

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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THE LORD'S SUPPER AT WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS?

Rusty Stark

Some brethren have attempted to make the Lord's supper part of a common meal. The June, 2002 issue of *STOP*, in an article by Jack Simons, reported about a place that made the Lord's supper part of a barbecue dinner.

Now we see another step some are taking, that of offering the Lord's supper at weddings and funerals. These modern trends and fads are perversions of the Lord's supper. Perversions such as these show no respect for God and his Word, and no real love for Jesus who died for us.

BIBLE AUTHORITY

Consider this prayer — Lord, thy will. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else. I don't remember where I read it or who prayed it, but it reminds us of the essentials of Bible authority. In the matter of religion, either the Bible has ultimate and absolute authority, or it has no authority at all. If we are free to add things that we want, take away or ignore the things we don't like, and substitute those things that appeal to us, then the Bible has no authority over us at all.

Israel of old was reminded of the authority of God's law. *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you"* (Deut. 4:2).

This verse was once more well-known and quoted than it is today. Look at it carefully. Why were they told they should not add to nor take away from the word? So they could keep God's commandments. If we feel free to add to and take away, then we cannot keep his commandments. We destroy any authority God's word ever had.

Lest anyone should forget, we also are under these same commands. *"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Rev. 22:18-19). While it is true these commands are specifically about the words of the book of Revelation, it would be exceptionally strange logic for someone to conclude that you can't add to or take away from the book of Revelation, but you can from the rest of God's word.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If all of God's word is inspired, then we can't take any of it away. If it is able to equip us to every good work, then we need to add nothing to it.

Colossians 3:17 is still in the Bible. *"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."*

THE BIBLE PLAN FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

The pattern for the Lord's supper is detailed in the Bible and that makes it quite simple for us. The more specific God is in setting forth a pattern for us to follow, the less expediences there are for us to decide in following that pattern. When God was specific with Noah about what wood to use for the ark, Noah did not have to worry about deciding which wood was better for him to use.

Jesus instituted the Lord's supper and showed us what things we are supposed to use as emblems: unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Matt. 26:26-29). We have no right to take away either of these emblems from the Lord's supper. We also have no right to add more than these. This condemns the use of barbecued pork (or beef).

Paul revealed to the Corinthians the mind-set and focus we are to have when we partake, and declared that if we fail to partake in the right manner, we will lose our souls (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

Even the day and the frequency

(Continued on page 84)

The Lord's Supper...



Guest Editorial

"THE LONG ARM OF GRACE"

Marvin L. Weir

The Saturday, June 1, 2002 edition of the Dallas Morning News contained an article by Rae DeShong featuring the Highland Oaks church of Christ and their minister of twenty-five years, "Dr. Gary Beauchamp." This congregation, that boasts of 2500 members, has no respect for Bible authority and proved such by keeping this apostate preacher in the pulpit for so many years. They have multimillion-dollar facilities but meet in homes throughout the city on Sunday evening and Wednesday night. The Bible declares that Christians are not to forsake "assembling together" (Heb. 10:25) and on the Lord's Day are commanded to assemble or "come together" (1 Cor. 11:20,33). Dividing the congregation into "cells" or "groups" that meet in homes ignores the command to assemble together and makes it most convenient for false teaching to occur and thrive.

The staff writer states that "Dr. Beauchamp...was raised in a tradition that sometimes has a reputation for rigidity and exclusiveness. But he says he has seen a change in the church over the years." Friends, this liberal preacher did all within his power to produce a change in the rigidity and exclusiveness of the New Testament church! When it comes to doctrinal matters, faithful members of the body will be rigid — not flexible and compromising, but fixed and steadfast (1 Cor. 15:58). The Lord's church is exclusive in that it does not divide, share, and fellowship with man-made denominations. "Dr. Beauchamp," however, with his "long arm of grace," desires to reach out and include those who demand flexibility in doctrinal matters!

What we hear next is absolutely appalling! "Dr. Beauchamp" declares, "People used to go to church on doctrine; now people go on programs. The church has to do a really good job on programming. The churches that only

do doctrine are dying." Folks, if you love the Lord and His Word, read again this quote and weep! The change agent's message is clear: "Doctrine does not matter but programming does." You will notice, however, that "Dr. Beauchamp" does not quote Scripture for what he proudly proclaims. In fact, according to several sources who have visited Highland Oaks, "Dr. Beauchamp" seldom quotes the Scriptures. Why does that not come as a surprise?

This graduate and strong supporter of ACU continues to explain that "people are not necessarily drawn to the church any longer because of its stance on biblical truth. People today are drawn to churches for what they offer them and their families." Does this statement not bring forth the righteous indignation of those who love God and His truth? Was the apostle Paul wrong in speaking "words of truth and soberness" to Festus (Acts 26:25)? Wonder why an inspired apostle did not abandon truth and appeal to Festus with whatever program he could offer him?

Is it truth or some program or gimmick that frees a person from his sins? Jesus said, "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Psalmist speaks of the God "Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; who keepeth truth for ever" (Psalm 146:6). But Beauchamp says that programming takes priority over doctrine and that what we offer folks takes priority over truth! Those like Beauchamp, proclaiming his version of "the long arm of grace," is the reason the Lord's church in many places is in such pathetic condition!

The staff writer comments that "soon it sounds as if this Church of Christ minister has spent much of his 40-year career hoping to help people who may have experienced less grace than they have dogma." The Ameri-

can Heritage Dictionary defines "dogma" as: "Theology, A doctrine or a corpus of doctrines relating to matters such as morality and faith, set forth in an authoritative manner by a church." We are not speaking of man-made dogma, but "sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10), the "good doctrine" Timothy followed (1 Tim. 4:6), and "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3). Brethren, God's grace does not negate God's doctrine!

God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and people will be judged by the Word of truth Christ spoke (John 12:48) instead of "Dr. Beauchamp's" programs.

One last swipe is taken at the indispensable and unchangeable Word of God. Beauchamp opines, "People who were born and reared in legalism generally break out of that when they become independent. Then they go out into the world and experience some hurt and pain. They want to go back to church, but want to experience something less rigid and more positive." Translation: when children leave the homes of godly parents concerned with Bible truth, Beauchamp and his kind will seek to convince them that programs matter most!

Yes, we believe in God's grace, but not at the expense of His truth! God's grace is for those who abide by a "thus saith the Lord," and Beauchamp's long arm of grace will not cover those who choose programs over doctrine and truth (cf. Rom. 3:4)!

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DEFILING THE LORD'S SUPPER

Bob Spurlin

One of the greatest events to take place in the life of a Gospel preacher is uniting men and women together in the bonds of holy matrimony. Love created in the hearts of the male and female is consummated by God's arrangement in "marriage" (Gen. 2:21-24). There is nothing more gratifying or rewarding than to perform the wedding ceremony joining two people together who repeat their vows promising to love each other until the union is severed by death (Rom. 7:2). It would be surprising if any preacher would acknowledge that performing a wedding ceremony was not one of the most satisfying duties of his entire ministry.

Conversely, one of the saddest events to surface for a minister of the Gospel is to receive a phone call being informed of a death in the congregation. Every Christian is cognizant of the New Testament, which teaches, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). This undeniable fact is keenly felt by all of us and unlike some appointments, this one cannot be avoided or shunned. Of course, the Gospel preacher is faced with the possibility of two kinds of funerals. The one that is a faithful child of God and who has been devoted to the cause of Christ, however, the other is a wayward Christian or unbeliever. Ask any preacher which memorial service he would rather preach. Without fear of contradiction it would be the one, who had dedicated himself to the cause of Christ. Offering hope to the grieving family is willingly offered because the divine record promises such (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 6:18-19).

Both of these events, the wedding and funeral service, will occur to virtually every individual that lives. It should be stated that not everyone will marry or is required to enter such a sacred union. However, the vast majority will have a wedding, and children will be the product of that loving union. The appointment of death, on the other hand, will be faced by each of us with the exception of those living when Christ will make his second advent with the reverberating trumpet of Michael, the archangel (1 Thess. 4:14-16).

Neither of these events, a wedding and/or funeral, can be recognized as a worship service. Although both of these events generally will have Bible reading, prayer, and the singing of sacred songs, it should be concluded that neither are considered worship.

It has come to my attention that during a recent wedding ceremony, the Lord's supper (communion) was served by a minister to the couple being wed. One good brother informed me that it is commonplace in some churches of Christ not only to serve the Lord's supper at a wedding, but also at a funeral service. He stated, "We are becoming more like the Catholic Church serving mass."

The digression in churches of Christ is becoming like a runaway train and whether it can be stopped will be predicated upon faithful elders and preachers that will stand up and be counted (Jude 3; Phil. 1:27; Gal. 1:6-9). It must also be underscored that the faithful sheep cannot just stick their heads in the sand knowing full well the far reaching consequences of doing so — like ancient Israel following the evil nations about them (1 Sam. 8:5,19-20). All too often the membership will "go along" and therefore ignore John's penetrating words, "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" (2 John 9). Proper decorum and respect in both of these solemn occasions should be implemented. Remember the New Testament regulates our worship in the Christian Age and it cannot be put into practice without a "thus saith the Lord." The apostle Paul quotes from the Lord when he writes, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:25-26). The first century Christians, on Pentecost, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

There are five avenues of worship mandated by Holy Scripture with members participating: 1) Bible study (2

Tim. 2:15), 2) prayer (Acts 12:5), 3) Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:23-28), 4) giving as one is prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and 5) congregational singing (Eph. 5:19). The apostolic example of engaging in worship is on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). No other day has been assigned by Holy Writ to engage in worship, therefore serving the Lord's supper on Saturday or any other day is wholly unauthorized and is a total abandoning of God's will (Rev. 22:18-19).

Local congregations that would permit and/or allow the Lord's supper to be served during a wedding or funeral service is the equivalent of Nadab and Abihu adding "strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 12:1-2). Godly elders that would take their work seriously must, in rapt fashion, respond with a firm and forthright rebuke. The membership must know with certainty that this erroneous practice is false and such a thing will not be tolerated, but will be acknowledged as sin. Specific guidelines and directives are important for the membership and/or anyone else that would use the physical building of the Lord's church for a wedding or funeral service. Elders and shepherds of the flock must be aware of their responsibility as Peter states, "The elders which are among you I exhort... Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:1-2). If elders refuse to take the "oversight" by giving "a wink and a nod" at such an unscriptural (unauthorized) practice, their leadership should be called into question.

Let us return to the "old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein" before it is too late (Jer. 6:16). We cannot just close our eyes when error is allowed to raise its ugly head. Each of us must respond, as Moses called upon Israel to take action when the golden calf was constructed, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me" (Exodus 32:26).

Can you be counted on to take a stand?

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The Lord's Supper...

(Continued from page 81)

are clearly set out in Scripture for those who have respect for the Biblical pattern. The disciples came together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7-12). In 1 Corinthians 11 beginning in verse 17 Paul discusses the assembly for the Lord's supper without giving us a day or a frequency. However he continues the discussion in chapter 14 when he discusses how spiritual gifts were to be used in their assemblies. He then goes on in chapter 16, as he discussed the collection, to pin down the day and frequency of those assemblies — *the first day of the week*. **It is sinful for us to partake of the Lord's supper on any other day.**

The pattern also shows us that the Lord's supper is a matter of public assembly. It was taken by the brethren at Troas when they came together and Paul preached to them (Acts 20:7-12). Paul describes the taking of the Lord's supper in Corinth with the words "ye come together" in 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34. It is true that there are some who cannot assemble with the saints (shut-ins, prisoners, etc.). However, no matter what we say about their partaking of the Lord's supper, there is clearly no biblical authorization for taking the Lord's supper and willfully placing it in assemblies that are for purposes other than congregational worship to God.

THESE PERVERSIONS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER SHOW NO RESPECT FOR BIBLE AUTHORITY

The Bible does not authorize these new changes in the Lord's supper. It plainly condemns using it as a common meal (1 Cor. 11:20-22), and there is no Bible authority for making the Lord's supper part of a wedding or a funeral. Since there is no Bible authority for it, that makes it a sin.

A wedding is a celebration of two lives becoming one. It centers on those lives and the decisions of those two individuals. The Lord's supper centers on the Lord, his suffering and death on our behalf (1 Cor. 11:24-29). There is simply no way to combine a wedding and the Lord's supper. A wedding is not a worship service, and a worship service is not a wedding.

Some may argue that we have

prayers at weddings. This is true, but the Bible teaches that prayer is always appropriate (1 Thess. 5:17).

A funeral is a memorial of the life of a mere mortal. This makes it very different from the Lord's supper, which is intended to memorialize our Lord's suffering and death. Again, there is no proper or Scriptural way to combine a funeral service and the Lord's supper — they are two different assemblies for two different purposes.

Someone else may argue that we sing spiritual songs and preach from the Bible at funerals, so why not partake of the Lord's supper there also? Singing spiritual songs can be done by those who are happy (James 5:13), and even when people are experiencing difficult times (Acts 16:24-25). And, preaching can be done in synagogues, schools, or wherever people gather (Acts 19:8-9; 17:22).

But, where is any particle of Bible authority, any command, example or implication, that even begins to authorize making the Lord's supper a part of weddings or funerals? In the absence of such authority, those who practice such things are showing disdain for the inspired Word of God.

THESE PERVERSIONS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER SHOW NO LOVE OR RESPECT FOR GOD OR HIS SON

It may seem harsh to say that these perversions of the pattern show neither respect nor love for God or for his Son, but this is not an unfair judgment. Those who do not respect God's word do not respect him. Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?

This is the reason Nadab and Abihu died, they did not sanctify the Lord when they tried to come near to him. In other words, they had no respect for his commands about how to worship (Lev. 10:1-3).

The man picking up sticks on the Sabbath had no respect for God's Word, and died (Num. 15:30-36). He is an example of a man who sinned presumptuously, one who reproacheth the Lord because he despised the word of the Lord (vs.30-31). This is the same attitude shown by those who pervert the place and purpose of the Lord's supper.

It is the vilest of lies to say that we love Jesus and yet defy his com-

mands, for Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Rejecting his word and failing to receive Jesus are one and the same thing (John 12:48).

CONCLUSION

Cloaked in false spirituality, people take a beautiful memorial, and in defiance of God who gave the memorial, they twist it to their own ends for their own enjoyment. And, let us not forget what this memorial represents. God gave his Son. He did not do so for the purpose of decorating or dressing up a wedding like a flower arrangement, an arch, or unity candles.

God did not give us the Lord's supper to celebrate or memorialize our own loved ones. There is nothing wrong with such memorial services when loved ones have died, but the Lord's supper does not belong in those services — it has no part or parcel in these activities.

Let us learn and live the attitude of this prayer and thus bow in submission at the feet of our Maker and Redeemer — Lord, thy will. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else.

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News Brief...

The following comes from Jon Gary Williams: I received an alarming call late last night from brother Jim Waldron whom we help in preaching in India. He informed me that yesterday a new law was handed down in the region of Tamil Nadu forbidding the practice of “Christian baptism.”

He further explained that anyone caught doing this would be sentenced to 5 years in jail. This is the result of a strong Hindu influence among Indian authorities. Our guess is that Hindu leaders are trying to reduce the flow of converts from Hinduism to “Christianity” (of any kind).

Jim has asked me to notify as many brethren as possible of this unbelievable turn of events. He is requesting that we give this matter particular attention in our Prayers. He told me the brethren there had already begun to fast and pray about this.

The region of Tamil Nadu is a large district in the south of India. It has a population of over 65 million with an estimated 1,000 congregations of the Lord’s church. This ruling will have a devastating affect on the growth of the church. And, there is the possibility of this spreading throughout all India.

Over the years Jim has begun a number of preaching schools throughout India and Pakistan. Such a ruling will also have a negative affect on this great work.

I asked him what they were going to do. He told me they were going to go right on baptizing (most likely in secret) and if discovered they would just wait to see what measures are taken by the authorities. This is a fearful time for the Lord’s church in India.

Please PRAY for the church there!



The following paragraph is from an ad in The Christian Chronicle, Sept., 2002, p.34. *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord’s Supper* by John Mark Hicks.

“Our church family spent a month studying and implementing Dr. Hicks book. It has had the very positive effect of helping many see the supper as a joyous community event focusing on the Risen Christ instead of a sad and solitary reflection on his death.”

— Rubel Shelly

What is sad is that Hicks and Shelly see a need to revision the Lord’s supper. We are to remember the sacrifice of Christ. We can be very thankful and happy that he was willing to die for our sins. But not remembering the immensity of the pain, agony and suffering of that sacrifice takes away from the sacrifice. Not everything about the Christian walk is fun and games. We do not have to always have happy feelings to be a joyous community. Joy can be gotten from the realization of his ‘willingness’ to endure a horrific suffering and death. The joy does not come from the horrific death. We did not deserve his sacrifice. He willingly did it because he loves us. Tears of thanksgiving are just as important as the joy of the result of the sacrifice. The feely, touchy, sugar coated, “make me always feel good” revisionism demeans the Lord’s supper.

— Mark McWhorter



Restoration Forum XX will be hosted by Quaker Avenue Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. Cohosted by Broadway Church of Christ, First Christian Church, Raintree Christian Church and Vandelia Church of Christ. “The Restoration Forums are annual meetings of Christians from various segments of the Restoration Movement who gather to reflect on our common heritage, our differences, and ways we may honor the Lord’s prayer that his disciples be one.”

Some speakers will be: Rick Atchley, Minister at Fort Worth’s Richland Hills Church of Christ, Kenny Boles, Ozark Christian Col-

lege faculty, Steve Doles, Director of Pray Lubbock, Leroy Garrett, Author of The Stone Campbell Movement, Randy Harris, Abilene Christian University faculty, Royce Money, President of Abilene Christian University, Jerry Reeves, Minister at Houston’s New Beginnings Church, Floyd Rose, Minister of Pine Hills Church of Christ in Valdosta, GA, Sam Stone, Editor of Christian Standard, Bob Wetzal, President of Emmanuel School of Religion. A joint Sunday evening communion service will be held at the Broadway Church of Christ. Contact person is: Patricia Browning, Quaker Avenue Church of Christ “www.quakeravenue.com”

The above information is taken from an ad in the September issue of The Christian Chronicle. There has been a large amount of evidence presented over the past 20 years demonstrating that Abilene University is not following the path that her founders envisioned. The Bible Department and Leadership no longer see the Church of Christ as the one and only church of our Lord. They see it as a Movement. And, they see us as only part of a Movement. The ad states that all those present at this forum are Christians. In fact, it actually is stating that all those in the Christian Church are Christians. Royce Money, the President of Abilene has agreed to participate in this gathering of apostates and non-Christians. Will he also join in making a mockery of the Lord’s supper by partaking of it with those from the Christian Church? Up until now, President Money has managed to hide from some of the limelight. He has managed to make apologies for those of the faculty who participated in very questionable activities or made very questionable statements. He now has stepped out and is making it known that he is fully supportive of efforts to apostatize the church. Will members of the church continue to send their children to ACU expecting them to get a sound Biblical education?

— Mark McWhorter

"YOU ARE...VERY TRADITIONAL"

Roger D. Campbell

A number of years ago in the Ukraine, I had a discussion with a member of the Boston Movement (known in many places as "International Church of Christ"). When he learned I was a member of the church, he asked, "Are you a member of the traditional church of Christ?" I knew exactly what he meant by the expression "traditional church of Christ" — in the lingo of the Boston Movement that term is used to refer to those congregations that do not accept the Boston methods and doctrines. In response to his question, "Are you a member of the traditional church of Christ," I asked, "What do you mean, 'traditional church of Christ?'" After a long pause he said something like, "I don't really know, I just know that is what we call it. I know that Kip McKean is the head of our church. Who is the head of your church?" I said, "Jesus Christ is the head of the church of Christ."

Just a couple of days ago I once again found myself being called "traditional," yea, "very traditional." In the mail I received a brochure about an extremely liberal web site ("magazine"). The person that sent the brochure attached a note that said, "Because you are a member of the COC who is very traditional, I thought you might be interested in hearing about the non-traditional side." Just what caused him to conclude that I am very traditional, he never said. However, by describing the material that he sent as "the non-traditional side," it is not too hard to see where he is coming from. What does his "non-traditional side" have to say for itself? The brochure made this claim about the advertised magazine: "Its roots are in Restoration Movement Christianity, encompassing the church of Christ, Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ." Two things stand out about the way this pamphlet portrays what its sender called "the non-traditional side." First, its roots are in "Restoration Movement Christianity." If the reference is to what is commonly called the American "Restoration Movement," then that would take it back to the late 1700s, at the earliest. The church of Christ had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem in the first century, some thirty-three years

after the birth of Jesus the Christ (Acts 2). Though we are grateful for all past efforts of men and women to try to return to the Bible way of doing things, the Lord's church owes no allegiance to any movement, and certainly does not trace its roots to something that took place on American soil.

Second, "the non-traditional side" (as portrayed in the brochure) kind of throws the church of Christ, Christian Church denomination, and Disciples of Christ denomination all in together. But, brethren, how can two walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3)? And, how could God's people ever consider "throwin' in with" denominational groups that have no authority to exist? Call us "traditional" if you must, but some of us are not yet ready to cave in to the call to fellowship those that have gone and continue to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

Back to the word "traditional." Is it a good or bad thing to be "traditional?" The English word "tradition" means "the doctrines, knowledge, practices, and customs passed down from one generation to another" (*Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1997*).

In the Bible we read of the "traditions of men." Jesus used this term when referring to the Pharisees' effort to try and bind on others their habit of hand-washing and pot-washing. The Master said, "*Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye*" (Mark 7:7-9,13).

The words of Jesus make it plain that following the traditions or teachings of men in the service of God is not according to His commandment or word, and therefore is unacceptable. It is also written, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Col. 2:8). Again, it is plain that

"the tradition of men" is "not after Christ." Thus, the religious traditions of men are to be avoided.

Is the term "tradition" ever used in the Bible in a favorable manner, that is, as something that is desirable? A couple of references from the book of 2 Thessalonians give a clear answer. "*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle*" (2:15). The "traditions" in this instance must refer to what we could call "inspired traditions," as they were the message that the apostle Paul taught. Paul previously told the saints in Thessalonica that what he had preached and written to them was "the word of God" and "commandments" by/from the Lord (1 Thess. 2:13; 4:2). Therefore, the "traditions" they were to hold fast were simply the doctrine of Christ.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 it is written, "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*" Obviously, in this passage "the tradition" is again used in reference to the inspired word of God. So, what shall it be? In our service to the Lord Jesus, should we keep traditions, or not? We must keep the inspired "traditions" that come to us as the word of God, but avoid and refuse the traditions or commands of men, because those are traditions "that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14). When you and I teach the exclusive nature of the body of Christ, try to worship God according to the New Testament pattern, follow the New Testament pattern for the church's organization, accept the New Testament teaching about the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, preach the connection between man's obedience and God's grace, and try to stand for and proclaim other biblical truths, some brethren with great contempt label us as "the traditional church of Christ."

Let us not allow anyone to pull us aside from our task of teaching and living the Gospel of Christ.

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IT'S SHOWTIME IN WESTERN OKLAHOMA!

Jerry C. Brewer

The Clinton, Oklahoma, Church of Christ is stepping right into postmodern sectarianism with its upcoming religious burlesque production set for Nov. 17, 2002 at the Tornado Dome, Clinton High school's basketball gymnasium. The show is explained in the following announcement recently mailed to area churches:

"Clinton Church of Christ — Presents Acappella Ministries Inc. 'Vocal Union' In Concert Sunday, Nov. 17, 2002. Accappella (sic) Ministries Inc. of Paris, TN along with the Clinton church of Christ is happy to present the seven man, all-vocal, contemporary Southern Gospel ensemble, The Vocal Union in Concert (sic). Along with Acappella, Keith Lancaster, and The Fireman, The Vocal Union rounds out Acappella Ministries roster of professional artists. Calling on years of singing, song writing, and recording experience, as well as rich gospel heritage, VU's members bring acapella (sic) expertise, moving enthusiasm, and good old fashioned charisma (sic) to every performance. The Vocal Union represents a kind of music that reaches people of all ages. Together with Vocal Union we want the lost to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ and the faithful to be uplifted in their walk with him. Go into all the world... Clinton church of Christ Youth." (Brent Evans — Associate Minister, Clinton church of Christ, 2601 Custer Ave. Clinton, Oklahoma).

If "years of singing, song writing, recording experience," an undefined "rich gospel heritage," "acappella expertise," "moving enthusiasm," and "good old fashioned charisma" will save souls, then one wonders where the Gospel of Christ fits in. Paul said God chose the foolishness of preaching to save men (1 Cor. 1:21), not the glitter and glitz of charismatic showbiz. God's power to save is in the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17), not in the Nashville "recording experi-

ence."

At the bottom of the flyer are listed 15 local businesses, above which is a line that says, "Sponsored by the following business owners and many other generous contributors from the Clinton church of Christ." This shameless recruiting of sponsorship from local businesses makes a beggar of the church and casts the bride of Christ into the same muck and mire as the Knights of Columbus' Casino Nights, Methodist Bazaars and Baptist car washes and carnivals.

The very idea that modern "Southern Gospel" music can save souls is Biblical ignorance at best and blasphemous at worst. The Lord's injunction to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15) is rejected by these religious vaudevillians who've changed it to read, "Go ye into all the world and sing and act and call it 'the Good News about Jesus Christ.'" There is not a breath of a hint of authority in all of the New Testament for the church to provide entertainment of this kind. If this concert is "worship" it's unauthorized worship and if it's entertainment, it's a transgression of God's law because the church was never authorized to entertain.

Elders, preachers and "youth ministers" seem to think they've discovered something new in drama and musical concerts. Calling them "out-reaches," they tell us they're just other ways to communicate the Gospel. But with theatre so widespread in the Roman Empire, one would think the apostles would have known of its value in communicating the "Good News of Jesus Christ...in song and praise."

The Clinton church cannot produce a single passage from the New Testament to justify this shameless corruption of the Lord's message, the worship of the Living God, and blood-bought church. If, like Ethel Merman, area brethren think "There's No Business Like Show Business," they "ain't heard nothin' yet" if this "holy burlesque" is a portent of things to come. With this event scheduled for the "Sunday Night Live Youth Series" rotated among western

Oklahoma churches, it's only a matter of time until area youth demand concerts at home so they can sit "down to eat and to drink," then rise up to play more often. "Brethren, the world is lost in sin and is steeped in the love of pleasure. The world cannot be saved by entertainment, by 'playing' them in. The world must be taught the Gospel (Romans 1:16). God has chosen the 'foolishness of preaching' as the means by which the world can be saved (1 Corinthians 1:21); he has not chosen 'plays' and other forms of entertainment to convert the world. Entertainment is not going to keep the church saved either. What is needed in the church is 'all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:27)... We need to stop 'playing' and return to 'preaching.'" (Lester Kamp, "And They Rose Up to Play," *Matters of The Faith*, Vol. 4, No. 3, October-December, 1998, p.3).

Drama and concerts are added elements to worship as surely as the mechanical musical instrument. They serve the self-interest of audience and participants, have no saving power, exalt the messenger instead of the message, take Christ from the cross and like the soldiers in Pilate's common hall (Matt. 27:27-30), treat him as a buffoon instead of the Lamb of God.

When the 12-year-old Jesus remained behind in the temple and was confronted by Joseph and Mary three days later, He asked them, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49)? The Father's business to which He referred wasn't show business and He certainly wasn't doing a song and dance routine for the doctors of the Law. This denominational show business foolishness is a radical, unwarranted, and sinful departure from the New Testament pattern. Clinton's elders need to repent and lead a return to the principles of the New Testament that made them Christ's church in the first place, or they need to take down their sign which reads "Church of Christ."

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I am a member of the Memorial Parkway congregation in Huntsville Alabama. I noticed on your website that the "Seek the Old Paths" publication is free upon request. I enjoy the website and often use articles from there to help me in my personal work and study" ...**Mike Crawford, Huntsville AL**. [Editor: There is no charge for the paper]. "I would

like to be placed on your mailing list for your monthly publication. I picked up a copy when I attended a Gospel meeting in Allenhurst, GA. It was a very enlightening publication. It is great to see congregations of the Lord's people working tirelessly to advance the Gospel. God bless you in all your efforts" ...**David Koeberlin, Richmond Hill, GA**. "I really liked the booklet *Seek the old Paths*. It is really good on telling it like it really is. Seems like old times when things were said like it really was. Thanks so much" ...**Name Withheld**. "I would like to thank you for putting out such an informative and helpful publication" ...**Jake Taft, Cordova, AL**. "I just want to thank you for your paper. It has helped me to understand the TRUTH more clearly. I am wondering if you send this material to churches who are in NEED of these truths. Our Congregation is undergoing a "liberal" approach by some of the younger folks. Is there any way that we could get a lot of copies of your magazine sent each month to our church. If so, how much would it cost? Please help if possible" ...**Name Withheld**. [Editor: there is no charge for the paper. Congregations can receive bundles in multiples of 10, 20, etc.]. "I greet you in the wonderful name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. I write to be included on your mailing list of *Seek the Old Paths*. It is quite educative" ...**Godfrey M. Simulubwa, Mkushi**. "Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the work being accomplished through the church at East Corinth via the monthly periodical and the lectureship. My only wish is that I could be there in person" ...**Michael Wilk, State College, PA**. "I am a subscriber to *Seek the Old Paths* and enjoy the publication very much" ...**Stewart Gillespie, Casa Grande, AZ**. "Please send me the book on the *Seek the Old Paths* lectureship. I am sure I will gain much knowledge from this book. May God continue to bless in this work. Thank you" ...**Georgia Dashner, Verona, MO**. "Please send me the *17th Annual Seek the Old Paths Lectureship* book, *Divine Authority (Leadership in the Church, Home, Government)*. Wish I could be there" ...**Thomas Holiday, Cherokee, AL**. "I enjoy reading *Seek the Old Paths*. Keep up the good work" ...**Winnie Hightower, Lindsay, OK**. "Keep up your wonderful *S.T.O.P.* paper" ...**James L. Shaver, Flint, MI**. "I very much appreciate your publication *Seek the Old Paths* and very much want to continue to receive it" ...**Bill Noblin, Hartville, MO**. "I really appreciated the invitation to speak on the lectureship this year. It was nice to see come brethren I had not seen in many years. As usual, the lectureship was outstanding. Please keep up the good work" ...**Douglas Hoff, Effingham, IL**. "Thanks for such a wonderful lectureship. I learned so much" ...**Marilyn Lawson, Taneyville, MO**. "We enjoy your paper so much. Please use the enclosed check to help with expenses in publishing *Seek the Old Paths*" ...**LuAnn Thompson, South Charleston, WV**. "I just wanted to drop a note and let you know that I really enjoyed the last issue of *S.T.O.P.* As so many have said we just must continue to do all that we can to stop the liberals and their false teaching. Today, too many people want their "ears tickled" by being told that everything is alright with them when in fact they are lost if they do not change" ...**Bobby Crowell, Amory, MS**. "Thanks so much for your publication of the East Corinth church of Christ. I have enjoyed reading it very much. But I would appreciate it if you would discontinue it" ...**Jerry Gooch, Mt. Juliet, TN**. "Please put me on the mailing list for *S.T.O.P.* Thank you" ...**Helen Hash, Lubbock, TX**. "Thank you very much for your stand for the truth. Please continue our subscription to *Seek the Old Paths*. Also, please add our son to the mailing list. He is away for college, and he would also like to receive *Seek the Old Paths*" ...**Steve Daugherty, Valdosta, GA**. "I wanted you to know how very much I enjoy and appreciate your *S.T.O.P.* paper. It is such a blessing, and so rewarding to know that there are still Christians who stand up for the truth and refute those that are in error of the truth. Thank you so very much for *S.T.O.P.* and may God continue to bless you in your work" ...**Gail Nelson, Elkins, WV**. "I enjoyed reading an article on "Battling Baptist Baptism" in your August 2002 issue that I received from a friend. I would like to be put on your mailing list. Thank you" ...**Wayne Kearley, Talladega, AL**. "Thank you for the most wonderful lectureship. Our thanks to all for the many thoughtful things you did for us and

our friend Helen Sloan. Pray for you and your good works there in Corinth" ...**Bob & Betty Lacy, Dunnellon, FL**. "I am found reading all the magazines mailed to me. I received it up to date of Aug. 02. Thank you, God bless you. It is always helpful. Please do not relent, keep up the good work" ...**Amos Ohisegun, Nigeria**. "We want to help in a small way to continue your stand for the truth. We picked up your publication at a Gospel meeting and have been receiving it ever since. Continue to uphold God's word" ...**M/M Floyd Roe, Cushing, OK**. "With this letter please receive a cordial greeting from your brother in the faith. I want to tell you that I received the bundle of *Seek the Old Paths* May and June issue package. Many thanks and may the Lord reward you for all you have done. Most of the church members now have a copy of their own and they are thankful so much for sending us such kind of sound and scriptural publication in the time of need to encourage every member in the truth. I would like to request you another great favour of remember us sending the 17th Annual Lectureship tapes and mailing 10 copies of *S.T.O.P.* regularly. It will greatly help us to stand firm in the truth. We wonder it very much that some members of the Lord's church are easily swift away by the liberalism doctrine. Books written by Rubel, Buddy and Cecil are freely distributed or sent freely by some missionaries to the church members in Manipur. Through their literature compromising campaign is very strong here in Manipur, Imphal. We are the only congregation who fought and stood fast to uphold the sound doctrine. Most of the congregations are influenced by this liberalism theory. There is a great delusion in the church and there was division in the church. We need a periodical in the local language to published such sound and biblical doctrines and teaching. Literature is one of the effective service spreading the Gospel. We need a local periodical to educate the public and encouraged the members in the truth. May God bless your ministry" ...**T. Ngulhopao, Manipur, India**. "Please send your bulletin *Seek the Old Paths*. Thanks for proclaiming the truth" ...**David Brink, Lake Worth, FL**.

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth 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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