

Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 14, No. 8

August 2003

THE CURRENT APOSTASY

Leon Cole

Simply stated, an apostasy is an abandonment of things once believed. It is also termed "a departure from the faith" (Vines). It involves the rejection of truth and embracing the teachings of Satan and his hellish host.

There are frequent prophecies of such departure in the New Testament. *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim. 4:1). *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine"* (2 Tim. 4:3a). The situation is vividly described in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 where it is stated, *"because they received not a love for the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believe not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

Apostasy occurs in the ranks of believers for one cannot fall from a place or position where he has never been. It comes forth from congregations who claim Jesus Christ as Lord. In the midst of professed believers, God's truth is flung to the ground, belittled, ridiculed and ignored.

Students of church history can pinpoint the departures that virtually obliterated the Bride of Christ for centuries. We are familiar with the struggles of the reformers and the fervent desire to eliminate the buildup of centuries of error. Then there was the refreshing cry not to

reform a corrupt institution but to restore the church as it was in the New Testament. How thrilling is the plea to be simply Christians as they were in the New Testament and worship as they did!

Literally thousands embraced this desire. "No book but the Bible, no creed but the Christ, speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent," became the watchword. And the church grew as it did in the first century because the same things they preached and practiced were again preached and practiced. But the old temptation to "be like the nations round about" reared its head again in God's spiritual Israel. Corruption of worship and corruption of God's pattern for evangelism began to develop. Apostasy became a reality.

Faithful brethren had to begin again to "rebuild the walls." The faithful remnant put their hands to the Gospel plow and seed falling on good and honest hearts had the desired effect.

Now, to use the old cliché, history is once again repeating itself. As was true of the initial apostasy, the time has come when believers will not endure sound doctrine. Instead, *"after their own lusts they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."* They "turn away their ears from the truth and are turned unto fables." In many circles, truth is considered irrelevant, divisive, cultish or just a matter of opinion. Many preachers deliver their weekly sermons with scarcely a mention of the

Word. In its place, jokes, fables and death bed stories are inserted.

As the "famine in hearing the word of the Lord" has intensified, there is seldom ever even a proclamation of the plan of salvation. There are now places where one claiming to be a Gospel preacher can close his sermon by inviting those who need to do so "to pray the sinner's prayer" and hardly an eyebrow be lifted, let alone a voice of protest. It is reasoned that we are all sinners saved by grace and there is now no need to emphasize the need to do the will of the Lord. It ought to be apparent to those who claim to be of Christ that once they refuse to obey the Lord and do his will, they have begun that fateful fall from the ranks of true believers. *"Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21).

For the last several decades there has been a gradual and persistent move away from the time-honored belief in the infallibility of the Bible. An evidence of this is the multiplicity of versions now available. Reliable versions like the King James is generally scorned as being archaic and difficult, being a relic of no longer used English. The truth is the new versions are watered down perversions not worthy of serious study or research and simply indicate the decadence that has pervaded

(Continued on page 63)

The Current Apostasy...



Editorial...

DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORKS #2

Though many ignore the book of James and some even deny its inspiration, what James says about the works of God (the works God commands us to do) rings loud and clear.

All that I have heard in the last few years about “works” is that they “will not” and “can not” save. From the pulpit, television, radio and printed page, many are brave to claim that works have nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. Whenever they come to the word “works” in the New Testament, they automatically include any and all works of any kind. However, there are at least six different classes or kinds of works mentioned in the New Testament. We would do well to learn something about each one and then seek to understand them in their context because each one is different.

There are **WORKS OF THE FLESH**. In Galatians 5:19-21 we read, “Now the **works of the flesh** are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The word “flesh” indicates that “associated with, or pertaining to the flesh, carnal.” These works are one’s deeds which originate from the desires that are solely of the flesh. One’s actions serve to satisfy their desires. Therefore, they are called “works of the flesh.” These works prevent one from entering the kingdom of heaven. So long as one continues in them he is unrepentant and can’t obey the Gospel. If, after obeying the Gospel, one falls back into such, he cannot receive the blessings of the kingdom of God.

The very nature of the works of

the flesh oppose the works of the kingdom. But the works mentioned in verses 22-26 of Galatians 5 are those which benefit the servant of the Lord and promote the Lord’s church. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*”

There are **WORKS OF THE DEVIL** or **WORKS OF DARKNESS**. In 1 John 3:8 we read, “*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*” Romans 13:12 says, “*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*”

The works of the devil are works that originated with Satan but are engaged in by man. Christians must not only refuse to participate in them but must reprove such works. “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11).

There are **WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** or **MORAL GOODNESS**. We read about such in Titus 3:5. “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” “*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil*” (Rom. 13:3). The world recognizes these as worthwhile. Such works

may result in helping others or in one’s personal morality, but they have no power to save one from their sins. Good works are performed by saints after they become Christians.

There are **WORKS OF THE LAW OF MOSES**. “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:20). The Law of Moses was not designed to save from sin. Its purpose was to identify and condemn sin for what it is. It was to show the blackness and guilt of sin. It brought man to the realization of his utter inability to follow a set of rules wherein he could justify himself.

The Scriptures make clear that the law of Moses could not save and that Jesus’ death on the cross took that law (works) away. Notice these verses: “*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions... Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*” (Gal. 5:19,24-25). Since Jesus died on the cross, men are no longer subject to the law of Moses (Rom. 7:1-5). Jesus died, “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*” (Col. 2:14). He died that the law might be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17-18).

There are **WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS INTRODUCED BY MAN**. **Romans 10:1-3**, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*”

These works may be described as works designed by man to draw men closer to God. Many such works became traditions and more often than not, replaced the Laws of God. In many respects, they became more important to the Jews than obeying God’s commands. They were thought of as bringing salvation to those who worked them. According to many scribes and Pharisees, it was worse to break one of these commands than it was to break a law of God. We see an

example of this in Mark 7:8 when Jesus said, “*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.*” Some of their traditions did nothing more than circumvent the law of Moses. When they refused to help their needy parents by obeying one of their traditions, Jesus said they made the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7:13).

Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees would bind heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders but not lift one finger to help them. They were hypocrites for they would say and do not (Matt. 23:1-4).

There are **WORKS OF GOD**. These are works God commands all men everywhere to do. They are the “works of God” as mentioned in John 6:28-29. They are sometimes called “works of faith” (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11). We often refer to them today as “works of obedience.”

When men perform the work God commands them to do, he has nothing to brag of, he has only done that which was his duty to do (Luke 17:10). What counts with God is “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Jesus said those approved of God are those who do “the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

Peter preached on Pentecost for men to “save themselves” by obeying God’s “works” (Acts 2:40). If it is the case, as many teach, that man has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation, then Peter misinformed thousands on the day of Pentecost and led them astray. But, Peter spoke by inspiration and his words recorded in this passage are accurate and true. All men will be judged by them.

Those who obey God are greatly blessed. “*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city*” (Rev. 22:14). Paul told the brethren at Philippi to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12). To humbly submit our will to the will of God and perform that which he has commanded us, is to “work the works of God” (John 6:29).

Though many ignore the book of James and some even deny its inspiration, what James says about the works of God (the works God com-

mands us to do) rings loud and clear. “*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?** Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how **faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?** And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified, and not by faith only**” (James 2:19-24).*

The only way Christians will stand approved in God’s sight come

judgment day is by continuing “*steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58).

It ought to be obvious that five of these six classes of works have nothing to do with salvation. However, to think that complying with the works God originated and commands men to do have nothing to do with salvation, is not according to the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, it is contrary to the Scriptures.

In the next issue, we’ll explore the “works of God” and show that obeying these works “from the heart” is an essential part of our salvation.

2nd of 3 parts

ATTENTION — WE ARE MOVING!

According to statistics, many Americans move quite frequently. I know that is the case with many on the mailing list of “Seek The Old Paths.” Preachers move quite often and that has now become true in my case.

I am moving to McMinnville, Tennessee, and will be working with the East End church of Christ. Even though it will be a little while before we actually move, all correspondence needs to be sent there effective immediately. The address is:

102 EDISON ST., MCMINNVILLE, TN 37110.

All contributions toward the paper need to be made out to “Seek The Old Paths” and mailed to the East End church in McMinnville. Put on the envelope, att: STOP. As always, there will be a full accounting of all funds contributed to this worthy work.

The church at East End has enjoyed many good years as a sound and faithful congregation. It is overseen by four faithful elders and they enthusiastically look forward to adding “Seek The Old Paths” to their many good works.

This move presents my family with new opportunities and challenges. This will also move us closer to aging parents where we’ll be able to help as we’re needed. We will be leaving behind so many friends and dear brethren in Corinth and especially at the East Corinth congregation. These brethren have been essential in helping to do all the “behind the scenes” things necessary in getting the paper out each month.

I assure you that nothing will change about “Seek The Old Paths” except the mailing address. I sincerely appreciate all the kind words of encouragement and the many contributions. Without you, this work would not be possible.

Editor, Garland M. Robinson

PRAISING AND FELLOWSHIPING THE WICKED

James E. Farley

“They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28:4).

We are commanded to “...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). However, more and more we are seeing members of the churches of Christ fellowshiping, encouraging, and even praising those in the denominations. If darkness is the opposite of light, and the light we have to guide us in this dark world of error and sin is the verbally inspired Word of God (Psalm 119:104-105), then denominationalism is the darkest form of darkness. Denominationalism is absolutely contrary to the Word of God (the light) and is certainly darkness (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

I must admit that it is staggering to me when I hear about congregations inviting a denominational preacher to speak on a program. It amazes me to hear about “our schools” having “specialists” from among the denominational ranks come in to teach on special workshops. “Oh,” they will say, “We’re not endorsing their error, but these men (and women) have something to say, and their expertise will be helpful to those we are training in these fields (i.e. youth ministry, etc.)” These want to “associate” with the denominationalists and use them in their programs, while saying “We are not fellowshiping them, we are not endorsing their error, but we can still use them to the glory of God.”

There was a king of Judah named Amaziah, who, when he came to the throne of Judah, determined that he would go to war against the Edomites. He surveyed and inventoried his men of war and found that he had “...three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield” (2 Chron. 25:1-5). However, Amaziah seemed to think this was not enough, so “He hired an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver” (v.6). This is during the time of the “divided kingdom” with “Israel” in the north and “Judah” in the south. The kingdom split years before when Jeroboam, the

son of Nebat, led the ten northern tribes into rebellion against God! Jeroboam set up a different worship, established a new priesthood not from the tribe of Levi, made new feasts that were “...like unto the feast that is in Judah”, and he himself offered sacrifices upon the altar at Bethel! These things were certainly not ordained by God, but Jeroboam devised these things “of his own heart” (1 Kings 12:25-33). This was sinful for it was contrary to God’s revealed law (1 John 3:4; 1 Kings 12:30). This sin certainly separated these ten tribes from God, for that is precisely what sin does, separates (Isa. 59:1-2). Sin brings death, always has, always will! (Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 6:23; Prov. 14:12). And, death simply means “separation.” When men are in sin, they are separated from God — they do not have God (cf. 2 John 9). Jeroboam’s actions “became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth” (1 Kings 13:34).

Romans 15:4 says these things which were “written aforetime were written for our learning.” We can learn something from Jeroboam’s actions. We learn that manmade religion divides people from God. If we are to have fellowship with He who is light, we must walk in His light (1 John 1:5-7). If we are to be “disciples indeed” we must continue in the Word (John 8:31-32). This principle has always been true and is true even today.

In 2 Chronicles 25 we learn of Amaziah hiring mercenaries from Israel for “an hundred talents of silver. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with the children of Ephraim” (2 Chron. 25:7). Why was it that God was not with Israel? It was because of “the sin of Jeroboam” who “caused Israel to sin.” Over and over again, from 1 Kings chapter twelve forward in the Old Testament, we read of “the sin of Jeroboam” (cf. 1 Kings 13:34; 14:16; 15:30, 34; 16:2; 2 Kings 3:3; 9:9; 10:29,31). Essentially, what Jeroboam did was to set up a manmade denomination with manmade headquarters, manmade worship, manmade priest-

hood, etc. This was (and is) contrary to God’s law, and it separated (and still separates) people from God.

Amaziah, in 2 Chronicles 25, could have reasoned like some of our people today by saying something like, “Well Lord, I am not condoning Israel’s error, I am not really fellowshiping them, I just want to use them to whip the Edomites, after all Lord, they do have certain skills and talents that can be used to your glory.” But God’s man straightforwardly told the king, “let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel.” This has to be our attitude toward the manmade religions of today. Denominations have come from men planting different “seeds” and producing “plants” which God has not planted (Luke 8:11; Matt. 15:13).

When Amaziah obeyed the Word from God and sent the men out of Israel home, they were greatly angered, and on their way home they destroyed some of Judah’s cities and took much spoil (2 Chron. 25:10,13). Let us not be surprised when those among the sectarian groups (even those who were once with us like the “Christian Church”) become angered when we tell them we cannot use them because God is not with them. Our brethren would do well to study the book of Nehemiah again with these things in mind (Neh. 2:20; 6:1-4; 13:1-9).

Proverbs 28:4 is correct. The further from God’s law men get, the better the wicked look, but when faithful ones will abide in God’s Will, they cannot help but to contend with those who oppose it (Jude 3; Phil. 1:17). Those who are living according to the doctrine of Christ must never give those who are not, any indication that we are having any kind of fellowship with them (2 John 9-11). We must “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1), warn them and attempt to correct them, but if they will not repent, they must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17). We must have “no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

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Frankie Lou Bailey.....	\$40
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Ronald H. Allen.....	\$30
Saks church of Christ, Anniston, AL	\$90
M/M John H. Brown.....	\$25
Evans church of Christ, Evans, GA	\$50
Corazon G. Santiago.....	\$10
John H. Lewis.....	\$50
Frank P. Allen.....	\$50
Redland church of Christ, Haworth, OK.....	\$50
Chuck & Nancy Verkist	\$25
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Robert W. Heflin.....	\$25
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Wesley & Naomi Snyder	\$10
Gary Price	\$150
O. A. & Wilma Danielson	\$10
Arthur Rocco	\$25
Loyd & Joanne Waldron (In memory of Kenneth Waldron).....	\$100
Martha Hudgins	\$20
L. Douglas Power.....	\$25
De'Angelo Brown	\$100
Norman Barnes	\$30
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Freddy Cook.....	\$20
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M/M Raonald H. Allen	\$30
Robert J. Austin.....	\$75
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Everett & Colleen Anderson.....	\$50
Charles Henley (In memory of Mary Henley)	\$100
Norman Barnes	\$30
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Chinquapin church of Christ, Batesville, AR.....	\$100
Virgil P. Horsley.....	\$25
Anonymous.....	\$50
Anonymous.....	\$50
Anonymous (In memory of Nellie Wallace & Sula Perry).....	\$125
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$50
Anonymous.....	\$1,710.75
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$100
Anonymous.....	\$40
Anonymous (In memory of Doyle Gough).....	\$20
Anonymous.....	\$300
Robert Price (Booklet Maker).....	\$200
Beginning Balance	\$ 1,107.69
Credits	
Contributions	5,845.75
Booklet Maker	200.00
Debits	
Postage.....	1,257.13
Booklet Maker	300.00
Ending Balance	\$ 5,596.31
Booklet Maker	\$ 13,500.00
Contributed.....	10,925.00
Remaining.....	\$ 2,575.00

Our hearts are over-whelmed by all these contributions. We thank you so much for your love of the truth and willingness to contend for the faith.

CONFRONTING ISSUES

Tom Wacaster

A number of years ago I was checking on some work following my return from South Africa. I sent out a number of resumes along with questions about the congregation to which I was applying and answered questions they had sent me. It is unfortunate that the Lord's church is in such a state of disarray that some of the questions being asked (by preachers and congregations alike) need to be asked at all. Some of those interviews were quite interesting. There were some congregations, thankfully, who were open and candid about the issues, and those calling me would ask some very pointed and direct questions (as they should). Others seem to be more interested in employing a hireling to do the work of the church while at the same time manifesting a poor attitude about issues in the Lord's church. In fact I had one brother affirm that the congregation he represented refused to be "issue oriented." When I asked him what he meant, he told me that they simply did not want their preacher getting embroiled in the issues facing the church — AT ALL! So what about issues? Can the local congregation simply "ignore" brotherhood issues? Please consider the following.

When I was a little boy, I would watch some of the old western movies and television programs. When the bad guys would flee, the men in the "white hats" would take the initiative and "head them off at the pass." Our heroes were not afraid to face the enemy head on. Great leaders of the past, in both the secular and spiritual fray, were men of courage.

More often than not, a good leader will take the initiative. They believe that an "ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure." There is no such thing as "issueless Christianity." Our Lord lived among the most outspoken and radical false teachers of His day. He would speak boldly on issues, teaching the truth and exposing error. Like our western heroes, our Lord would take on the enemy and "head them off at the pass." He was the Master Controversialist. Were I to ask if Jesus addressed the "issues" of His day, doubtless none would answer in the negative.

The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). If we are the body of Christ, do we not represent Christ? Are we not (as we have often heard said) His hands, His feet, etc? Paul said that the church is the "pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). We are to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). How can we fulfill these two sacred obligations if we do not address issues? The late Bill Jackson was straight to the point: "We keep hearing from those who admit that the issues are present, but their recommendation is that nothing be said about it. The preacher or the editor is censured for speaking or writing on it, as if the noble thing to do when an issue rears its head is to ignore it. We wonder if some feel that by ignoring it, it will go away? The basis behind the urging of silence is that men are involved, and thus these men have their friends, associates and supporters, and they do not want to see their friends spotlighted at all. Let a problem such as Crossroads appear, and let men thus begin to promote it; then, those who try to counter it face the friends and supporters. Let someone get off on the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage, and spread the doctrine abroad; again, those countering the false position must face the friends and supporters." How right he is.

The church in any location cannot afford to remain silent on the issues facing the brotherhood. We live in such a mobile society — close knit in every sense of the word. If a congregation has not yet experienced the error being taught in some places, just give it time and it will eventually arrive in your community and your congregation. So, wisdom dictates that we "head it off at the pass." Yet so often when the preacher or elders address an issue they are branded as "trouble makers" (reminds me somewhat of what Ahab said of Elijah, 1 Kings 18:17-18).

Brethren, we cannot, dare not, remain silent on issues. A strong, definitive, clear proclamation on where we stand is absolutely important. The survival of the body depends upon it.

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NON-BORING WORSHIP DESIGNED TO PLEASE

Marvin L. Weir

Where are the Scriptures for theatrical dramas, inspirational concerts, and dancing, shouting, and swaying to the beat of instrumental music?

The Saturday, February 15, 2003 *Dallas Morning News* featured an article by Berta Delgado in the “Religious” section entitled “Lights, camera, worship.” The caption noted that “high-tech wizardry is as expected at these churches as pipe organs are at others.” The article notes that “many houses of worship now have somewhat the look and feel of performing arts centers,” and then gives the following information regarding the Fellowship Church in Grapevine.

The church, which draws 16,000 people or more, has a sanctuary with comfortable, theater-style seating. The stage can be changed, even moved around to suit any message the Rev. Ed Young, Jr., senior pastor, is delivering. (Once, while preaching about God’s armor, he sat in an Army tank). The stage also has a ramp, so Mr. Young can walk down among the congregation while preaching... “Most people think church is boring, that it’s something they have to suffer through and don’t really want to be a part of,” said the Rev. Rob Johnson, Fellowship’s worship pastor. “We’re trying to tell them we’re excited that we live in our faith. God is the author of all creativity. He gives us all these wonderful things, so use them” ... “Media Ministry” members, working in a control room decked out with \$800,000 worth of electronic equipment, also roll video onto the giant screens.

Craig Janssen, co-founder of Addison-based Acoustic Dimensions, called the technology trend in the

church “a steamroller.” His company says a basic system runs around \$500,000. A system to accommodate concerts and other productions costs about \$1 million. But many churches spend was beyond that. “It’s not a luxury anymore, it’s expected,” he said.

It is obvious that **modern, man-made** worship is designed to appeal to one’s emotions and feelings rather than one’s reasoning and intellect. The statement that “most people think church is boring, that it’s something they have to suffer through and don’t really want to be a part of” is indicative of man’s distorted view of worship.

The Bible makes it clear that God is to be the object of one’s worship. The Scriptures declare, “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). What is sad it that denominational ideals and innovations have more influence over men than the Holy Scriptures!

Brethren, it is not whether I am pleased with worship, but whether God is pleased with worship! God is only pleased when one worships “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). Christ has made clear His disdain for those who give lip-worship while their heart is far from Him. He says, “*But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men*” (Matt. 15:8-9).

Most people today believe that if **they** are happy with their worship that **God** is happy with their worship. Not so! The Creator has the right to demand **how** His creatures worship Him. Scriptural worship will never be “boring” to those who truly love and appreciate God.

Mr. Johnson stated, “He [God]

gives us all these wonderful things, so use them.” Thus, folks who possess certain objects and have certain talents convince themselves that these objects and talents should be used in worship to God. By whose authority is anything and everything to be used in worship to God? Only the Bible tells us **how** we are to worship God! There is Scripture for *preaching* and *teaching* (Acts 2:42; 20:7), *praying* (Acts 2:42), the *Lord’s supper* (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:20ff) and *giving* as we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Where are the Scriptures for theatrical dramas, inspirational concerts, and dancing, shouting, and swaying to the beat of instrumental music?

In the same paper’s religious section, Kristen Holland titled her article, “Place of Worship – Greenville Avenue Church of Christ.” She declares that the junior high students of this congregation in Allen spend a great deal of their time “clowning around.” The article states:

In the past year, the G. O. Clowns have performed at church events, birthday parties and hospitals...and also assisted My Guardian Angels in the 2002 Allen Christmas parade. For a donation of \$25 and two week’s notice, the ensemble will schedule a “drive-by clowning,” with less-than-stellar singing and colorful balloons...The program is still in its formative stages, but **church leaders** (emph. MLW) say it’s full smiles ahead for **the innovative ministry**. “We know that the kids enjoy it,” said Galon Jones, minister of congregational care.

You will notice that this “pro-

gram” belongs to the Greenville Oaks church of Christ and the congregation’s leaders admit it is only in its “formative stages.” “Minister of congregational **care** (emph. MLW) is a misnomer if this is an example of their “caring” for the congregation. Wonder if the chief concern of Paul and the apostles was “non-boring worship” and “innovative ministries?” I think not!

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The Current Apostasy...

(Continued from page 57)

both the religious and secular world.

The current apostasy can trace its beginning to the same source as all of the others — unconcern and disregard for the authority of God’s word. Our Lord plainly declared that those who would follow him must observe and obey his teaching. “*Why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Luke 6:46)?

There is no longer a distinction between the Christian and the world. Jesus declared concerning his followers: “*the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:14). The reason there is hostility between the world and the true followers of Jesus is because those true followers do not compromise their standards nor join in with the world’s activities and agenda.

But it must be admitted that it is now difficult to differentiate between the “saint” and the people of the world. They look alike, dress alike, behave alike, have the same goals and pursuits in life, watch the same movies and listen to the same music. It is nothing short of amazing that many denominational schools have stricter standards of dress and behavior than do our supposed to be Christian colleges.

Some of this invasion of the world has come through the glorified baby sitters styled as “youth ministers.” Dare we ask for Bible authority to hire special ministers for some elite group in the church? In many cases, they have begun using the world’s music in their so-called “devos.” Under the tyranny of rock

and roll, young people of the world are impelled to be involved in all kinds of orgies. What do you think church folks are impelled to do under the same tyrannical spell when the same music (except for the words) is used in a religious service? There is no such thing as Christian rock music — it doesn’t exist. The use of that ungodly beat and sound is an effort to attract and hold young people in the organization. They can get their kicks in church rather than go to a concert or a nightclub or a cabaret.

The seeds of apostasy have sprouted as seen in the popularity of the social gospel. No longer is the church viewed as performing its function when engaged in evangelism, edification and benevolence. Recreational activities are now considered as a normal “work” of the church. Many congregations now host agendas that range from job training to weight loss and field ball teams and drama clubs. A bulletin from a Tennessee congregation announces that because so many of their teens are involved in high school basketball, they will run the van to the away games for the spectators of the congregation.

As the apostasy grows, no longer is there an understanding that “the son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.” The family life center is the home. The church is not charged by God to raise children. The church is not a business enterprise charged to render services to the community or make a profit. The basic goal of the church is not to alleviate temporal suffering but eternal suffering. Apostates make loud lamentations about “losing our children,” “being out of touch with society” and “the need to appeal to the whole man.” They forget, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). A mark of the current apostasy is the lack of confidence in the power of the Gospel. Love to have it so elderships smilingly approve as the youth entertainment directors wean the young people away from the church for the uplift of a bowling party or a lock in.

Another sign of the prevalence of apostasy is the preponderance of a

desire for affluence or an abundance of material possessions. It is not unusual to hear of congregations holding seminars to guide people on how to be debt free or accumulate wealth. The gospel of prosperity seems to be all the rage. Am I wrong. Didn’t Jesus say, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth?*” Is affluence synonymous with God’s approval? “*And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*” (1 Tim. 6:8).

Further evidence of the harvest from the seeds of apostasy that have been sown is in the drift from Bible teaching concerning marriage and divorce. God stated emphatically that “*a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife (singular) and they shall be one flesh*” (Gen. 2:24). Many marriage ceremonies have become cluttered with nonsense and meaningless verbiage. The statement “till death do us part” has become a joke and could as well be substituted with the words, “till we grow tired of each other.”

This flippant spirit has produced carnal minded congregations who declare to those who have been divorced and remarried for all kinds of reasons “come to us as you are.” Men may proclaim so-called new ideas about marriage and divorce but God has not changed his viewpoint: adultery is still adultery and fornication is still fornication. And professing Christians are neither automatically excused nor forgiven just because they are professing Christians! While it is true that God forgives sin when a person is truly repentant, repentance does not allow a continuation of sin. Repentance seems to be a lost message in the church — more seeds of the great apostasy! Proof of this is the increasing number who take pleasure in unrighteousness while maintaining their claim of God’s approval on their lives and lifestyle.

The cliché again comes to mind, “history repeats itself.” When this apostasy is finished (and personally I think it is far from being done) those who love the truth will again have to sweep away the muck and the rubble. Once again we must seek to rebuild the walls of Zion and call for a return to the old paths.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

grateful that I found a publication like this. This publication is what I am longing for to make my faith strong. I like all the topics in this issue especially the "Boldly Proclaiming the Glorious Gospel of Christ" by Marvin Weir and "Steadfast for the Lord" by Charles Box. All churches of Christ preachers in the Philippines must read your publication to avoid division and conflict of the churches with regards to our teaching and doctrine. Thanks God, your publication meets the need. May the Grace of God be unto us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our very own SAVIOR" ...**Corazon G. Santiago, Los Angeles, CA.** "To God be the glory, and to you peace, grace and love be with you all; in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. Am glad to see some of your hand-outs. They are rich and educative as well. I thank you so much for the great work you had been doing for God both in U.S.A. and in other nations to win souls for Christ our Lord. I earnestly appeal to you to consider me to be one of your students in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I still need some Bible literatures and tracts for the ministry work in this area. Am one of the ministers in the church of Christ in Delta State" ...**Moses O. Agofure, Nigeria, West Africa.** "We thank God and Christ and to you, and to our most beloved brother James D. Cox of Southern California School of Evangelism. The same brother sent me a copy of your printed page. Myself and our brothers enjoyed the articles very much and we discussed some of the contents in our regular Bible Classes. Thank you very much to you that you evangelizing and strengthening the preachers, Bible Class Teachers, and brother and sisters all over the world. We pray that, it should be widely used for the Lord's service to spread the Kingdom of our Lord. God bless you all. I would so much appreciate having copies of the previous and present, to be mostly used in the church services as well as share them with others too. I will pray for you the brethren there and ask that you do the same for us" ...**K. M. Ratna Kumar, India.** "I am a recent graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. While I was a student at MSOP, I really enjoyed reading *Seek the Old Paths*. I would like to request that a subscription be sent to my home so I can continue to be edified by the sound articles in your newsletter. I really appreciate your work. May God bless you" ...**Matt Sprague, Bells, TN!** "God Bless You" ...**W. A. Washington, Houston, TX.** "May God bless you and your work to further the Gospel message" ...**Name Withheld.** "We continue to receive *STOP* and appreciate its stand for the right. There will always be critics, gainsayers, and enemies of truth, but fortunately there will also always be truth. Our thanks to you, the good eldership there at East Corinth, and all others who have a part in this good publication. We are better because of your efforts" ...**Chuck & Clarene Dinkins, Silverhill, AL.** "Greetings in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who is very good bestowing us with countless blessings so often undeserved. Surely having been blessed with another New Year, we now eagerly wait more copies of *Seek the Old Paths* which biblically teach the right way God wants to do for His people. It is one of the greatest sources of spiritual strength except the Bible. Through reading the articles, a friend was baptized in January 10, and on 20 January three young boys were also baptized into Christ. Your publication can truly convince people the one who read attentively and help tremendously in studying more about the scripture. Thank you for providing us a good, sound doctrine teaching material" ...**T. Ngulkhopao, Manipur, India.** "We have been receiving your bulletin for awhile and enjoy it very much" ...**Mrs. William Roberts, Athens, AL.** "I enjoy *STOP*" ...**N. C. Johnson, Springhill, LA.** "We have been getting your paper for years and know how sound and grounded in the doctrine that you are. Keep up the good work" ...**Name Withheld, TN.** "I enjoy *STOP* so well I'd like to contribute a small amount to help in any way it is spent. God bless all who have a part in the good lessons" ...**Marie Barrett, Gallipolis, OH.** "We enjoy *Seek the Old Paths*" ...**Old Union church of Christ, Carrollton, MS.** "I enjoy this publication and the work you are doing. The information you and the elders are publishing in this paper is very helpful to our leadership here in the congregation at Talladega, Alabama. May God continue to bless you with good health and bless your efforts in this work" ...**Ed Collins, Talladega, AL.** "This is a thank-you for your publication and continual refutation of the liberal wave that is striking con-

gregations all over the United States. It is getting more difficult finding true to the word, New Testament based churches to attend here in the north and is quite frightening to so many of us who have been raised in the church. Thank-you again for all your efforts to keep the true church alive and well. God bless your efforts" ...**Paula Childs, Highland, MI.** "We all seem to be overwhelmed by the liberalism around us. It is refreshing to read the articles in *STOP* that stand for the truth and are not afraid to point out the error in the liberal teachings of some of the "brotherhood" and mark them (Rom. 16:17)" ...**Leland Reed, Pleasant Hill, MO.** "Brethren, we want to thank you for sending us *Seek the Old Paths*. It is a very good periodical and our congregation enjoys it very much. It enlightens us on what the brotherhood faces today. Keep up the good work (3 John 2). Wishing you God speed in your work" ...**M. D. Kirkpatrick, Tiptonville, TN.** "Thank you and God for this very good Gospel paper" ...**Harold Heath, Huachuca City, AZ.** "Please delete us from your mailing list" ...**Paul Allen, Meridian, MS.** "Please take my name off list now please. Thanks for your kindness" ...**Dot Coon, Montgomery, AL.** "Thank you for sending our congregation *STOP*" ...**Michael Gilbert, Greeneville, TN.** "I am writing to express appreciation for the efforts that you put into preparing and mailing *STOP*. I find your articles very informative and true to the Bible. Continue the good work" ...**Name Withheld, AR.** "Thank you for sending *STOP!* We appreciate your strong stand for truth. Keep up the good work for the Lord" ...**Maurice Brown, Rockford, IL.** "Enclosed is a check for expenses related to printing and mailing *Seek the Old Paths*. Our congregation has been receiving ten copies per month. It is our plan to send you \$50 per month for the remainder of the year. We hope this is the beginning of a long relationship between our congregations. Please keep up the good work" ...**Art Greer, Evans church of Christ, Evans, GA.** "I appreciate receiving the publication. Refreshing to know there are brethren who have not compromised truth (John 8:32; 2 Tim. 2:2)" ...**Bill Trees, Sioux Falls, SD.**

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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