



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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CURRENT CAUSES OF APOSTASY

James W. Boyd

Notice the title closely. The word “causes” is plural because there are many things causing apostasy. We want to notice several of them, how they can and should be prevented so we can learn from the past and stop further erosion. This will lead to constructive rebuilding.

Apostasy is the abandonment of previous loyalty, like Judas and Demas. It is defection, desertion, renunciation of that once held. It is described as “they went out from us” (1 John 2:19) and are no longer of us though they once were.

Current refers to that which is causing apostasy now, in contrast to causes of apostasy in the past. There was apostasy in the Old and New Testaments. Romanism and Protestantism are evidences of apostasy. The efforts to restore New Testament Christianity have been hit by apostate movements with legalism and liberalism, various doctrinal “isms” that were once threatening. We are now concerned with doctrines that generate a massive onslaught against Christ, the church, the Bible and faithful brethren. The devil has too often been very successful.

In principle, today’s apostasy is like that of the past but varies in subject matter, geography and people involved. It is often the result of a gradual drift with brethren not being alert. It also is promoted intentionally by “change agents.” Apostasy certainly refutes the false doctrine of “can’t fall.”

THE OVERRIDING CAUSE

Rejection of the authority of God is what causes apostasy. This rejection

is the result of man exalting himself, following the foolishness of human wisdom rather than divine revelation, egotism and seeking to be a “big name.” One rather obvious cause is *ignorance*. This is no reflection on intelligence but refers to being misinformed, uninformed and untaught. Some years ago a NBC reporter was talking about a dictionary that had a drawing of the Ark of the Covenant beside the word “ark.” He sneeringly said some people believe Noah and his family lived in that box for over a year to escape a flood. The reporter was supposed to be wise? Jesus told the Sadducees why they were so wrong. “*Ye do err not knowing the scriptures*” (Matt. 22:29). Some say they did not hear any error from a false teacher but that could be because they do not know enough truth to recognize error if it slapped them in the face.

Some try to use “local autonomy” as a cover for false doctrines being taught. Each congregation is self-governing but that was never meant to be a place to hide error. Peter accused those who crucified Christ to have done it ignorantly (Acts 3:17). Jesus said while on the cross, “*They know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Paul said the Jews were not acting according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1-2). Little wonder we hear how some withhold extending the Lord’s invitation, show Andy Griffith films at services, use fun, games, gimmicks and gadgets to create emotion to win “converts.” One man told me he left a congregation when after three weeks of “sermons” not one, NOT ONE, Scripture was even cited, let alone

read. Why can’t brethren, who are otherwise sensible, see the need for Biblical preaching? Not only do elders and preachers need to know the truth, but every member. Nobody can lead astray a congregation where the membership is thoroughly informed regarding “*thus saith the Lord.*”

COMPROMISE

The early church apostatized. That is because it compromised. How presumptuous man is to think he has the right to compromise what is not his; namely, God’s truth. We have a choice regarding truth: accept it or reject it. We do not have the option to change it, alter it, mix it with denominationalism, modernism, liberalism or any such thing. Our goal is not to make everybody happy and feel good. We must please the Lord even if some are disturbed. “Some measure success by how many they exclude,” critics of truth will say. That is a lie. But some do measure success by how many they can include regardless of the truth. “Just maybe they will be accepted by God anyway,” some contend. What right does a man have to say that about those who obey not the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9)? If there is another way of salvation than Christ, what is it?

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Is there such a thing as a white blackbird, or a swift turtle? Those who cry “unity in diversity” do not seek unity but, fellowship in spite of division

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Current Causes of Apostasy...



Editorial...

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOUSE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Garland M. Robinson

The details of God's eternal purpose of redeeming sinful man and establishing a kingdom of which they would be members was kept secret by God through the ages. By the inspiration of God the prophets spoke of it but did not understand exactly what it was. Even the angels did not know what God had in mind. In First Peter 1:10-12 we read: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace [that should come] unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

By God's design, it was not for the ancients to know the details of it. It was spoken of in bits and pieces and as a result "...eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). It would not be fully revealed to men until the time was right. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

ISAIAH AND MICAH

Both Isaiah (2:2-4) and Micah (4:1-3) spoke of the coming kingdom in their inspired scripts about seven hundred years or so before it became

a reality. They lived as contemporaries and their message was the same because it came from the same source — the Holy Spirit. Isaiah wrote: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that *the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains*, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

As we turn our minds to the New Testament we read of the long awaited kingdom of God spoken of as being the "mountain" of the Lord's house that would be established in the "*top of the mountains*" and would be "*exalted above the hills*" (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1). The land of Israel is literally filled with hills and mountains. The people of Israel knew very well about mountains. That was their way of life. They knew nothing else.

The "high ground" has always been the position to control in battle. It is the place of greatest advantage over the enemy. Spiritually speaking, it is by far the place to be. The Lord's kingdom would be positioned in the most advantageous place — at the top of all the mountains and hills. Nothing has ever existed that excels above the Lord's spiritual "mountain" (Micah 4:1). It is referred to by many other designations, such as: "house"

(1 Tim. 3:15), "kingdom" (John 18:36), "church" (Rom. 16:16), "husbandry" and "building" (1 Cor. 3:9).

According to the words of the inspired apostle Peter, it's not actually a literal mountain, instead, it's a "spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). It signifies its majestic, exalted, glorious, place, far above all other hills and mountains.

DANIEL

About 150 years after Isaiah's time, Daniel was carried away into Babylonian captivity. In chapter two of the book of Daniel, king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him greatly. He called for his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and soothsayers, saying unto them: "If ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof" (vs.5-6).

"The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean" (v.10).

"For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain" (vs.12-13).

The order to kill all the wise men of Babylon included Daniel (Belteshazzar), Hananiah (Sadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abed-nego). When Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, came to kill Daniel and his friends, Daniel asked why the king was so hasty with this order. When it was explained, Daniel asked for time and he would reveal the interpretation of the king's dream.

"Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night

vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (vs.17-19).

When Daniel told Arioch he was ready to reveal the secret to the king, he was hurriedly taken to him. He told Nebuchadnezzar that the God of heaven is the revealer of secrets and he (Daniel) had no special wisdom or ability of himself more than anyone else. It’s a great lesson for us to learn to not take glory to ourselves. To God be the glory!

Nebuchadnezzar is given the interpretation of his dream: “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

“This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.”

In the interpretation of the dream, Daniel was speaking of the establishment of the kingdom of God just like all the prophets had done before him and would do after him. However, God revealed to Daniel the “time” at which God’s eternal kingdom would be established. He reveals that the

image the king saw had a head made of “gold” representing Nebuchadnezzar and the *Babylonian* empire. It had a breast and arms of “silver” representing the empire of the *Medes and Persians* that would succeed the kingdom of Babylon. Its belly and thighs were of “brass” representing the third empire of *Greece*. Fourth and finally, its legs were of “iron” and its feet and toes were part of “iron” and part of “clay” representing the *Roman* empire. “*And in the days of these kings (the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*” (Dan. 2:44).

During the days of the Roman Empire the kingdom of God would be established. The Roman empire began around 30 BC and continued about 500 years. The everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ began in 33 AD when the Gospel was preached for the first time in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) and would last as long as the earth stands.

THE KINGDOM OF THE LIVING GOD

The kingdom of God is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). It is also referred to as the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Jesus used the words “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably when he said, “...I will build my **church**; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the **kingdom** of heaven...” (Matt. 16:18-19). Peter used the keys when he preached the Gospel of Christ for the first time. The kingdom/church began that day when about 3,000 souls repented and were baptized (Acts 2:36-41).

The saints in the church at Colosse were members of that kingdom. Paul wrote to them and declared that God is the one “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col. 1:13).

Our brethren in the church at Thessalonica were in the kingdom. “*That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his **kingdom** and glory*” (1 Thess. 2:12).

Brethren among the Hebrews en-

joyed the blessings of the kingdom. “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Heb. 12:28).

The apostle John made note of the fact that he was a brother and companion of those in the kingdom. “*I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...*” (Rev. 1:9).

Jesus made clear that the memorial of his suffering and death would be enjoyed with brethren in the kingdom. “...*He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God*” (Luke 22:15-16).

THE “STONE” IN NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM BECAME A GREAT MOUNTAIN

Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar’s attention to the feet of the image he had seen in his dream. “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:34-35).

A stone is small and insignificant in comparison to a mountain. But the stone Nebuchadnezzar saw that struck the image on its feet shattered not only the feet but rippled throughout the entire image and literally made it crumble and fall to pieces! From the smallest of beginnings this little stone became a huge mountain itself and consumed the entire image so that it was blown away as dust in the wind.

The stone cut out without hands is the Lord’s kingdom — the church of Christ. From its smallest of beginnings, it grew and spread into the whole world. The church began in Jerusalem with the twelve apostles (Acts 2:1-4) and grew that same day to about 3,000 in number (Acts 2:41).

By Acts 4:4, the men alone numbered 5,000. Then in Acts 6:7 we read: “...the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” ... “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). It spread throughout Judah, unto Samaria and then the uttermost parts of the earth. It exists today in the world because it is God’s doing, not man’s.

JESUS WOULD BUILD HIS CHURCH

The first reference in the New Testament regarding the Lord’s church is found in Matthew 16:13-19. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Jesus was/is the Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He is the redeemer, the long awaited messiah promised throughout the Old Testament. He came to establish his eternal kingdom. In this passage he referred to it as the church. The word church means “called out.” Those who will believe in Jesus and obey his commands are members of it — called out of the world of sin and transplanted into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13). Jesus announces what he will do in verse 18 of Matthew 16 — “I will build my church.” He makes clear that it is also referred to as his kingdom in verse 19. The words church and kingdom are used interchangeably.

Different words are used to refer

to the Lord’s church:

- **Kingdom** (royal, supreme, authority, Acts 8:12; Col. 1:13);
- **Body** (oneness, Rom. 12:5);
- **Flock** (tender affection, Acts 20:28);
- **Family** (fellowship, Eph. 3:15);
- **House** (residence, 1 Tim. 3:15).

These words simply describe different aspects of it. They all refer to the same thing.

Both the church and the kingdom have the same:

- **Owner** (Matt. 16:18; John 18:36)
- **Ruler** (Eph. 1:22; 1 Tim. 6:15)
- **Beginning date, 33AD** (Acts 2:16ff; vs.34-36)
- **Terms of admission** (faith, repentance, confession, baptism) (Acts 2:38,47, John 3:5)
- **Destiny** (Matt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 6:9-11)

Daniel had prophesied the kingdom would be established in the days of the fourth kingdom (Dan. 2:44, the Roman empire). Jesus promised to build his kingdom in the lifetime of those to whom he spake. “...Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen **the kingdom of God come with power**” (Mark 9:1). If the kingdom has not been established (as millions claim), then there are people living today that heard Jesus speak these words two thousand years ago! He plainly said that some to whom he was speaking would see the kingdom come. If it hasn’t come, some folks are mighty old!

God knew there would be naysayers and disbelievers even though Jesus promised to build his kingdom in the first century. As a result, He makes certain we know exactly when the kingdom would be established.

In **Mark 9:1** Jesus said the kingdom would come “with power.” The

words “with power” mean “along side of.” Some of you came here today with your wife/husband/friend (along side your wife/husband/friend). So, if the Scriptures tell us when the “power” came, we know the kingdom came because they both would come at the same time.

In **Acts 1:8** Jesus told the apostles “...ye shall receive **power**, after that **the Holy Ghost is come upon you....**” Jesus said the power would come when the Holy Spirit came. Now we have three things to consider: 1) kingdom, 2) power, 3) Holy Spirit. The kingdom would come with power and the power would come when the Holy Spirit came. For example, things equal to the same thing are equal to each another. If pew 1 is just like pew 3 and pew 2 is just like pew 3, then pew 1 and pew 2 are identical. Let’s sum it up:

- The kingdom would come with power;
- The power would come when the Holy Spirit came;
- Therefore, the kingdom would come when the Holy Spirit came.

Notice Acts 2:1-4. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all **filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

- The kingdom would come with power (Mark 9:1);
- The power would come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8);
- The Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:4);
- Therefore, the kingdom was established (Acts 2:4).

PASSAGES BEFORE AND AFTER THE DAY OF PENTECOST		
Daniel 2:44		Acts 2:47
Isaiah 2:2-4	PENTECOST	Col. 1:13
Matt. 3:1; 4:17	AD 33	Heb. 12:22-28
Mark 9:1	Acts 2:1-47	1 Peter 2:9
Acts 1:8		Rev. 1:9

OLYMPIC MISTAKE

Johnny O. Trail

Most people have heard about the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics in Paris. The responses over social media have varied from complete outrage to complete shock that the followers of Christ would respond in such a manner. Some have argued that the scene depicted by several drag queens was nothing more than the recreation of a pagan feast depicting Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, and ecstasy. One of the creators of the scene even made this assertion.¹ Still, many people viewed it as a recreation of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the "The Last Supper."

Regardless of what the organizers of the opening ceremony intended; many people were offended by what one commentator described the scene as being — "Jesus Christ as a transgender drag queen."² Enough reasonable people associated the ceremony with The Last Supper to make one give some credence to the assertion of profaning a world-famous iconographic representation of the Savior's instituting of communion.

Still, the denials have come in a fast and furious manner. Barbara Butch, who was at the center of the table in the opening ceremony recently deleted an *Instagram* post where "she" displayed a picture of the opening ceremony along with a da Vinci's painting. In the post "she" remarked "O yes! O, yes! The new gay testament." It seems that the denial of the depiction of the "Lords Supper" falls apart upon examination of the evidence.³

Furthermore, a recent article reveals that the Olympic Committee knew what the opening ceremony contained. One source states, "A Paris 2024 Olympics spokesperson admitted the controversial drag show version of 'The Last Supper' seen in Friday's opening ceremony was indeed inspired by the iconic da Vinci mural — despite attempting to vehemently deny it following fierce backlash."⁴ Even so, the attempts to walk back the Olympic fiasco continue.

For the sake of argument, one might assume that it was little more than a representation of a pagan god.

women (transgendered individuals) to be actors in the depiction? Why include a child on the same stage as men dressed as women with two of them being almost nude and having semi-exposed genitalia? It is simple really, the radicals in our world are trying to indoctrinate adults and children to accept the LGBTQ+ lifestyle.

Still, one person on social media said that the supporters of Christ should expect to be persecuted for what they believe. There is a difference between being persecuted for our convictions and profaning the Son of God! When one profanes the holiness of God, he relegates the Creator of the Universe to just another common being. The Bible is replete with passages that warn against profaning God to the extent of warning about the misuse of His name.

The first part of the Ten Commandments addresses the Israelites interaction with the Holy God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage. Consider these portions of the decalogue. Exodus 20:3-7 says, "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain." The simple fact of the matter is this — if you do not revere God you will not obey His commandments. Many people in our world hold nothing holy or in awe other than themselves and their carnal desires. The opening ceremony of the Olympics made that plain to the casual observer.

Moreover, the question begs "Why is it acceptable to parody Christ and His followers, but other religions and beliefs are simply off limits?" Even if the opening ceremony of the Olympic

Games was just a parody of Dionysus there is ample evidence that Christianity is under constant attack. Some people on the opposite side of being offended seem to by saying we need to turn the television and "go to something else."⁵

There are some things which should offend the people of God. Profaning His Son should be chief among them. Perhaps even more disturbing is the way some have responded to Christians who are genuinely upset by this carnal, sensual display. While it is true that we need to love all people who are created in the spiritual image of God, we are not instructed to accept every immoral standard that society attempts to shove down our throats.

The world we live in has lost its moral compass. Regardless of the reasoning behind the opening ceremony of the Olympics — a portrayal of the Last Supper or a pagan god feasting — the organizers of such a spectacle should be ashamed. Jeremiah 6:15 says, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD."

ENDNOTES:

1 <https://www.today.com/news/paris-olympics/olympics-opening-ceremony-last-supper-controversy-rcna16392>

2 <https://iheart.com/podcast/867-verdict-with-ted-cruz-56253661/episode/olympics-mocks-christians-harris-snubs-israel-200352292/>

3 Allen, Elise Ann (2024). "Drag Queen Confirms it was a Parody of the Last Supper Despite Olympic Committee's Claim," Catholic Herald. <https://catholicherald.co.uk/>

4 Exclusive | Paris Olympics admitted opening ceremony drag show was based on 'Last Supper' (nypost.com)

5 <https://www.foxnews.com/video/63595787-27112>

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Editor's Note: What does the God of the universe and creator of all that exists say about man corrupting his creation in changing the roles of male and female? Romans 1:18-32 makes it plain and simple. There is no argument that can challenge and refute God's holy design.

Current Causes of Apostasy...

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which is contrary to truth. The Bible gives the basis for unity to be the truth accepted. We can be united in error and all go to hell together. Unity is not the ultimate goal; certainly not union.

Some cite Mark 9:39-40 as justification for unity in diversity. The passage is not talking about denominations or those who teach error. It refers to those who did what they did in the name of, by the authority of, Christ. They were not of the apostles but were on the same side.

Some say we can learn a lot from denominations. What we learn from denominations is to follow men and reject the Bible. Why accept “denominational baptism” even though it is not the baptism taught in the Scriptures? Some marry outside the church and are led into apostasy by their mate. Some absorb denominational material because it is so “sweet and kind” without regard to truth. Some do not really convert before adding people to their role. “Join now and learn later,” is the cry. There is much to learn once we are born again. But some have not learned enough to begin. I held a meeting in a city where the year before there had been a big campaign which reported ninety-six baptisms and received much publicity. Of that number one year later, only one, **ONE**, attended worship services with the brethren. Some of the number never attended once. Many had been pushed beneath the water but had not been converted. No wonder there is apostasy!

THE DESIRE TO BE ACCEPTED

“Go along to get along” is the manner of some. They want others to like them. Who doesn’t? At what price? Some castigate “name calling.” One prominent brother said those who call names are “religious nuts.” (I feel sure Paul would be flattered.) Israel wanted to be like the nations around them and soon left the way of the Lord. Some will not condemn error but they have strong words of condemnation for those do condemn error. One good brother said there are two places he has no friends — the pulpit and the golf course. Critics of criticism are odd!

NEW OR TRUE

“Change agents” have persuaded

some that anything old must be discarded and only something new is worthwhile. They sneeringly brand anything old as “traditionalism.” It may be, but there are two kinds of traditions (something handed down): human tradition and apostolic tradition. Truth is not determined by age, but source. Error is also old (remember Eden?)

Some liberals were once rabid “antis.” They switched. The inactivity of some brethren has provoked some of this. I heard a young fellow say in a business meeting, “Let’s do something even if it’s wrong.” That is not the answer to lethargy and dullness.

Holding the old just because it is old is not wise. Taking the new simply because it is new is not wise either. “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23) is the standard.

AN OBSESSION

Some have gone overboard for what they consider to be “scholarly.” They think having some arbitrarily determined academic degree from some school is to be “scholarly.” Even some preachers and elders have bought into that. Some elders will not have a preacher who has no “degree.” How some advertise their degrees! I was once introduced as having a good education (maybe) and degrees but the man added, “But you can’t tell it.” What did he mean?

Schools have been on the front lines taking the church into apostasy because so many “professors” have drunk so deeply from the cisterns of error as they obtained their degrees and now they spew that stuff before students and churches as if it warranted acceptance.

A CRAVING

Some brethren have a craving for big numbers, large contributions, notoriety, headlines, prestige and fame. They will not peach the “whole counsel of God” because it may offend some of their number and they want the numbers. It may adversely affect the contributions and they want the contributions. It may make them unpopular and they want to be popular. They are like those described by Paul, “whose God is their belly” (Phil. 3:19). But when they finish their message everybody feels good.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Listen to liberals denounce negative preaching. They are so negative about

being negative. But their inconsistency is acceptable because they are above others. If God could have had their advice when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the words would have been ten suggestions that were optional. The “thou shalt not” commands would never have appeared.

Some, in their desire to never offend anybody, offend God. They want to be politically correct and disturb nobody. Can you read in the New Testament anybody coming to Christ that was not first disturbed? The Gospel is not how to win friends and influence people, but to save souls from spiritual death. How they distort true love and show hatred for those who show love as Christ did! The early church was taught not to have complicity with those who destroy (2 John 9-11; Eph. 5:11). Some boast about the good friendships they have with false teachers! They are not my friends. I don’t deliberately make friends of the enemies of Christ. Being friends with God’s enemies is treason. Better we “try” (examine) the spirits (1 John 4:1).

There are other causes we shall not mention here, such as the so-called new Bibles (false modern-speech translations), adopting and condoning worldliness such as drinking alcohol, dancing, lascivious conduct and immodest dress, divorce, materialism and the accommodation of the status quo. Some are trying to convert God to us rather than the other way around. But it all leads to the same thing — APOSTASY.

ALMOST UNIVERSALLY IGNORED

One method of combating apostasy that God has directed is the exercise of discipline, even withdrawal if necessary. It does not appear to be used very often. Discipline is not “kicking somebody out of the church” as some sneer. It is a loving effort to recover lost souls who have fallen away from the truth. It is to keep the church pure and the Gospel defended. Why do some always feel they have the power of God to condemn the motives of those who are striving to obey God? Those who are habitually, defiantly determined to walk in the ways of error cannot be tolerated. At least, that is what Scripture teaches whether we like it or not.

Some have the “play on, Miss Bertha” attitude. It is reported about the time when some were insisting instruments of music to be used while others pleaded not to do it. The one in charge turned to the pianist and said,

“Play on, Miss Bertha.” It mattered not about the truth. Some want what they want and will have it regardless. They are to be disciplined.

The home is where the correction of apostasy must begin. It is said the church is losing its young people. That is only partially accurate. The home is losing the young people and the church is suffering the consequences. The home is the first line of Christian training of the young.

A DARK PICTURE

When once teaching this lesson, one came to me afterward and said, “Brother Boyd, you paint a dark picture.” No, friend, I am not painting any picture. I am taking note of a picture already painted. It is hideous and dark. Loss of souls, departure from the truth, division in the church, crucifying the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6:6), is not a bright and glorious scene. If we will read 2 Peter 2:20-22 we will see why apostasy is such a dark and gloomy picture. Then we pray we may be more willing to attack its causes and seek remedy.

*A Burning Fire, Vol. 19
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Who Am I To Disagree With You?

Tracy Dugger

In attempting to teach others the Gospel, I have often wondered why so many in the religious world accept what “their” preacher says without question. Whether discussing baptism, worship, or even marriage, responses such as, “But my preacher says,” are often heard. Recently, I witnessed first hand what I knew to be true. In a religious discussion with a man, I made a biblical point. Expecting disagreement, it astounded me to hear him say: “Who am I to disagree with you? You are a man called by the Lord into the ministry.” Those words implied that regardless of this man’s view, my understanding carried more weight. He reasoned that God had specifically and directly called me to the ministry to proclaim His Word and would thus be speaking through me.

First, this is an unproved assumption! The prophets and preachers of the first century were truly directly called and guided by God (Matt. 4:18,21; John chapters 14-16; Acts 9:15). The apostles were called to preach just like the prophets of old (2 Peter 1:19-21; Isa. 6; Jer. 1:5).

When the writing of the New Testament was complete, there was no longer a need for inspired men. Divine inspiration was written down and thus preserved. It was so complete that there was no need for additional divine knowledge (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In New Testament times, God’s Word for man was fully delivered (Jude 3). And, it was so completely delivered by the apostles and prophets, that the apostle Paul gives a warning not to add nor subtract from it (Gal. 1:6-9). If preachers today have what the apostles and prophets had in the first century, they would not need a Bible to preach from; they would be divinely inspired. And, if God were still giving additional revelation today, there would have to be confirmation of the Word of God through miracles, wonders, and signs (Mark 16:17-20).

Second, not realizing what the Bible teaches about this has created massive error and confusion. Is it any wonder that many in the denominational world blindly follow their preacher’s utterances? Is it any wonder they

give little thought to “*trying the spirits*” (1 John 4:1) or “*searching the Scriptures*” (Acts 17:11)? Is it surprising there exists a clergy/laity distinction in the denominational world (and sometimes even among our own brethren) (Matt. 23:9)? Take the case of two preachers disagreeing on a biblical matter. Common sense should tell us that something is wrong. When two “called” preachers disagree and teach contradictory things, one or both are not following the direction of God. Who is right? How do you determine? Because a person claims to be a preacher of the Gospel does not make it so (2 John 9-11; 2 Peter 3).

In the first century, the message of Gospel preachers could be authenticated by their demonstration of signs and miracles of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:4; Mark 16:20). God directly spoke through these men (2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 2). But such miraculous workings through men ceased when the completed Word of God was finally delivered to mankind (1 Cor. 13:8-12; Eph. 4:7-11). The pen of divine inspiration was put down by the end of the first century because we have been given “all the divine information” needed in the Bible. When a religious matter comes up today, we must consult the Word of God for the final answer! This is why it was written and preserved! What spiritual, religious, or moral problem does the Bible not address? None! The Bible is the all-sufficient, complete, authoritative Word of God, needing no addition, nor subtraction (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3). And so, we can determine the truth of a teaching today by comparing it with the Bible. If people would study and make application of the Word, confusion on this and many other issues would dissolve.

We encourage and plead with our religious friends: Check us out! Do not take our word for anything. Go to the Bible and verify what you hear with God’s inspired Word. Confirm our words by using God’s test for truth — the Bible.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Thanks. I appreciate it” ...**Grenada, MS.** “I would like to receive STOP” ...**Eddie Boring, Louisville, TN.** “I would like to receive STOP” ...**Patty Austin, Maryville, TN.** “I do Bible Correspondence Courses with about 40 inmates and one has requested any booklets with religious articles. I know you offer this service for free and I have been receiving them since I was in prison. I am enclosing a check to help continue this program. Thank you for all the many well written articles to help others see the Truth as God would have us see it” ...**Steve Miller, Fox, AR.** “We often use your articles in our bulletin” ...**Duncan, SC.** “Thank you for your good work” ...**Jason Gann, McMinnville, TN.** “I am asking that you quit sending me your newsletter” ...**Bryan Scott, Shelbyville, IL.** “On behalf of the Smartt church of Christ elders we are asking you to stop sending the copies to the church because we don’t have anyone taking them so we don’t want you to waste your money. We deeply appreciate the work you do, so keep it up!” ...**Smartt, TN.** “Please STOP mailing me STOP and be sure to put this message in the MAILBAG” ...**Kevin Turbeville, Dickson, TN.** “One of the members here shared your paper with me. Send me *Seek The Old Paths*. Thanks” ...**James Johnston, Jonesboro, AR.** “Change of address. Thank you” ...**Gary Brock, Attalla, AL.** “Thank you” ...**Allen & Irene Tate, Cache, OK.** “My daughter brought one of your *Seek The Old Paths* by, and I loved it. Would you please add me to your mailing lists. Thank you very much. God Bless” ...**Pauline Curtis, Jonesboro, AR.** “Love *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**Louise Wilks, Telephone, TX.** “Keep preaching the truth in your good paper *Seek The Old Paths*. This donation is to help with the printing of it” ...**Mary Lois Moore, Amory, MS.** “I love your publication” ...**Tuscumbia, AL.** “I was baptized into Christ on 4/12/1978 and am currently worshiping with the church on Hampton Ridge Rd, Fayetteville, North Carolina. I just wanted to take this opportunity to say ‘thank you’ and the congregation for this marvelous publication. I’ve been receiving it for years. They have been enlightening, enriching, edifying and an outstanding evangelism outreach tool, solid biblical teaching. Keep up the great words. To God always be the glory. Enclosed is a personal and small token of appreciation towards God’s terrestrial kingdom and its work. Hebrews 13:1” ...**Robert Wright, Fayetteville, NC.** “I would like to receive *Seek the Old Paths* for free” ...**Dana Zimmerman, Brandon, SD.** “My grandfather Nathan McCall was a Gospel preacher and we recently moved into the old family home. I received his July issue and thoroughly enjoyed it and would like to subscribe. Thank you and God bless!” ...**Dustin Boyce, Sr., Bradford, AR.** “Continued thanks to all you brethren for the monthly sermons in written form that cannot be denied! Preach it! To His glory” ...**Freddie Clayton, Dunlap, TN.** “Thank you from the frozen wasteland” ...**Shannon Wilder, Chickaloon, AK.** “The August article by Jon Gary Williams, Irreducible Complexity, is very good. If ever any man proved that evolution is ‘fake news,’ brother Williams accomplished it in this article. I shared this article with several people. Good work” ...**Carl O. Cooper, Lewisville, NC.** “Please take me off your mailing list. I am moving. Thank you” ...**Ann Free, Garland, TX.** “My copy of ‘Wolves In Sheep’s Clothing’ was torn in the mail. I think Satan got angry. Please send me another one. Great lessons to learn. God bless your labors. He rewards his people” ...**Doris Ingram, Memphis, TN.** “My dear mother had your paper sent to me years ago. I have enjoyed it so much. I have moved several times and the paper has followed me. May the Lord continue to bless you in this work” ...**Wilma Hendrix, Duncan, OK.** “Thank you” ...**Glenn Hamilton, Cisco, TX.** “Keep up the good work” ...**Pamela Snyder, Altha, FL.**

REFRESHING WORDS

God’s Word is powerful (Rom. 1:16). It provides that which we need (2 Peter 1:3). How thankful we should be for the Word of God and glad that we have it, because when we are:

- Discouraged we can pick up the Bible and begin to read it for it “is able to build us up” (Acts 20:32).
- Doubting we can read Matt. 6:24-33 and be refreshed.
- Disturbed with the problems of life we can read Romans 8 and feel secured.
- Distressed with a troubled heart we can find solace in reading John 14:1-6.
- Drifting away because our faith is growing weak we can read Hebrews 11 and be encouraged by the great saints of old.
- Dealing with temptation and it seems too much for us, we can read 1 Cor. 10:13 and see there is a way out.
- Deserted by those around us and we feel that we are all alone in this life, we can read Psalms 23 and know that there is ONE who is with us who really does care (1 Peter 5:7).
- Distracted with the guilt of sin we can find the solution in God’s Word and be delivered spiritually when we submit our will to His Will (Heb. 2:9; 5:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:4; Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:8; Matt. 7:21; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Rom. 10:9-10 and Mark 16:15-16). How glad we should be for the “refreshing” words that are found within the BIBLE. Think about It!

Jerry Joseph

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