me the *STOP* paper. I appreciate the sound articles. I worship with the Cushing Church of Christ in Cushing, OK" ...**Nora Cole, Drumright, OK.** "Please remove us from your mailing list" ...**Bill & Brenda Wheeler, Nolensville, TN.** "Please continue to send *STOP*. It means so much to me" ...**Marian Word, Decatur, AL.** "Thank you for the article in *STOP* about the new hymnal 'Sacred Songs Of The Church'" ...**Brad Bradshaw, Norcross, GA.** "Since no one in our congregation reads your publication, I request you to remove me from your mailing list" ...**A. P. Farnell, Shongaloo, LA.** "I appreciate your paper so much. It is wonderful to know there are still brethren that continue to preach the truth in love for the lost and brothers and sisters in Christ. God bless and give you the funds and strength to continue in this work" ...**Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK.** "Please delete my name from your mailing list" ...**Lamar Roberson, Palestine, TX.** "I receive your bulletin. I enjoy it very much. Please send it to my daughter" ...**Pat Brumbelow, Pocahontas, TN.** "I recently had the opportunity to read something in your periodical and really like what I was reading. Would you please provide me the information as to how I can receive this publication on a regular basis? I am a member of the Lord's church in Newport, Tennessee, and I want every opportunity to further my knowledge concerning the oracles of God" ...**Paul Powell, Dandridge, TN.** "I would like to be put on the mailing list. One of the members of the congregation gave us a copy and we really enjoy reading the articles" ...**James Williams, Grayson, KY.** "Keep up the good work" ...**Marcus Morris, Athens, AL.** "We enjoyed seeing an issue of *Seek The Old Paths* and would love to receive it regularly" ...**The Hinkles, Lynchburg, TN.** "I appreciate *STOP* very much. It is an excellent publication" ...**Kenneth Jarrett, Huntingdon, TN.** "Please remove my name from your subscribers list. I receive many publications and prefer to spend my time focused on Bible reading and studying. Thank you" ...**Irene Aschen, Brookfield, CT.** "Thank you very much" ...**Steffie Stewart, Riverview, MI.** "It is at this time I ask you to stop sending me your publication. Although you are scripturally correct, you also are falling into the 'whipping a dead horse' category by constant use of condemnation. Jesus still cried over Jerusalem and lamented that this holy city would fall to ruin because of their hard hearts. You do have a fine publication, there is no doubt about that you have been a good sentinel for the brotherhood, but if you would print a prayer section for **Max Lucado** (Who I know teaches falsely) or the others who have strayed from the pure gospel, that they would return to the old paths, maybe there would be some huge interruption of their lives and they would return to the pure gospel and with that influence they would set the world on edge as tools in the Master's hands!!! Wouldn't you agree? We have many fine brothers in the Lord's church who are apt and able to cause restoration in the Lord's church, but what if we had folks like **Rubel Shelly** and **Jeff Walling** back on the beam and preaching correctly? We do need to keep an eye on these brothers as they continue on that they do not infect the savior's body, but we also need to be compassionate towards them. I would liken it to how Jesus felt towards the Jews he wanted to save. He still hoped that they would listen to the message, and He still reasoned with them. He could have kept his message from them, but he was still with them and wanted them to change. He knew their hard hearts and that is what stopped their entry into the kingdom. I am just as conservative and willing not to stray off the word and think you are doing a noble job, but there is just too much repeated

"I enjoy reading *Seek The Old Paths* online. Thank you for your hard work" ...**K. D. Davis, Burleson, TX.**

"I am serving a four year sentence in Oklahoma. I served the Lord in the past but decided I could drive the car on my own without the Lord's help. I am blessed with only a minimum sentence considering the wreck I've gotten myself in. I have a wife and

whipping and the newsletter smacks of bitterness and self righteousness. Thanks for sending it to me while it came and God bless you all" ...**C. J. Rimmer, Southgate, MI.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: We thank you for your words of commendation but we're certainly puzzled by your lack of understanding in the nature and purpose of *Seek The Old Paths*. Passages such as Jude 3, II Tim. 4:2-5, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1, and II Peter 1:12, all command us to "tell it like it is." We seek to do this diligently and "with love" (Eph. 4:15). We certainly do pray for the kingdom and all who are wayward. Paul did so in Romans 10:1-2: "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*" We acknowledge that false teachers have "zeal", but as Paul said, they do not have the "knowledge" of God's word. It would be good if false brethren would see the error of their way and return to their first love. The Lord certainly needs more workers. The whole purpose of *STOP* is to teach these men of their error and encourage them to repent. It also is for the purpose of instructing others of false doctrine and those who teach it so that they may not fall into the same error. We pray for all to come unto the knowledge of the truth and obey it while there is time. We pray for all men and we pray for you.] "God be thanked for real men who are capable and able to stand with God against iniquity. *STOP* is appreciated by everyone who loves God and Truth! God bless the saints there and you brethren" ...**Fayetteville, AR.** "I picked up a copy of *STOP* while attending the Memphis School of Preaching last March. I would certainly enjoy being added to the mailing list to receive the paper and the good articles I know it will contain" ...**Thomas Forrest, Sr., Clanton, AL.** "Please send us *STOP*. We would like to have our own copy so we can read it and share it with others. Thank you" ...**A. B. Copeland, Stephenville, TX.** "My wife and I really appreciate the work you do publishing *STOP*. Keep up the good work" ...**Morrison, TN.**

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.

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