

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 CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT A DENOMINATION

Chuck Northrop

When speaking of Christianity, many ask, "What denomination do you belong to?" How do you answer such a question? Do you simply say you are a member of the church of Christ? Or do you explain the church of the Bible was non-denominational and you are striving to simply follow the New Testament pattern? Or do you explain disunity and division was condemned in the New Testament? These and various other answers should depend upon who is asking the question, and why the inquiry is asked.

In answering the question, "Is the church of Christ a denomination," we must understand that God has a plan for unity. In the beautiful prayer of Jesus in John 17, Jesus prayed, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (v.11).

It was and is Jesus' desire that His followers (Christians) be one. Since He prayed for our unity, then Jesus must expect us to strive to be one, and since He expects us to be one, then we can be sure He provided a way for us to be one. That way is the New Testament of Jesus Christ! If every person who calls himself a Christian would put away his selfish pride and man-made doctrines and simply follow the New Testament pattern, all division would be eliminated. What causes division is not the Bible, but personal opinions and doctrines of men which are elevated above the Divine plan of God.

In this light, think about the words of Paul, the apostle. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Paul writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

Just two chapters later, Paul told the Corinthian Christians they were not spiritual, but carnal because of the division that existed within the church (3:1-3). Thus, true unity is a sign of being spiritually minded.

What do we mean by "true unity." True unity is not "union." Many within the religious world claim they are striving for unity but in reality they are striving for union. True unity is found in the exhortation of Paul as he writes to the church at Philippi: "Fill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). Notice the number of ways unity is emphasized: likeminded, same love, one accord, one mind. Unlike the unity demanded in the Scriptures, many religionists want to agree to disagree.

There is no likemindedness with-

in such an idea as this. "I will think as I want, and you think as you like, but we will agree anyway." There is not the same love for God, brethren, and the lost within this self-contradicting thought. Though there is a shadow of being of one accord, the reality of such is completely and totally absent. Amos' question is certainly fitting, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3)?

Paul outlines for us the Divine standard of unity. In Ephesians 4:4-6, we read, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Certainly these are not the only things that pertain to unity, but they are a good place to start.

The *one body* is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). How many churches are there? There is only one which belongs to Christ, though there are numerous churches which belong to men.

The *one Spirit* is the Holy Spirit who inspired holy men to write words by which we can be saved (II Peter 1:20,21; Acts 11:14).

The *one hope* is man's only true hope which is in Christ Jesus and which reaches beyond the grave (I Cor. 15:19).

The *one Lord* is Jesus, the Christ (Acts 2:36; 20:21; I Cor. 1:2).

The *one faith* is "the faith" (the

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Not A Denomination...



Editorial...

DENOMINATIONS ARE SINFUL #4

Garland M. Robinson

DENOMINATIONALISM IS SINFUL BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINE

The chart below is a brief contrast between denominationalism and undenominational Christianity — the church of Christ.

DENOMINATIONALISM

- Many bodies or churches
- Founded by men
- Human heads
- Human creeds
- Wear human names
- Follow men
- Membership in denominations not necessary
- Preach many gospels
- Rewrite creeds every few years
- Many faiths
- Many baptisms
- Join churches
- Abiding in the branches of denominations
- Walk by different rules
- Thank God in prayers for so many churches

CHURCH OF CHRIST

- One body, One church (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:20)
- Founded by Christ (Matt. 16:18)
- Christ the head (Eph. 1: 22-23)
- Bible as the only creed (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3)
- Wear the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:16)
- Following men is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10-13)
- Membership in Christ's church is essential (Eph. 5:23)
- One gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)
- Bible remains the same (Matt. 24:35)
- "One faith" (Eph. 4:5)
- "One baptism" (Eph. 4:5)
- Lord adds to the church (Acts 2:47)
- Abiding in Christ the true vine (John 15:1-6)
- Walk by the same rule (Phil. 3:6)
- Christ prayed for oneness (John 17:20-21)

People who sit at the feet of denominational preachers are told to "receive Christ as their personal Savior" or pray "the sinner's prayer" in order to be saved. But the Bible says those who receive Christ are not sons of God, but are given the power TO BECOME sons of God (John 1:12). Man is saved from sins ONLY when he **BELIEVES** in Jesus (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), **REPENTS** of his sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), **CONFESSES** Christ before men (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10), and is **BAPTIZED** in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). This is the ONLY plan taught in the Bible by which one is saved from past sins.

DENOMINATIONALISM IS SINFUL BECAUSE IT DIVIDES THE HOME

God made Adam and Eve in the beginning. He made them to be husband and wife. He decreed the home

as a divine institution. It has continued to be such throughout history regardless of what man believes. There have been those who have sought to destroy the home, even as there are those today who seek to do so. They will fail because God designed the home and family.

Jesus said that *"...he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."*

Denominationalism divides the home and family. So often husbands and wives are divided religiously. The husband goes one way and the wife goes another. There should never be division over service to Christ. There ought to be peace and harmony in

the home. God instituted the home and it is not to be divided. Woe to the individual(s) who divides the family.

DENOMINATIONALISM IS SINFUL BECAUSE IT CAUSES SOULS TO BE LOST

Jesus Christ is the savior. He calls all men to come unto Him. Since he is Deity, He is one in purpose and goal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He is in harmony and unity with the godhead. There is perfect unity between them. Denominationalism on the other hand is constant division. That is its very nature. It contradicts everything Jesus is, contends for and stands against.

Jesus calls men together, denominationalism divides them.

Jesus calls for men to come unto Him while denominationalism calls for them to depart from Him.

Jesus calls men to the "one body" and denominationalism calls them to "many bodies."

Jesus calls men to the "one Spirit" and denominationalism calls them to "many spirits."

Jesus calls men to the "one hope" and denominationalism calls them to "many hopes."

Jesus calls men to the "one Lord" and denominationalism calls them to "many lords."

Jesus calls men to the "one faith" and denominationalism calls them to "many faiths."

Jesus calls men to the "one baptism" and denominationalism calls them to "many baptisms."

Jesus calls men to the "one God" and denominationalism calls them to "many gods."

DENOMINATIONALISM IS SINFUL BECAUSE IT'S CONTRARY TO THE PROMISE OF CHRIST

Jesus promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). He did not say He would build "churches" — plural. He did not say I will make it so men will have a choice. Denominationalism does that, but Jesus does not do it.

Jesus promised to bring unity (cf. John 17:20). Denominationalism brings division.

Jesus promised to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

Denominationalism promises, but cannot fulfill.

CONCLUSION

Why not submit to the authority of Christ? Why be a part of something you cannot read about in the New Testament? Why follow after men instead of God?

In that last great day, the day of judgment, don't you want to hear the Lord say, "...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The only way we will be able to hear those words is to obey the Lord NOW. Are you ready?

Part 4 of 4

Not A Denomination...

(Continued from page 49)

system of faith) taught within the New Testament (Rom. 10:17; Jude 3).

The *one God* is God, the Father (I Peter 1:3; II John 1:3; Jude 1:1).

Besides the outline of the Divine standard of unity, when Jesus prayed, He disclosed the standard of unity. Jesus prayed, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). The standard of unity is the Bible — God's Word. Those who have the courage to allow God to set them apart from the world by keeping His word, will enjoy true unity with God, His Son, His Spirit, and His children in the heavenly abode.

Thus, we call all men to the Bible. Read it, study it, and accept it for it alone can bring us to Jesus, "*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:9).

Because the religious world views the varying kinds of churches as a part of the whole, it is not surprising the sectarian world views the church of Christ as a denomination. However, it is truly sad that many within the church of our Lord are asking, "*Is the church of Christ a denomination?*" Before one can answer this question, there are several preliminaries that must be considered.

First, some terms must be defined. What do the terms denomination, nondenominational, undenominational, and interdenominational mean?

The term "denomination" means

a part of the whole. A one dollar bill is a denomination of money. It is one denomination as is a five, ten, or twenty dollar bill. Each are a part of the whole money system of the United States. To nearly all religionists, various denominations such as Baptist, Lutheran, or Methodist are a part of the universal church of Christ. In their minds, all are Christians striving for heaven by different routes.

The term "nondenominational" means not a denomination. The prefix "non" means not. Thus, when a church is nondenominational, it is not a denomination.

The term "undenominational" is very similar in meaning to nondenominational. The prefix "un" means the opposite of or reverse of. Therefore, when a church is undenominational, it is the opposite of a denomination.

Finally, the term "interdenominational" carries the idea of accepting all denominations. In actuality, many denominational groups use the term nondenominational when they actually mean interdenominational.

Second, the term "church of Christ" must be considered. Several religious groups use this as a name. In many other countries, the Mormons are known as the Church of Christ. In Independence, Missouri, where the "temple lot" is located, the Temple Lot segment of the Latter Day Saints are known as the "Temple Lot Church of Christ." Also, in some locations, the Independent Christian Church carries the name Church of Christ. Further, the churches associated with the Boston Movement are known as the International Churches of Christ. In addition, in the 1960s, five denominations joined together to form the United Church of Christ. Finally, of course, there is the group with which many of us who are reading this are associated.

Third, we must consider what we are speaking about. When we use the term "church of Christ," are we talking about the Mormons, the Christian church, the International Church of Christ cult, or the far-liberal United Church of Christ? Are we speaking about a group of people who are a part of "Christendom"? Or, are we speaking about the church of which we read about in the Bible?

When I write these lines, I am

speaking about the church of the Bible which existed before a single denomination. It is the church that was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world and was prophesied in the Old Testament. It is the church which was established upon the preaching of the apostles in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 2). It is the church which was planted first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This church was planted in the cities of Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus as well as many other cities and regions of the ancient world. She is known by such designations as the church of Christ, the bride of Christ, and the kingdom of Christ. She was prophesied by great prophets such as Daniel, Isaiah, Micah, John the baptizer, and the greatest prophet of all — Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as we prepare to go into all the world to teach all nations concerning Christ and the church, the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12), let us be sure we understand the church of which we read in the Bible was not a denomination.

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BOLDLY PROCLAIMING THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Marvin L. Weir

One can only weep as he contemplates the answer that many preachers and elders today would give if told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

The absence of boldness in those who profess to be children of God has caused the Lord's church much misery. Boldness is a characteristic sorely needed by those overseeing the Lord's church and those who are preaching and teaching God's Word. Without boldness the apostles would have never accomplished the task assigned to them. They were charged to not speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). Peter and John did not have to think the matter over or consult with their families. The quick answer of these two men of God was bold and decisive. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). One can only weep as he contemplates the answer that many preachers and elders today would give if told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

The apostle Paul fervently prayed that he might open his mouth "to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" and that even though a prisoner he might speak boldly as he ought to speak (Eph. 6:19-20). Doubt and confusion is not the message that is revealed in Holy Writ (Heb. 11:6; I Cor. 14:33). Paul unmistakably states, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

First, *one must speak confidently and boldly regarding the Creator of this universe.* Genesis 1:1 states both truth and fact and will be accepted by one who truly believes. Herbert Spencer introduced five facts of science in the 1800s that are found in the first verse of God's Word. "In the beginning [time] God [force] created [action] the heaven [space] and the

earth [matter]" (Gen. 1:1). We do not need preachers and teachers today who have only a vague idea of what God meant in His revelation. Instead of creating doubt and uncertainty in the minds of people, God's glorious truth needs to be stressed and His unchangeable characteristics emphasized (cf. John 17:17; Rom. 3:4; Mal. 3:6).

Second, *one must boldly proclaim the Gospel plan of salvation.* The Savior promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18) and He did so, purchasing it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Thus, Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18) and the right to set forth the terms of salvation (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). The one and only Gospel must be preached in its purity (Gal. 1:6-9) for it is the only power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). One who believes what Christ has said will repent of his sins (Luke 13:3), make the good confession (Rom. 10:9-10), and be immersed for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). The Lord adds those who genuinely obey the Gospel to His church (Acts 2:41,47).

The Lord and not man has the right to locate salvation, and He stipulates that it is located in Him (II Tim. 2:10). We must then boldly affirm that salvation is to be found only in Christ Jesus, and one is only in Christ if he has obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation.

Third, *one must speak boldly about the Lord's church.* Instead of apologizing for the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), Christians need to stress that it is the only church that has the right to exist. The phrase "church of Christ" shows ownership and is not used as a proper name or as a man-made denomination.

Those who truly believe God's

Word will boldly declare the differences between the Lord's church and the man-made churches that have no God-given right to exist. One will not be embarrassed that there is only one church authorized by God (Eph. 4:4). Christ wanted it to be understood that He was the head of His church that is said to be His body (Eph. 1:22-23). He promises to save only His body — the church (Eph. 5:23)! It then behooves people of the age of accountability to make sure they are members of the Lord's church. Will those who defend man-made denominations wearing names honoring some man or woman be willing to inscribe on their building "this is not a church of Christ?" Can one not see there is indeed something in a name?

Fourth, *a Bible believer will boldly state that God's grace will not save one in his sins.* Some folks who are living in sin and refuse to repent will say, "I'll just continue to live like I'm living and take my chances." Others say, "I'll just do the best I can under the circumstances, and if God wants to send me to Hell, He will just have to do so."

Friends, God will keep His Word! It is not His fault that people refuse to repent of their sins and continue to cling to that which is sinful! It is, however, repent or perish (Luke 13:3). God's wonderful grace is reserved for those who have hearts pricked by the Gospel and will turn from their sins. The grace of God is not to be abused (Rom. 6:1).

May we boldly stand firm for the cause of Christ!

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “PROVE ALL THINGS?”

Roger D. Campbell

The familiar message of 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22 is composed of three instructions for all Christians: 1) “Prove all things,” 2) “Hold fast that which is good,” 3) “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” Which of these three commands would you think is important for God’s children to heed? That is correct: each of them is essential.

In the expression “Prove all things,” what does the word “prove” mean? It means to put to the test. The same Greek word from which “prove” is translated in this text is found in Luke 14:19, where we read that a man said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to *prove* them.” We find the same word in 1 John 4:1 where it is written that Christians are to “*try* the spirits whether they are of God” [all emphasis mine, rdc]. Again, this “proving” points to the idea of putting things or beings to a test.

In the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, what would be included in the “all things” that are to be proven? In verse 18 “the will of God” is mentioned, in verse 19 the message is, “Quench not the Spirit,” and verse 20 is, “Despise not prophesyings.” So, when it came to the will of God and claims to be led by the Spirit or speak prophetic utterances, the early saints were to “prove all things.” Claims of miraculous power were just that — claims. Was there proof in the form of signs to substantiate the claims (Mark 16:19,20)?

What about today? Just as God said they would, true prophecies and all other miraculous manifestations

of the Spirit came to an end after the complete revelation of God’s truth to mankind (I Cor. 13:8-10). When a modern-day person or group claims to possess miraculous powers, we put their statements to a test by examining the Bible’s message and pointing out the falsehoods of Pentecostal fantasies. In fact, any time a person teaches a religious message, we need to turn to the Book and test/try the spirits to see if they harmonize with the genuine will of God recorded in the New Testament (I John 4:1).

Let us look further. “Hold fast that which is good.” This reminds us of the exhortation to “cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). To hold fast or cleave indicates that we grab on to it and do not let go! Again, to what are we to hold fast? Answer: “that which is good.” Well, everybody’s got their own opinion about what “good” means, right? That may be true, but the only One whose assessment of “good” counts is God’s! It is to God’s standard of good that we must hold fast. Just as God told the Israelites to do that which was right and good in His sight (Deut. 6:18), so Christians must turn to the Lord’s true doctrine to find God’s standard of good. In order for you and me to hold fast to that which is good, we must (1) Have an adequate knowledge of God’s word, (2) Make a decision/commitment to do what we know is right, and (3) Have the courage to carry out the right action. And, what is the right action? Answer: doing that which is pleasing in the sight of God.

There is then the third instruction of our text: “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” The word “appearance” means “form,” so we are to stay away from all types of evil. Again, it is God that determines what is evil. It is just as wrong to call something that is permissible “evil” as it is to label a sinful activity as “good.” In Isaiah’s day, God pronounced a “woe” on those that confused good and evil (Isa. 5:20).

Since sin is the only thing that can separate any of us from God and keep us out of heaven (Isa. 59:2), does it not make sense for us to strive to stay as far away from evil activities as possible? The Lord calls on us to “abstain from fleshly lusts” (1 Peter 2:11), “depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19), and lay aside the sin that easily besets us (Heb. 12:1).

Participating in that which God labels as evil is no joking matter. Sin is destructive from beginning to end. Surely we are wise enough to accept the truth that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Proving all things, holding fast to that which is good, and abstaining from all forms of evil — these are all excellent practices. We know that is an accurate conclusion because God is the One that gave us such instructions. He knows what He is talking about. May we have the courage to humble ourselves before the Lord and devote our hearts to living for Him.

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“BY THE TRICKERY OF MEN”

James E. Farley

The apostle Paul issues a warning to the Lord’s church at Ephesus concerning the danger of immaturity in the Christian faith resulting in their being “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Eph. 4:14). The New King James Version has this verse, “...no longer be

children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by *the trickery of men*, in cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...”

The Lord expects us to GROW (Eph. 5:15; Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). The religion of the Lord is a living one, and any living thing that

is not growing is either dead or dying. It is true that we have to die to become a Christian... die to sin... crucify the old man... but Christ must LIVE in us by faith as we rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 2:20). As we walk this new life in Christ we must renew our minds daily through study

and use of the Word of righteousness, and in this way only can we discern good from evil — right from wrong (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 John 1:5-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:13-14). The New Testament is where God has revealed His righteousness; where we are taught or instructed about how to live righteously (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). We must use the Bible to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11).

The devil, our adversary, does not want us knowledgeable. He does not want us to grow in knowledge and grace, for his two main tools are 'ignorance' and 'lies.' It is easy to lie to ignorant folks! Satan cares not that a person, or a group of people, are zealous, just as long as they are ignorant of God's right ways (Rom. 10:1-3). The father of lies and liars (John 8:44) has little trouble convincing ignorant people of his false ways, for if a person does not know the Truth (John 8:31-32), how will they be able to judge whether a doctrine or practice is right or wrong? Yes indeed, it is easy to lie to ignorant folks!

God has placed the treasure of the Gospel in earthen vessels (human beings), and he has therefore given the commission to preach the good news to men and not to spiritual beings (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:26,29; 9:6,10-17; 10:1-6). So too, Satan uses men to carry on his deceptive work. He has ministers and they, like him, are very active in carrying out their father's bidding, deceiving and being deceived (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Tim. 3:13).

These troublers pervert the Gospel of Christ, and lead men and women into a snare to become captives of the devil (Gal. 1:6-10; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; 3:5-9). Keep in mind that they do this with deception and trickery. They appear to be "ministers of righteousness," but instead, they are wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Cor. 11:15).

We know that Satan is active and very successful among and through the denominational churches, and for years we have prepared ourselves to fight "against the wiles of the devil" on that front (Eph. 6:10-20). However, when those from among our own numbers turn out to be his deceitful disciples, it delivers a blow that is staggering indeed. This is especially true when we have come to love and trust the one who turns out to be a heretic (Titus 3:10-11).

Paul wrote of some "false brethren" who came in "privily" (Gal. 2:4). These kinds Jude says, "crept in unawares" (Jude 4). You see, they sneak in, for they are of their father, the devil. They "lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). They are ambushers, using lies and hypocrisy as their camouflage. They are ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15-20; Acts 20:27-32). Think for a minute about that picture. Think what one lone wolf could do to a flock of innocent, unsuspecting sheep! Think of the carnage! Obviously the Lord wants us aware of this great danger, and He wants us to prepare to meet them and stop their pernicious ways! Therefore we must try the spirits to see whether they are of God, and if they do not have the doctrine of

Christ, they must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 2:2). Furthermore, when one of these heretics is uncovered and warned twice, he must be rejected. Notice the urgency in Titus 3:10-11. If a wolf is loose in the flock, we do not use tolerance and patience with him. We do what we can quickly to rid the flock of this pressing danger.

Brethren, may God help us to be loving in all we do for Him (Eph. 4:15). We must love Him first and foremost with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (Mark 12:30). We must love Jesus who is the Christ; the one who bled and died for us (I John 4:19). If we truly love Him, we will obey Him (John 14:15). We must love the church of Christ, purchased with the precious blood of the Lamb (Titus 3:15; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 1 John 3:14-16; 5:1-3). Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). We must love the Word of God that directs us as a lamp in this dark world of sin and error (Psalm 119:97, 104-105, 127). And, we must love the souls of men and women even to the point of warning them of these kinds of dangers. Paul loved, and he warned of the dangers of wolves within (Acts 20:28-32). We must strike a balance here. We do not want to develop paranoia in our churches, but we must do a better job instructing our members to be better watchmen for the Cause for which our Lord gave Himself.

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WHAT IS YOUR RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING BIBLE SCHOOL?

Virgil L. Hale

Do you recommend Bible school by setting an example of faithful attendance, or do you just recommend it in word only?

It has always been true (at least in places where I have been) that some just will not attend Bible school. There is always a difference in Bible school attendance and the attendance for worship. Unless there

is an unavoidable cause which prohibits someone from being present for Bible school, there is no possible reason why there should be such a variance in the attendance. Here are some questions that need to be considered, and considered honestly and seriously.

1. Would you recommend to a new convert that he attend Bible

school?

2. Would you recommend to an erring Christian who has just returned to the church that he attend Bible school?

3. Would you recommend to your children that they attend Bible school?

4. Would you recommend one to serve as an elder in the Lord's church

who seldom, if ever, attends Bible school?

5. If Bible school is good for new converts and for restored Christians. If it is good for your children and for men who are considered for elders. Is it not good for you?

6. If Bible school is not good for you, are you in favor of stopping it? If you don't feel that you need it, why should others? Do you feel that you are superior to the average member?

7. If Bible school is good for you, do you recommend that other Christians quit urging you to attend, or that they continue to encourage you to be present?

8. Do you recommend Bible

school by setting an example of faithful attendance, or do you just recommend it in word only?

The answer to these questions could be most enlightening. If you are not presently attending Bible school, why not? Not only will it help to increase your knowledge of the Bible, but it will be a good influence on someone else. It is one thing to talk about spiritual matters, but it is altogether something else to put talk into action. As the old saying goes, "actions speak louder than words." When we decide to put the Lord and His Cause first in our lives, we cannot help but be a good example to others. Rest assured you are either a

good or bad example to others. Influence is something that we automatically have — we do not have to intentionally try to have influence. What kind of influence have you been exerting in regard to Bible school attendance? Think about it!

Someone has said, "The true mark of success is to be able to recommend your way of life to your son." Far too many parents have this philosophy: "Don't do as I do; do as I say." This is not just limited to parents. Far too often we see Christians say the same things — if not by word of mouth, by their actions.

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ARE WE LIKE THE JEWS?

A charge being made against many of God's faithful people today is that we are "Pharisees", meaning we are like the hypocritical and tradition-bound Jewish leaders of Christ's day. Are we like those Jews? I categorically deny that adhering to the tenants of the law of Christ, and standing against false doctrine is "Phariseism."

On the other hand, are we in some ways like the Jewish leaders of Christ's day? In some ways we probably are. If some of us are guilty, then we need to recognize the problem and fix it so the charges are no longer true.

Many Jews in Christ's day were arrogant about their salvation. Most thought they were saved simply because they were "sons of Abraham." When Jesus tried to teach them about their bondage to sin (John 8:32-39), they misunderstood and remarked, "...We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free" (John 8:33)?

How might we be like these arrogant Jews? Many of the Jews thought they were saved by bloodline. Do we think we are saved for similar reasons? Some third-generation Christians seem to think they are saved because their parents and grandparents were saved. They have missed the fact that no one is saved by the goodness of his/her parents or grandparents. Notice God's instructions in Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it

shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." No one is saved because their parents were devout, hard working Christians.

The Jews had developed a very arrogant attitude toward the Gentiles, believing they were better because they were children of God. This caused Paul to say in Romans 3:9, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Some Christians today wear their salvation like a "badge" as if it makes them better than everyone else. This kind of Christian looks down on those of the world. They constantly judge and ridicule the neighbor for his ungodly acts, but they have never gone to that neighbor to see if he would be receptive to Bible study. This kind of attitude is foreign to scripture. In fact, Paul says we are to have the very opposite attitude about ourselves and others, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). Jesus said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). A Christian should remember that the only difference between himself and his lost

neighbor is that he as a Christian has taken advantage of the saving power of the blood of Jesus and is striving to overcome his sins.

The Jew seemed to have the idea that salvation was only for them. Some Christians today wear their salvation like a "chip on their shoulder" implying, "I've got it, and you can't have it." They forget that salvation is for ALL men, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

When we become a child of God we accept the responsibility to teach others, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20).

God forbid that we should really be like the Pharisees in Jesus' day. If we are, then pray to God to help us repent so that the charges are no longer valid. We need to change so that no one can use us to propagate false doctrine.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

enjoyed receiving your publication. We appreciate all the good you do by spreading the gospel. We would like to devote more of our time to studying the Bible and feel we are not doing justice to your material. We also want to make sure the Lord's money you collect is being put to the best use. Mailing and paper costs are constantly increasing and we don't want to be guilty of not reading and studying your publication as often as you intend. Please remove our names from your mailing list so that you can send the copies we would have received to other Christians in various locations. We wish your congregation well and encourage you to keep up the good works you do in spreading the gospel. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ and also pray for our great country in such troubling times. May God continue to bless you all" **...Jimmy & Nancy Alsop, Pulaski, TN.** "Would you please send a copy of the monthly publication of *Seek The Old Paths* to my friend? She would love to receive this paper. She is a member of the church. Thank you very much" **...Judy Miller, Doniphan, MO.** "I am a resident of the county jail. I was raised in the church all my life and my dad served 20 honorable years as an elder. Obviously, I have made some mistakes in my life but I am closer to God now than I've been in the past 30 years. My dad and mom send me several bulletins and publications to study while here and I usually put the articles into outline format then pass them on to other inmates here. Dad sent me a March 2008 issue of STOP and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it today. I was wondering if you could please send me any other back issues you may have. Thank you in advance and please look for further support from my family and I when I get out of here! Also, if you print this letter please just omit my name" **...MS. THE GOSPEL TRADE-MARK** — A trademark is used by manufacturers to distinguish their product from others. The Gospel is produced by God and is stamped with His trademark. The trademark of the gospel is Inspiration. The Gospel was revealed, inspired and confirmed as true by the Holy Spirit. No other book can rightly claim such inspiration. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit insured the accuracy and reliability of the scriptures. That makes it a definite and accurate standard. Each Denomination also has its trademark. Its trademark is its particular teaching that identifies it and distinguishes it from others and from the church for which Christ died. Christ's church also has its trademark. Its trademark is the doctrine of the apostles without deviation (Acts 2:42). It is the deviation from the apostle's doctrine that produces Denominations. Have you looked at the trademark of your church? Does it deviate from the apostle's doctrine, failing to teach all that the Gospel says, adding to it, taking from it, changing it and making God's word contradict?" **...Ed Allard, Jr., Mansfield, GA.** "To help with the expense. Thank you" **...Name Withheld, Harrisburg, AR.** "I still so enjoy STOP and when I finish reading every word, I pass it on for someone else to enjoy. I especially like to give it to a non-Christian so they can read the truth about God and his church in hopes it will lead them to Christ. At this time, I would like to receive five copies of the February 2009 issue and ten copies of the March 2009 issue. I am enclosing a small donation to help cover postage. Keep the excellent work coming. God bless you for all you do to get God's word out. Please withhold my name. Thank you" **...Name withheld,**

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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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