

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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WILL GOD OVERLOOK UNAUTHORIZED WORSHIP?

Ed Casteel

*As God did not overlook unauthorized worship
in the days of the past, neither will He overlook unauthorized
worship when you and I stand before Him in judgment.*

To the woman at the well in Samaria, Jesus said that the heavenly Father seeketh men to worship Him (John 4:23). But, for that worship to be acceptable, it must be "in spirit and in truth" (4:24). From this occasion in the life of Christ, even if we could read of no other thoughts concerning worship, we should be impressed with the seriousness of and the need for Scriptural worship. First, we are to worship God — nothing else and no one else. Second, we are to worship Him with the right attitude — in spirit, from the heart. Third, we are to worship Him according to the prescribed pattern or plan — according to the truth.

The first recorded scene of worship had to do with Cain and Abel. From the pages of Genesis we read, *"in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstling of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect"* (Gen. 4:3-5). Both of these men were desirous of worship-

ping Jehovah. Abel offered his sacrifice "by faith," but Cain did not (Heb. 11:4). Since we know that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), it would appear that Cain rejected the command as to how to worship God acceptably. Seeing that God did not have respect for Cain's sacrifice, can we say that he overlooked his unauthorized worship? Certainly not! God expected Cain to worship Him in the same way that Abel worshipped Him. If Abel knew how to be right in his worship, then Cain would have had the same opportunity to know how to worship. No, God does not overlook unauthorized worship.

When we read the book of Leviticus, we learn of two brothers, the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu. Moses says of these two brothers that they *"offered strange fire before the Lord"* (Lev. 10:1). The problem was in the origin of the fire. It was not authorized fire; therefore, it was "strange fire." In Leviticus we observe that God directed that on the Day of Atonement the incense fire should be taken from the brazen altar. To bring fire from some other source would constitute strange fire.

God was not pleased with the fire they used for it was strange, i.e. not authorized. Since they were offering unauthorized worship, made so by the unauthorized fire, God sent fire from heaven and consumed both the sacrifice (Lev. 9:24) and the responsible persons. Such was done to demonstrate the glory of God. God does not overlook unauthorized worship.

Turning to the pages of the New Testament we travel with Paul to the city of Athens. *"The city of Athens circled the base of the Acropolis, a hill five hundred feet high on which numerous temples were built...North of the Acropolis was the agora, or market place where the Athenians met to transact business and argue philosophy (Acts 17:17) ... At the western approach to the Acropolis was Mars Hill, or the Areopagus"* (Baker Bible Atlas, pp.222-224). It was here that Paul was brought for a hearing (Acts 17:15-34); and, it was here that Paul discusses "the unknown God" whom they, the men of Athens, ignorantly worshipped (Acts 17:23). At the conclusion of this masterpiece

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Unauthorized Worship...



Editorial...

MISLEADING USE OF SCRIPTURE?

In the May 2002 issue of S.T.O.P., the Guest Editorial was a short article titled “Instrumental Music in Worship to God” written by Gary Colley. It listed 29 reasons why we do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship. We received a letter from a man saying this article misused Scripture. I want to briefly list some of his comments and answer them from the Bible.

LETTER:

“All of your verses quoted, especially #10, could just as easily apply to a lone preacher as to choirs. Is a preacher there to glorify himself or God? Is he performing or worshipping?” Why have a song leader? Is that song leader glorifying himself or God by standing in front of everyone and leading hymns? Is he performing or worshipping? Where in Scripture is a song leader granted authority in worship to determine which hymns are to be sung? I have been to Church of Christ services in four different congregations, and all of them had song leaders. Are these men glorifying themselves or God? I see no difference between a choir of several members, and a choir of one — the song leader.

ANSWER:

The tenth reason brother Colley lists as to why we do not use mechanical instruments in worship is: “By admission of most, such teaching is an effort to please the ears of men (Gal. 1:10).”

Paul made clear he did not preach to please men nor to glorify himself (Gal. 1:10). He did not perform before audiences to receive their applause. He did not seek to impress them with enticing words (1 Cor. 2:4). Neither would any preacher today be right in so doing. There was nothing about preachers in this article and the parallel does not fit.

Having a song leader is an expedient way to carry out the command to sing (Eph. 5:19). It is obvious that the congregation must know which song they are going to sing. The song must start at some point. One to lead (get the song started) is an appropriate (expedient) means of accomplishing this. A “song leader” is authorized in the command to sing. “Playing” is not authorized in the command to sing. Playing is a separate kind of music all together. When someone leads singing, there is nothing more being done than singing; whereas, when playing is being done, there is something more than singing being done. It is an addition to what God commanded (Rev. 22:18-19).

LETTER:

“It can be stated without fear of successful contradiction that there is no command, approved example, or necessary inference in the New Testament for churches of Christ ever, with authority, to BAN instrumental music in worship.”

ANSWER:

The “logic” of saying there is no Scripture that bans instrumental music is flawed. The principle of truth and the Lord’s church exists on the premise that God tells us what He wants. That excludes everything else. The silence of the Scriptures is a valid means of learning and knowing the truth. This is illustrated in Hebrews 7:14. Divine instruction from heaven makes clear that Old Testament Scripture did not forbid or ban anyone from a tribe other than Levi being a priest under the Old Testament system. When God specified priests would be taken from the tribe of Levi, that eliminated all other tribes. When God tells Christians to sing, that eliminates all other kinds or forms of music.

The point at hand is simply this

— Scripture can be found which authorizes congregational singing in the worship of the church today (Col. 3:16; Gal. 5:19). But, Scripture cannot be found (therefore, no authority) for playing mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church today. The Holy Scriptures ban and forbid mechanical instruments by its silence — there’s no authority for it! Where’s the Scripture?

LETTER:

You conveniently deny the many Psalms that tell us to praise God with all kinds of instruments. You are also disregarding the book of Revelation which specifically mentions musical instruments.

ANSWER:

Your inclusion of the Psalms shows plainly that there is no authority for mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship in the church (which you admit yourself); otherwise, you would list them and refer to them. The question at hand is this, “what does God tell us to do regarding worship in the church?”

Since Jesus’ death on the cross took the “old law” away, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14), worship and service in the church today is not governed by the Old Testament. **THE OLD TESTAMENT IS NOT THE LAW BY WHICH WE LIVE AND WORSHIP TODAY.** To try to keep just one part of the old Law makes one a debtor to keep the whole Law (Gal. 5:3). If we go to the Old Testament to find authority for one thing, then we must be ready to include all it demands (including animal sacrifices and burning of incense). Neither does your reference to the book of Revelation provide authority for worship in the church today. What is discussed in the book of Revelation is not talking about worship in the church.

LETTER:

“If the New Testament is the sole means of establishing Truth, then why would any Church of Christ congregation object to evolution? After all, Genesis is not part of the New Testament. Therefore, by your own words, Genesis can be disregarded, as it is not among those

verses that are the sole means of establishing Truth. For that matter, why mention any of the Old Testament in church at all? Why not eliminate the Old Testament from the Bible entirely? You rely on Genesis, a part of the Old Testament, to disprove evolution as truth and treat the Creation account as literal Truth, yet you deny all of the verses from Psalms! There are no verses in the New Testament that contradict instruments.”

ANSWER:

The Old Testament is profitable in that it brings us to the New Testament (Gal. 3:24-25). It was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). Every word of it is true. It is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The principles of the Old Testament are true. The Old Testament is useful in that it presents facts such as the creation. However, none of these things affect nor govern our worship and service in the church today.

Evolution is objected to because it is a doctrine of man, not God — it is false, not true. The Old Testament sufficiently refutes it; but the New Testament does also. Colossians 1:16 speaks of the creation and thereby refutes evolution. So also does Hebrews 1:10-12; Heb. 3:4; 1 Peter 4:19; Rev. 4:11. Jesus referred to creation in Matthew 19:4-6. The creation is also referred to in: Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19; Rom. 1:20,25; Rom. 8:22; 1 Cor. 11:9; Eph. 3:9; Col. 3:10 and 1 Tim. 4:3.

The New Testament replaced the Old Testament as far as rules and regulations that govern people today is concerned. Notice what inspiration says concerning the Old Testament. It has *decayed* and *vanished away* (Heb. 8:13). It was *changed* and *annulled* because of its *weakness* and *unprofitableness* (Heb. 7:12,18). It was only a *shadow* of the New and was therefore *taken away* (Heb. 10:1,9). It was *blotted out* and *nailed to the cross* (Col. 2:14). Its purpose was to bring us to Christ (the New Testament) and since Christ has come, we are *no longer under it* (Gal. 3:24-25). If this were not enough, the Gentiles were never subject to the Law of Moses anyway. It was only for the Israelites and their descendants (Deut. 5:1-3). To refer to the Old Testament as authority on how to worship God today, makes Christ's death on the cross null and void. It makes mockery of his pain, suffering and sacrifice. It counts his resurrection from the grave as trivial and meaningless.

The Old Testament told the Israelites what to do to worship God. The New Testament tells the whole world (both Jew and Gentile) how to worship God. The Old has been replaced by the New (Heb. 10:9). Every verse in the New Testament that speaks of worship in the church today overrides, nullifies, transcends, revokes and cancels what was said about worship under the Old Testament system.

LETTER:

“In looking through S.T.O.P., I found as many articles devoted to stating what everyone else is doing wrong as articles instructing how to do right. You are truly modern-day Pharisees.”

ANSWER:

We print articles dealing with what people are doing wrong as well as articles providing instruction on doing what is right. The vast majority of the New Testament deals with what was wrong in people's lives as well as what was wrong in congregations. You can't tell people what they should “do” without telling them what they should “not do.” They are so closely tied together that they cannot be separated. To do one is to do the other. Faithful preaching includes reproving, rebuking and exhorting (2 Tim. 4:2). That is: 1) “reprove” — explaining what is wrong, to find fault with, to reprehend severely, chide, admonish; 2) “rebuking” — reprimanding those who are guilty of sin, to tax with fault, to admonish or charge sharply, and 3) “exhorting” — encouraging them to repent and come out of it, beg, entreat, beseech.

Your point has absolutely no connection to the Pharisees. To point out what the Bible says and demand that all men adhere to it is not Pharisaical, it is commanded by Jesus (Luke 6:46). The friends of Jesus obey his commandments — his rules and regulations (John 15:14).

Unauthorized Worship...

(Continued from page 65)

exalting the nature of the Almighty God, Paul announced, “*the time of this ignorance God winked at* (overlooked, ASV); *but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). In essence, Paul said there was a time that God overlooked their religious ignorance, but that time is no more. Why is the time no more? For now, we are under a better covenant and He has plainly revealed His pattern for worship to man; therefore, He expects all men everywhere to follow that pattern. God did not overlook their unautho-

rized worship.

When we consider again the words of Jesus to the woman at the Samaritan well we hear him telling her that the Father seeketh men to worship Him, not an idol made by the hands of men. To worship something other than Jehovah God is both unauthorized and unacceptable. Just as when John the apostle and writer of the Revelation fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who was revealing to him the message from God, we hear the angel say, “*see that thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God*” (Rev. 22:9). From this we also learn

that God expects us to worship in the prescribed fashion. To worship the Father in some manner other than what He has authorized by the Scriptures is totally unacceptable.

Today, when the Lord's church assembles to worship, we need to go back to our Bibles to see what God has authorized to be done in worship to Him. Now, if God had given us no directives as to how to worship Him, just simply said worship Me, then we would be at liberty to worship Him any way or in every way we desired. But, on the other hand, if God has given His directives as to how to worship Him, we are obligated to worship Him as he instructs. Remember Cain, Nadab and Abihu?

We have learned in other studies that God, through his word, authorizes through commands, implication and examples (accounts of approved actions). God does not authorize through personal feelings or through popular vote. God is the only one who has the right to determine or decide what is right in worship and all other matters.

Shortly after the New Testament church was begun, we read about their coming together to worship. Luke described their worship when he wrote, “they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer” (Acts 2:42). Four of the avenues of worship are here described: *apostles’ doctrine* (teaching or preaching), *fellowship* (collection), *breaking of bread* (the Lord’s supper), and *prayer*. The only other authorized item of worship is *singing*. Authority for this type of music is found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Paul wrote, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Heb. 2:12). Please observe, these are the only avenues that are authorized for worship. As Nadab and Abihu did not have the right to offer strange fire unto the Lord, neither do we have the right to offer strange doctrine or strange music before God and at the same time expect him to be pleased. Therefore, we have to conclude that, bowing before images, counting of beads, burning of incense, neglecting to partake of the Lord’s supper every first day of the week, or partaking of the Lord’s supper at times other than in periods of worship, playing on an instrument, being entertained by individuals from solos to a full-fledged chorus or band etc., are all without the authority of God for worship. Seeing they are without the authority of God for worship, individually or collectively, they constitute unscriptural worship. As God did not overlook unauthorized worship in the days of the past, neither will He overlook unauthorized worship when you and I stand before Him in judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

127 W Seward St.
Ackerman, MS 39735

BOLDNESS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Bob Spurlin

Far too many would sweep false teaching under the rug and pretend it would go away, but Paul would not do so for one hour. We must show great boldness in exposing false teaching whenever it rears its ugly head.

All of Jerusalem was in an uproar as the ruling body of the Jews had thought executing Jesus would put an end to the difficulty his teachings and popularity was causing among the people. Three days following the burial of Jesus, his body was missing from the tomb and all Jerusalem knew about it. An angel appeared to certain women stating, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28:6). Those doubting Jesus’ resurrection felt the brunt of Christians driving home the argument that the Lord’s death on Mount Calvary was a sacrifice for sin. The deity of Christ consequently was confirmed when the body of Jesus was raised following the third day (Acts 2).

The Jewish court might have expected Peter, James, John, and other disciples to become intimidated by their threats. Such would not be the case, as their former fear would be transformed to daring boldness. Paul writes, “But with all boldness as always, so now Christ also shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or death” (Phil. 1:20). The original word for “boldness” comes from an aorist participle signifying “waxing bold.” The original language suggests, “Dare to do, or to bear something terrible or difficult;” hence, “to be bold, to bear oneself boldly, deal boldly.” These early Christians acted boldly in all their activities to glorify Christ. The Sanhedrin Council threatened Peter and John to cease teaching in the name of Jesus Christ

and their reply was, “For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). If we are to serve Christ today, we must do so with the same boldness that characterized the Christians of the first century.

1. We need boldness to preach to unbelievers. We have earlier stated that the apostles were on trial before the Sanhedrin Council. The church grew very quickly to 5,000 men, not including women and those young people that have reached the age of accountability. Some have estimated the church to be 20,000-25,000 members at this time. The Sanhedrin was desperate to interrupt such rapid growth, and the two apostles were requested to give an answer to the miracles and consequent growth of the church taking place. Peter said that it was by the authority or power of Jesus Christ that all these things have come to pass (Acts 4:10-12). This message of “the only way” was not designed to make them popular; it would require, however, courage and boldness to be effective (Acts 4:13).

One of the greatest needs of our day is to convince people that they are lost in sin (Rom. 3:23; Ezek. 18:20). More and more the pulpit is becoming weaned from the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). A dose of psychology and other theories are being offered as an alternative while the souls of men are being shortchanged of the distinctive message of Christ (John 14:6; 1 Peter 4:11; Heb. 4:12). We must point out in a spirit of love

and kindness how ugly sin is and that a day of reckoning is awaiting those who reject the Gospel message (Mark 16:16; Gal. 1:8-9).

2. We need boldness to expose false teaching. Rebuking those that are teaching error is never easy, however Jesus did so when needed. Jesus forcefully stated to the scribes and Pharisees, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:8-9). To some of the same Jews Jesus said, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). Jesus did not look the other way when he saw the arrogant Pharisees teaching the doctrines of men for the law of God. The apostles displayed great boldness when dealing with religious error. When some attempted to bind the Old Testament on those of the Christian age, Paul opposed it. The apostle said, *“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue*

with you” (Gal. 2:5).

We live in a day of permissiveness and religious tolerance when anything goes. Paul was certainly not of this persuasion and would not give in to religious error — “no, not for an hour.” Far too many would sweep false teaching under the rug and pretend it would go away, but Paul would not do so for one hour. We must show great boldness in exposing false teaching whenever it rears its ugly head.

3. We need boldness to preach the whole truth. There’s always the temptation to preach what people want to hear, rather than what they need to hear. Imagine your doctor saying, “All is well,” while your body is riddled with cancer or some other deadly disease. We would want our physician to be forthcoming and give a full range of treatment and procedures that would enhance a full recovery. Long ago the prophet Isaiah wrote, *“This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits”* (Isa. 30:9-10). Israel rejected the prophets’ and repudiated “right things” while longing for that which was deceitful. How modern the

practices during Isaiah’s day resemble the current situation in the 21st century.

Let us exemplify the attitude stated by Paul, *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27). It will require great courage to preach the whole truth, especially when we know that some will not always embrace it. We must boldly preach the whole truth on the faith that saves, the one church, baptism for the remission of sins, acceptable worship, instrumental music, divorce and remarriage, and a host of other vitally important subjects. We cannot and must not change the Gospel to fit the needs of modern man. The Hebrew writer underscored the fundamental truth, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8). The proposition should follow: if Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever should we not conclude that his Word is the same yesterday, today, and forever? The attitude of every Christian should be *“speaking the truth in love”* (Eph. 4:15). Our prayer should be, “Help us O father to speak the truth in all boldness, but above all things, help us to speak it.”

2101 Glenwood Dr. SW
Hartselle, AL 35640

MCBRIDE’S MURKY MEANDERINGS

Jerry C. Brewer

The trick is to mix matters of opinion with those of faith, stir them into the change agents’ bubbling cauldron and call them all “tradition.”

Christian Chronicle Editor, **Bailey McBride** is at it again — or is it, “still?” Promoting his agenda to transform the church into a full fledged denomination among peers, his latest treatise is such a jumbled maze of obfuscation (confusion), theological gobbledeook, and murky meanderings that the reader could easily mistake Washington State apples for Florida oranges.

McBride’s typical liberal doubletalk is manifested in the following

from his latest editorial lamenting an “unwritten creed” that was developed in the 1950s by churches of Christ:

“Yet, an unwritten creed had slowly developed even though we were people of the Book without human creeds. Do not have a neon sign. Do not have a choir or chorus. Do not let someone show off by singing a solo. Do not ever let someone tell a personal story of their faith’s development — testimonial. Do not teach too often about the Holy

Spirit. A responsive reading is disorderly. Don’t raise your hands while praying or singing because the Holiness folks do that. Rely on Bishop Usher’s chronology because it is as reliable as Scripture in dating the world. The heart of worship is preaching. Stamps Baxter songs belong on the other side of the tracks. ‘High church’ songs are pretentious. Preachers with too much education are dangerous. The church building is not the church, but it is surely not

the place for a kitchen or for recreation.” (Bailey McBride, *“Sorting Tradition, Divine Teaching,”* www.christianity.com/christianchronicle)

McBride’s “bob and weave” liberalism is perfectly delineated in the above paragraph. The trick is to mix matters of opinion with those of faith, stir them into the change agents’ bubbling cauldron and call them all “tradition.”

1. A neon sign for the church building — Opinion. I don’t know where McBride was educated, but intelligent people do not take an isolated opinion, call it a creed, and assign its belief to everyone else in the church. His inane sophistry would make a normal man blush!

2. Choruses and choirs — Faith (Eph. 5:19). He thinks they’re banned because of tradition. So does Rubel Shelly. They are banned because of the absence of authority.

3. Soloists — Faith (Eph. 5:19). Ditto, the above.

4. Testimonies — Faith (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:1-5). Is he going to “cry” mourners to the altar where they can “pray through?” More theological slop that ought to be tossed back into the denominational trough from whence he extracted it.

5. “Do not teach often about the Holy Spirit” — A vague statement. What does our “erudite” Chronicle Editor mean? Is this directed toward men like Foy Wallace and Franklin Camp who taught the truth about the work of the Holy Spirit? Does McBride mean we ought to teach what Joe Beam does — that the Holy Spirit enables him to tell whether a person is lying or not? One who edits a worldwide publication should be able to express himself in clearer terms. But then, obfuscation is a primary tool of the change-agent.

6. “A Responsive reading is disorderly” — Faith (Acts 20:7). How many responsive readings were done at Troas? Is there a New Testament example of such? That practice came from the Catholics. No one objects on the basis of it being “disorderly,” but on its absence from the New Testament as an authorized item of worship.

7. “Raising hands while singing or praying” — Faith. No one objects on the basis that “the Holiness folks do that,” but on the basis that liberals have twisted 1 Timothy 2:8 to

emulate the holy rollers.

8. Bishop Usher’s chronology? — Opinion. What hat did McBride pull this one from? I have been a Christian since 1954, worshipped and preached in four states and never heard this once. I suppose McBride thinks those of us who hold to the plenary, verbally inspired, authoritative word of God also believe the parchments Paul instructed Timothy to bring him were Johnson’s Notes!

9. “The heart of worship is preaching” — No one in my experience has ever made such a statement. That’s not to say it hasn’t been made, but every faithful preacher

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and teacher I’ve known has always taught that preaching is part of our worship, not its “heart.”

10. “Stamps Baxter songs belong on the other side of the tracks” — Opinion. W. R. Craig used to say of some of those songs that “they do more for the toe than they do for the soul,” but that’s not a general indictment of all of them. Liberals who pride themselves on “scholarly” specifics ought not to make sweeping generalities as though they were oracles.

11. “High church songs are pretentious” — Opinion. Again, “Who

said that?” What High Church songs? Those that express unscriptural thoughts or others? There is absolutely no worship in the sound of a song. The worship, admonition and teaching come from the words. This notion that we ought to have toe-tapping holy roller songs or staid old “High church” songs for their tonal and tuneful value is a late blooming idea of change-agents and Howard song book publishers who borrowed it from denominations.

12. “Preachers with too much education are dangerous” — Opinion. Another broad generality from the “succinct” pen of McBride. Some educated preachers **are** dangerous. Look at LaGard Smith, Richard Hughes, Doug Foster and others who hold court at various universities misguidedly supported by Christians. They are the ones who, in the name of change and progress, would drag the church 200 years backwards into the Babel of denominationalism. They are the ones who want to restore the restoration rather than the pristine New Testament church. Like every other temporal facility, education is a tool to be used by the Christian. The tool itself neither makes him dangerous nor faithful as a preacher. What makes him so is his use of that tool. A hammer in the hands of a murderer can kill, in the hands of a master carpenter can build.

13. The church building and kitchens — Now McBride takes on antis and lumps them with Bishop Usher, Holy Spirit teaching, Stamps Baxter songs and neon signs. Coherence of thought and clear expression thereof certainly isn’t a prime attribute of liberals, especially those who run the Christian Chronicle.

After reading McBride’s heretical effluence, it’s hard to tell Washington State Apples from Florida Oranges. But, then, obfuscation and illogic are the prime tools of the liberal.

As a final thought, parents who want to hand their children over to **Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts** ought to be forewarned that the Christian Chronicle is owned, operated by, and expresses the views of that school.

308 South Oklahoma
Elk City, Oklahoma 73644
editor@gospelpreceptor.com

“UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS”

Rusty Stark

Once again news comes to us about **Rochester College** (once **Michigan Christian College**). It comes to us in the NORTH STAR (volume 43, #2, Summer 2002), a newspaper published by Rochester College about Rochester College. The article is titled “*Unity of All Believers*” (page 3).

The article reports on the annual Sermon Seminar held at Rochester college in May of this year. The opening paragraph reads as follows:

In the spirit of the Restoration Movement’s plea for the unity of all believers, 140 ministers from 14 Christian fellowships and 27 states assembled on May 20-22 at the College’s fifth annual Sermon Seminar.

The article goes on in paragraph four to say this:

“This seminar brought together people from a variety of faith backgrounds for a unity of purpose to improve preaching through a biblical perspective,” said Dr. Michael Westerfield, Rochester College provost. “I believe that this is a critical part of our mission.”

One last quote later in the article (paragraph 8):

Organizers said the seminar experience emphasized the participants’ unity of purpose in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

FALSE UNITY

How can people from a “*variety of faith backgrounds*” have a “*unity of purpose*” in preaching? Amos the prophet thought (and by inspiration also taught) that such unity of purpose was impossible with disagreement of doctrine. Amos 3:3, “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*”

Furthermore, are we even supposed to have unity of purpose with those who are of a “*variety of faith backgrounds?*” Those who teach different doctrines, including the creeds, disciplines, confessions of faith, and church manuals that men have devised are vain in their wor-

ship (Matt. 15:9). Are we supposed to be unified with vain worshipers? The unity that God demands is not simply unity of purpose while we hold on to our divisive creeds. God demands unity of doctrine (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed that we would have the kind of unity he enjoys with his Father (John 17:20-21). Jesus didn’t teach one doctrine and his Father another (John 7:16).

FALSE BELIEVERS

It is true that we must be in unity with all believers, but we must understand who is a believer and who is not. The word translated “believer(s)” or “believe(d)” is also translated as “faithful” (Heb. 11:11; 1 Tim. 1:15) and “true” (1 Tim. 3:1; 2 Cor. 1:18). This carries the unmistakable meaning that believers are those who are faithful, dependable, and true.

People from a “*variety of faith backgrounds*” are not faithful. If they were all faithful to the word they would not be of various faith backgrounds.

It is especially true that preachers from various faith backgrounds are not faithful. There is only one Gospel. Those who pervert it and teach something else are accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). Why would we want to be unified with those who are accursed? Do we want to share in their eternal fate — hell?

THE ANSWER

“*A variety of faith backgrounds*” is a smooth way of saying denominationalism. And denominationalism is the enemy of Christ and therefore our enemy. In this sermon seminar, Rochester College is waving a white flag, aligning themselves with the enemies of the cross, and becoming part of the division which is so hateful to God. They may call it unity, but in reality it is surrender!

If men truly want unity, let them lay down that which divides. The word of God is not divisive. The doctrines which come from its pages, baptism for the remission of sins, one church, worship in spirit and in truth, none of these things is the

cause of division. Those who have denied and perverted these things are the cause of division.

We call on those who are part of a “*variety of faith backgrounds*” to lay down the creeds that make them distinct and to give up all doctrines that cannot be supported from Scripture. Let us become one on the platform of truth, not on the shaky ground of false unity with false believers.

*1495 E Empire Ave.
Benton Harbor, MI 49022*

CONTRIBUTIONS

Paul Curless.....	\$100
Thurmond & Nellie Dull.....	\$100
Frederick Weeks	\$5.25
Mrs. Gibson	\$1
Martin Bedford	\$200
M/M Ronald H. Allen	\$10
D. A. Atchley.....	\$50
Kenneth & Geraldine Bohannon	\$30
Oak Ridge church of Christ, Obion, TN	\$100
Freeda Strawn	\$15
Bill Noblin.....	\$7
Douglas Hoff	\$35
LuAnn Thompson.....	\$50
Ward’s Chapel church of Christ, Manchester, TN.....	\$25
M. S. Rooker, Jr.....	\$100
Joe Dawson	\$75
James Horton	\$100
Dillon church of Christ, Dillon, SC ..	\$100
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$25
Jerry Gooch.....	\$30
Helen Hash	\$10
Steve Daugherty.....	\$100
Anonymous	\$25
Anonymous	\$250
Anonymous	\$160
Anonymous	\$60
Anonymous	\$100
Robert Price (booklet maker)	\$200
Beverly Sue Kamm (Memory of Doug Gilliland)	\$30
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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

book yet, but the 40 or so pages spent asserting this heinous doctrine is enough to throw up a red flag. It is especially dangerous because a gratis copy is sent to each church many of whom will be unsuspecting of its falsity. Keep the faith" ...**Jim Mettenbrink, Brookings, SD.** "I was given some copies of your paper and enjoyed them very much. Please add my name to the mailing list" ...**Elizabeth Williamson, Paden City, WV.** "Just a line to tell you how much we enjoy *STOP* out here in "Babylon-on-the-Desert." It is like a shot in the arm each month. We really look forward to it" ...**Martin Bedford, Tucson, AZ.** "My husband and I are members of the church of Christ in Beebe, AR. Recently, another member loaned us a copy of your publication of *Seek the Old Paths* from October. We were very encouraged by reading it. We would like to receive this publication. Thank you for speaking out in a world full of people who would prefer you to hold your tongues" ...**Dawn Segerson, Austin, AR.** "Just finished reading your March issue of *Seek the Old Paths*. It's a joy to see the Gospel is still being preached. Please add my name to your list of readers. Thank you and God bless you" ...**Harvey Wilson, Folkston, GA.** "Please use this contribution for the few individuals of (Obion County), Union City, TN Area that you send your publication to. We enjoy it very much" ...**Kenneth Kemp, Union City, TN.** "After reading every issue from stem to stern, I didn't realize you put out this very note worthy paper. It's so honest and a real eye opener. Thank you. No one can say you're not doing the Lord's work. You must be busy all the time" ...**M/M Howard Stark, Kissimmee, FL.** "We are still enjoying *STOP*. Keep up the good work. May God bless you in printing the truth" ...**Rube & Lorene Wilson, Binger, OK.** "Thanks so much for truthful articles in a world of error. We look forward to receiving it" ...**William J. Paul, Jr., Elmore, City, OK.** "We really enjoy the good lessons in *STOP*. Would you please add these names to your mailing list? Thank you" ...**Robert Cunningham, Obion, TN.** "We receive *Seek the Old Paths*. It is interesting and informative. May God bless you as you seek to do His will. Have a great day!" ...**Fay White, Tuscumbia, AL.** "Your paper, *Seek the Old Paths*, is greatly needed today. We pray you will continue to have the courage to stand for the Truth" ...**Name Withheld, Cantonment, FL.** "Thank you for the great work you are doing. I look forward to getting the paper and passing it on for someone else to read. May God bless you always" ...**Lois Smith, Tyler, TX.** "I borrowed a copy of *Seek the Old Paths* from a friend. I enjoyed reading it very much. Please add me to your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Douglas Stafford, Sparta, TN.** "The peace and the love of God be with you all. I feel very grateful and am anxiously interested in receiving your wonderful magazine *Seek the Old Paths* till this day. I enjoyed the whole page and each word that refute the liberalism plague spread in the church everywhere. It is Biblical and spiritually fundamental and educational. My free copy is no longer enough as many of the brothers and sisters would like to read. So we would like to request you to increase if possible to meet the need who are interested to read for their personal study and understanding more of the truth. Please send us about 10 copies from the next issue or if received of this letter for the use of our congregation. Faithful members in the truth are interested to read so that they may hold fast the faith which once delivered. May God continue blessing you and help you go on with your beautiful labor" ...**T. Ngulkhopao, Manipur, India.** "We appreciate your bulletins and papers" ...**E. Cook, Tallassee, AL.** "I enjoy *STOP* so much and I appreciate your stand for the truth. May God bless you in your good work" ...**Dolores Renfro, Thackerville, OK.** "Thank you very much for your stand for the truth" ...**Claude Andrews, Pleasant Hill, MO.** "I lack knowing how to express my thoughts on paper. Someone once said, "Though I had a thousand tongues." If I did have many tongues it still would not be enough to express my gratitude for you and all others that still preach, teach, and follow God's divine pattern while living for Him. Works, money or thank you will never convey how much I owe and love all of you in Christ. Please accept this small check so that your bulletins may continue these wonderful forceful messages to a lost and dying world" ...**Kay Barron, Mobile, AL.** "I have recently run into a person who passed one of your *Seek the Old Paths* booklets on to me. I enjoyed it very much and being a beginner in the Bible (as far as really putting a strong foot forward), I really enjoyed

"This is to warn you of a book being sent free to at least congregations in the Midwestern USA. It is titled "Things you never Heard" (150pp) by Calvin Fields. It purports to be a book of Christian evidences, however the author sets forth his belief that the creation days are metaphors for millions of years and not literal six 24 hour days. I have not finished the

your insight and guidance to the Word. I am seeking the truth and any learning material you can send me to help me would be more than appreciated. As a prisoner I'm trying to turn my life around and live for God. Thanks" ...**Dustin Reeder, Parchman, MS.** "Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want to beg you to put my name on your mailing list so that I will receive *Seek the Old Paths* magazine. It will assist me very much in preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ and edify the brethren. If you can also send me old/back issues of the *Seek the Old Paths* magazine, it will be very helpful. It is only eternity that can measure the good that your periodical will do to me and those that I teach. I look forward to receiving the *Seek the Old Paths* magazine. Yours for the spread of the Gospel" ...**Andrew Osatohamwen, Nigeria, West Africa.** "I enjoy your paper, *Seek the Old Paths*, very much and look forward to receiving it" ...**Hurschel Ray, Jonesboro, AR.** "May God continue to bless you and yours as you make straight the crooked ways with God's Word" ...**W. A. Washington, Houston, TX.** "I appreciate the work you are doing" ...**Jimmy Clark, Grand Prairie, TX.** "I was very pleased when I read your publication *Seek the Old Paths*. I do not know who submitted my name and it does not matter. They sent me a blessing and I thank them and God for this blessing. I would like to remain on your mailing list. I would like you to add my daughter to your mailing list" ...**Vance Parr, Marietta, OK.** "My donations to *STOP* are an investment in the Word of God placed in other's hands. My hope is it continues for many years to come with the same straight-forward manner as has been printed. Thanks to each of you for all your hard work" ...**TX.** "Thanks for sending a bundle of *Seek the Old Paths* to the Land Between the Lakes church of Christ. We are thankful to God for the good work you are doing through this publication. Hope to see you at the lectureship" ...**Earl B. Claud, Dover, TN.** "We appreciate the articles in *STOP*. Keep up the good work" ...**Joseph C. Britt, Jr., Baxter, TN.**

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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** / Associate Editor: **Jimmy Bates**

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