



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 PRESERVATION OF THE FAITH #1

Leroy Brownlow (deceased)

The most important thing is not whether you are in the main stream of the fellowship of the church, but whether you are in the main stream of “The Faith” (Jude 3).

The preservation of the faith is a topic I consider to be one of the most relevant and pressing topics that can be discussed in our brotherhood today. I firmly believe with all of my heart that the church is now facing the greatest dangers it has ever faced in my lifetime — dangers from within: modernism, denominationalism, new hermeneutics, liberalism. Liberals remind me of the old farmer who kissed his mule. His explanation was, “Well, it’s every man to his own choice.” But his neighbor down the road didn’t want to kiss his mule. He wanted to kiss only his wife; and, he was called a legalist. Brethren, guard against liberalism fever. It can cause a person to talk out of his or her head. It is dangerous. It is deadly. Some take it and never recover. Protect yourself from it by standing fast in the faith.

I said to some people not long ago concerning their congregation, “You need to decide whether you are going to follow the Bible or not follow the Bible; whether you are going to be the church of Christ or not the church of Christ, because we are divinely obligated to preserve the faith.” Jude said, “It was needful for me to write unto you and to exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith.” Now, while the false teachers, like raging waves of the sea, foam out their shame; you

contend earnestly for the faith.

In the same connection, Paul commanded the Corinthian church, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.” Stand fast! Don’t waver. Don’t go with the wind. Don’t play politics. Don’t try to be on both sides. Don’t be like the soldier in the Civil War who put on the coat of a Northern soldier, a blue coat, and the pants of a Southern soldier, gray pants, and tiptoed onto the battlefield. He got shot by both sides.

The apostle Paul commanded Titus, “Wherefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith.” Not all sound, but sound in the faith. And, rebuke them sharply to produce it. That is preserving the faith. But there are those who say the faith does not refer to the teachings of Christ; that it refers only to the deity of Christ, and that, if one believes in the sonship of Christ, that he can violate all of the teachings of Christ all the way from Dan to Beersheba, from “a” to “z”, and still be a keeper of the faith. But that’s not what Paul taught. Paul taught otherwise. Paul stated in Galatians 1:8 that he preached the Gospel, and in verse 23, he stated that he preached the faith. What did he do? He preached the faith of the Gospel, and Paul used that very expression in Philippians 1:27, “striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

So, what is the faith? It is the gospel faith. It is the Christian system. It is the Christian religion. And, therefore, we must respect it and we must not trample it under foot because it will be the standard of judgment when the judgment day comes.

Jesus said, “The word that I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day” (John 12:48). So, I appeal to our brethren everywhere: Do not sell the standard of judgment, the teachings of Christ, for a mess of denominational pottage.

Also, in the same connection, warning Christians to preserve the true doctrine, Paul gave this command to Timothy: “That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3). No other doctrine! No other doctrine! No other doctrine! Yes, I know the word “doctrine” upsets some of our people. Just mention the word “doctrine” and they start shaking like they had the saintitis dance. But they could overcome this if they would quit dancing to the tune of denominational professors and writers. And, if they don’t overcome it, then, they themselves place their names in the category with Hymenaeus and Alexander, whose names have gone down in infamy as

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Preservation of the Faith...



Editorial...

THE NEED FOR AN ELDERSHIP IN EVERY CHURCH

Garland M. Robinson

What is the most pressing need of any congregation? A better meeting place? Better trained Bible teachers? A faithful Gospel preacher? Perhaps more money to support more work for the Lord. What if you were able to supply one or all of these. If you could do one thing for the church where you worship, what would it be?

Though most of these are pressing needs, there is a need far greater than any and all of them, that is, a qualified, faithful, godly eldership in every congregation! With a faithful eldership, the needs of the church will be taken care of. [Men who are not scripturally qualified cannot be faithful elders until they become qualified (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11)].

Jesus did not intend to leave His church to be a formless, leaderless group of unguided people. God intended the church to be the *ekklesia* — the “called out.” His church is to be a thoroughly ordered body of people, not a chaotic, self-willed sect. The church of Christ is made up of people who are obedient to God’s will — the Faith, the Gospel.

Elders are the “key” men in the church. Their function is to oversee/superintend. That is, they have been given the charge to see to it that what is done, is done correctly/rightly. They will integrate and harmonize the work of evangelists, deacons, teachers, members — the entire membership. A strong, faithful eldership in every congregation is one of the surest ways to stand before the Lord one day and hear him say, “well done thou good and faithful servant” (cf. Matt. 25:21,23). On the other hand, an unqualified eldership is a sure way to fail in God’s work. Such a congregation cannot be what it’s supposed to be with an unqualified eldership.

Why do not more churches have qualified overseers? Several questions much first be answered. How

many churches really want godly elders? How many Christians really want elders? Would the average church’s membership tolerate real New Testament shepherds? It is sad, but many Christians are in such a state that it is doubtful they would tolerate someone scripturally watching for their souls. How many are willing to submit their spiritual welfare to the care and keeping of the elders (pastors, shepherds, overseers) of the church?

ELDERS ARE NOT OPTIONAL

Congregations must realize that elderships are not optional. We do not have the liberty to have elders or not have elders. We do not have the option of forming another system to oversee the flock on a permanent basis (such as the general men’s business meeting). The men’s business meetings are attended by the faithful and unfaithful, the novice and experienced, the learned and the unlearned. Such meetings are sometimes characterized by friction, strife and division. They are many times dominated by a small minority or sometimes a single individual who can maneuver and manipulate others to vote the way he desires. The work of the Lord is not carried on by popular (majority) vote! Nor is it carried on by minority vote! Nothing will ever work successfully when everyone is in charge, yet no one is in charge!

However, in the absence of qualified men to be elders, the word of God compels each congregation to carry on the business of the church. Decisions have to be made and things have to be done in the work of the Lord. Therefore, it is obvious that the mature, faithful male members carry on the work of the Lord. Concentration must be given to obtaining a qualified eldership as quickly as possible. The only alternative would be

to disband as the Lord’s church. We must not let the devil have his way. Let’s march on in following our Master to our heavenly reward.

Every congregation should want and desire elders because *it is the will of God!* Paul said to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). It is obvious the congregations in Crete did not have elders. As Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23), Titus was to do the same. No other individuals have the obligation or responsibility of those who are elders. A congregation will never be fully organized until the will of God is carried out in this area. The number one reason why every congregation should have elders is that it is the will of God.

ELDERS HAVE THE OVERSIGHT

Elders have the responsibility of seeing to it that God’s will is obeyed. They do not make laws where God made none. Neither do they ignore the laws He did make. They simply carry out the laws God has commanded! God has given them authority to see that it’s done.

Elders are to “TAKE HEED” to themselves and to the flock. “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). The word “heed” means to “hold to, turn one’s attention to.” The Holy Spirit made them overseers and they have the right to turn their attention to every member and see to it that what they are doing is pleasing unto the Lord.

They are to “TEND” the flock. In 1 Peter 5:1-3 we read, “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*” The word “tend” or “feed” means “to shepherd, to nourish, pro-

mote the interest of, direct, superintend, to rule.”

Elders have the “RULE” over the congregation. *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief”* (Heb. 13:17). “Rule” means “to go before, to be a leader, to rule, command, to have authority over, leading in respect to influence, controlling in counsel.” They must give the congregation organization and direction. They must communicate with them, evaluate the work, always be alert for ways to use every member to the fullest of their ability.

Elders have the duty of keeping the church “PURE.” In doing so, they teach the word (1 Tim. 3:2) They are able by sound doctrine to “convict the gainsayers” (Titus 1:5). “Convict” means to “bring to light, expose, demonstrate, convince, reprove and correct those who speak against or contradict the truth.” They are to “warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all” (1 Thess. 5:14). They take the lead in church discipline (2 Thess. 3:6).

Though they are responsible for each of the souls entrusted to their care and have authority from God in carrying out their task, they are not to be lord’s over God’s heritage (1 Peter 5:3). This means they must not rule with an iron hand or dictatorial spirit. They are not to love the pre-eminence as Diotrephes (3 John 9). Instead, they are to be gentle and not self-willed.

WHAT FAITHFUL ELDERS WILL DO

They will be *diligent students of the Bible*. It’s hard to be a coach if you don’t know the rules of the game. Therefore, elders will keep themselves informed of false doctrines and take seriously their responsibility to guard the church.

They will *know the needs of the membership* and strive to meet those needs according to the Word.

They will *know the Bible teachers and be assured of their soundness and faithfulness*. This will also involve making sure the literature used is true to the Bible.

They are men who will *hold fast the faithful word and be able “by*

sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince [convict] the gainsayers” (Titus 1:5). They are men who have the courage and willingness to meet error head-on. They will inoculate the members against the errors that run rampant.

They will *close the pulpit and classroom to false teachers*. When there are no elders, it’s more difficult to stop false teachers. Some will have objections of one sort or another. People will become upset and division occurs. With elders, they can put a stop to it and the faithful will stand behind them. Some may voice objection, but they will learn they cannot have their way.

They will *uphold the hands of those who preach the word*. This is extremely important! They will let the congregation know what was preached is the will of God and if anyone has any objection, see them about it, not the preacher.

They will *take the church out of the secular education, entertainment and recreation business*. Youth activities often siphon funds from the church treasury to support fun and games and other non-spiritual matters. There is no Bible authority for the church support of such things. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). It is the work of the home to supply these needs, not the church.

They will *make every effort to restore the church to her ancient simplicity and purity as authorized by the scriptures*. An appeal to the “old paths” is always foremost in their minds.

They will *see to it that God’s word is obeyed in all things*. They will show the way by example.

CONCLUSION

If you work under good elders, be thankful and hold up their hands. Never be a worry to them. Pray for them. Work with them. If you do not have elders where you worship, let it be foremost in your mind that as soon as there are qualified men, they will be appointed. Working under faithful men will stir your soul unto a greater zeal for the Lord. Work for the day there will be such godly, sound, faithful, qualified men among you!

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Preservation of the Faith...

(Continued from page 57)

the shipwreckers of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19,20).

Again, concerning doctrine, Paul has said, “Now, I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17,18). Now, God has spoken to our hearts, and God has said, “Mark them and avoid them.” Now, God put that statement in the Bible. It is there. It was there yesterday. It is there today, and it will be there tomorrow. And no man or group of men can take it out. Just cynically calling the preachers of the faith “Bible thumpers” or the “doxie keepers” and “cranks” won’t take it out. It is there to stay. But a brother says, “Maybe they can take it out with hermeneutics.” That reminds me. One brother said to another, “What do you think of hermeneutics?” He replied, “I may have met him, but I don’t recall it.” Not knowing anything at all about hermeneutics is far better than knowing something about it that is not true. Some of the new hermeneutics advocates strain at a scripture and swallow a whole sectarian seminary.

New hermeneutics is like a greased pig. It makes a lot of noise but gives you nothing to hold to. New hermeneutics, modernism, denominationalism, liberalism, are all peas from the same pod. They are the same disease — just different strains of the same virus. Oh, hermeneutics, how scripture has been perverted in your name! Oh, hermeneutics, how the reckless head hunters have walked into cemeteries and invaded the graves of the sleeping giants of the faith in your name! Oh, hermeneutics, hermeneutics, what crimes are committed in your name! My friends, if you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

Paul commanded Timothy to “make full proof of thy ministry,” and then he told him how. He said, “Preach the word; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Fellow Christians, in all candor, it takes more than degrees for one to prove his ministry. In fact, the church can slip into apostasy by degrees. And, you

can interpret that any way you wish.

The most important thing is not whether you are in the main stream of the fellowship of the church, but whether you are in the main stream of the faith. The Bible says, “That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

Every wind of doctrine. I must honestly say, from what I see and from what I hear, the winds of doctrine are blowing hard against us today. In some places, there is a cyclone, and every once in a while, there is a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder. Therefore, duty is incumbent upon me that I call attention to some of the winds of doctrine blowing against us — to some of the eyebrow-raising events occurring among us. I cannot be true to this topic; I cannot be true to the church; I cannot be true to myself; I cannot be true to the God of heaven, unless I call attention to some of the winds of doctrine blowing against us today.

Here is a Bible lesson, a sheet, in a big class, in a big church that teaches “no pattern” theology. That means do your own thing in your own way as you see fit — no pattern. Here is a church bulletin that smears the rigid forms of Christianity that we have been teaching. And, yet, Jesus said, “Enter in at the strait gate,” that is spelled s-t-r-a-i-t — strait gate — “and narrow is the way,” and that is rigid.

Here is another church bulletin that tells of a poll they took in their congregation, and that poll revealed that over one-half of their members do not believe in the exclusiveness of the church and do believe in instrumental music in the worship.

Here is another church bulletin that announces their summer series that features seven denominational preachers that will preach seven Wednesday nights. In a prominent brother’s last sermon (which I heard on tape), he didn’t know it would be his last sermon, but it turned out that way. He attacked and assailed congregational autonomy. Fellow Christians, we must have either congregational autonomy or centralized control. And, if they want centralized control, where will the headquarters be, and who will be the one or the ones to head it?

At a Christian university lecture-ship, an evening speaker derided thousands and thousands and thousands of people — brothers and sisters in Christ — calling them “the five steppers.” Some in the audience cheered. Now, it is very evident that he does not believe in the five steps: *teaching, belief, repentance, confession, and baptism*. Since he doesn’t, then, he ought to tell us how many steps he does believe in — four, three, two, one, or none.

Here is a statement issued by a church given to its members stating that on Sunday morning they would have an all-women participation in public worship. The women would serve as ushers, would make the announcements, lead the singing, lead all the prayers, serve at the Lord’s table, and wait on the congregation by serving them the communion — do everything except the preaching! Of course, that will follow next. Because a boy that drives the plow, can trip them up on that one. A boy that drives the plow, will tell those elders, if you can have in the public worship a woman to address God for the people, why can’t you have a woman to address the people for God? You see what I’m talking about there?

Now, here is the account of a preacher’s reputed sermon before a large group of youth directors. He said, “You are saved by grace alone — by grace period.” He condemned us on the music question. He talked up the idea of women preachers. He argued that, “in the 1990s, there will be a diversity in the church that do not believe in the essentiality of baptism.” And, then, he boasted, “There is nothing that you can do to change that; nothing, nothing.” But, my friends, there are a lot of faithful men and women in the church — dedicated, strong and sound in the faith — who stand in the way of the fulfillment of that prophecy, especially the older members. And, for that reason, the digression peddlers have put the older members on the hit list.

At a north Texas teachers’ workshop held in Fort Worth a few years ago, which drew some 1,600 people each night, in a large class, a man spoke up and said, “Don’t you think that the church will be a lot better off when a lot of the older members are dead?” The teacher replied, “No ques-

tion about it. No question about it.” My friends, I wondered which ones they want to shoot next. Frankly, when my number comes up, I’m going to vote against it. And you have my word on that.

Concerning the pioneers in the church, there is one thing sure: They gave the world a lesson in dedication, commitment, faith, hard work, sacrifice, courage, and success. Think of the sacrifices and the courage of the older preachers. They had enough bravery that they would have been willing to charge hell with only one bucket of water. And, now, it bleeds my heart that some newcomers, and some not quite so new, would come along and spit on their graves. My friends, if they could only see the hearts they are now breaking! If you have prayers, prepare to pray them now.

Here is a book authored by three Christian university professors and published by a Christian university press. Brace yourself, brace yourself! It is shocking! On page 35, it reproaches us for having been preoccupied with what humans must do to secure their own salvation with exhortations to duty and faithfulness and with admonitions to keep the law of Christ. My friends, I never thought I would live to see the day that there would be those in our fellowship who would fault us and reprimand us for putting on the priority list: salvation, duty, faithfulness, and the keeping of the law of Christ. And, then, on page 37, it condemns the churches of Christ for competing with the evangelicals for souls and derides us for being fundamentally concerned that people come to our churches, not elsewhere. How could they say this unless they believe that one church is as good as another? Of course, we competed with those in error for souls, and that was an outstanding characteristic of the New Testament church. And, if the Lord’s church back in the first century had not competed with those in error for souls, then, the Lord’s church never would have gotten off the ground. We come now to page 58. It assails us for using the New Testament essentially as a law book or divine constitution for the church.

Fellow Christians, if the New Testament is not the law book or the constitution for the church, then,

pray tell me, what is? Don’t tell me the Lord established a kingdom, gave a spiritual government, and gave no laws or a constitution to govern it. That would be preposterous, absurd, ridiculous, non-sensible. Who ever heard of a kingdom — a government — anywhere on the face of the globe, in any civilization, in any age, that has not had laws or a constitution to govern it? Without laws, without a constitution, chaos would take over; anarchy would prevail. The reason we have anarchy and chaos in the church of our Lord is because some have refused to recognize the New Testament as the law book or the constitution of it.

On the next page, page 59, it refutes us for our focus on the scriptures. It says, “The focus began to fall heavily on obeying the laws, building by the blueprint, knowing all the right facts; in short, upon human knowledge and performance.” Of course, the focus fell heavily on *obedience*. “He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:8,9). Of course, the focus fell heavily on *building by the blueprint*. We must not add to it or take from it (Rev. 22:18,19). Of course, the focus fell heavily on *knowledge*. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32). Of course, the focus fell heavily on *performance*. Jesus told of two men: a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man built his house upon the rock, and it stood. The foolish man built his house on the sand, and it fell (Matt. 7:24-27). The thing that made the difference was performance! And performance will make a difference at the day of judgment when we are judged according to our works, according to our performances. And, these men have bashed it.

Also, on the same page, page 59, in their derogatory remarks about obeying God, they cynically say, “God, of course, had done his part long ago, and it now remained only for human beings to engage their minds, dig in their heels, and bring the plan to completion.” Fan me! That takes my breath! My friends, that’s what Christianity is all about — bringing God’s plan to completion in our lives. And they have bashed it!

I trust that I can say something about a book published by a Chris-

tian university press without stepping on a land mine. I don’t want to be blown up. I just want to preserve the faith. Don’t misunderstand me — please, please don’t misunderstand me. I don’t want to throw the baby out with the wash. I just want to clean up the wash! And, surely, that is the wish of all of us — clean up the wash rather than throw the baby out with the wash. I trust that we can understand that.

Unless digression is rebuked today, it will be a lot bigger and stronger and louder tomorrow. And, therefore, we need to recognize this today, as those who stand in the defense of the Gospel of Christ. I trust that we shall not allow blind partisanship to lead us into the ditch. There is no place for blind partisanship in the life of a child of God.

Part 1 of 2
Sermon delivered over
20 years ago

PREACH THE WORD!

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). There is only one priority in preaching and teaching — pleasing God! If we please God in our preaching, it matters not how men regard it, God is pleased. He is the judge. God told Isaiah, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and...sins” (Isa. 58:1). We are faithful today when we do the same. We are to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) and “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). That requires exposing error. When Paul entered a city and preached, trouble followed. The Truth disturbs those who love darkness (1 Thess. 5:4-5). TRUTH and ERROR are mortal enemies. They cannot exist together without conflict and controversy! Satan will go to any length to keep error from being exposed! Question: Where has God EVER condemned anyone for exposing, rebuking, reproofing and admonishing error? God commands us to expose error, not conceal it! Refute it, not support it!

— Garland M. Robinson

Elder's COLUMN

HAVE CHRISTIAN COLLEGES COMPROMISED?

Lloyd Gale

This is a question posed by Ken Ham and Greg Hall entitled “ALREADY COMPROMISED”, as the result of a major research study conducted last year.

They say that average church members would be shocked and outraged at their findings of an uncertain sound emanating from many of our Christian colleges.

Now, dear reader, understand that the authors of this study and the book they have written are not faithful members of the Lord's church. However they were able to see what far too many members of the Lord's church for years have refused to see. This in spite of the fact that many faithful members of the Lord's church have documented the uncertain sounds coming from the private schools established by faithful brethren. Schools established in times past with good intentions.

The authors of this research state; “Average church members would be shocked and outraged.” I so wish that such were true, but the “average member” of the Lord's church has been indifferent and continues to be so. Many look upon those of us who have been sounding the warnings now for decades as trouble makers. They have in fact become blind followers of their blind leaders.

The authors of this study state: “An uncertain sound is emanating from many of our Christian colleges.” “Many,” they say, please show me the exception(s). Have some gone farther into error than others? Yes, without a doubt this is the case. However, it appears that it is just a matter of time as they swap professors and bow to the accreditation demands of mammon.

It has been shocking to me to observe that so many members of the Lord's church appear to be more loyal to some school than to the blood purchased church. Some believe that any education is better than no education. How sadly mistaken is this concept. My wife and I have labored many decades in educating our-

selves, our children and as many others as possible in that which is true. Any and all education that conflicts with God's word is a curse to any person, church or nation. Jesus stated that absolute and objective truth is knowable (John 8:31-32). Evolution is a lie. Secular humanism is a lie. Relativism and phony Ecumenicalism based upon a ‘unity in diversity’ concept is blasphemy. Yet many of the so-called Christian schools, to some degree, promote these very philosophies.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John is found to be providentially on the small isle of Patmos which is located very near the seven churches of Asia. They were to be given the responsibility to decode the urgent (at the time) message to the Lord's church. As we know, the church of Christ had its inception in Jerusalem and was spread throughout Judea before it was carried to the Gentiles. Even in A.D. 68, it was the heart of Christianity. It was in that area that Christians had endured the greatest persecution because every convert weakened the power of the Jews.

After Rome had its great fire in A.D. 64, it is believed that Nero sought to find a scapegoat on which to blame the catastrophe. Nero sent his forces to destroy the heart of Judaism and Christianity.

The churches of Asia were first closely examined by Jesus. Jesus noted the good as well as the bad. In commenting on something good found in the church of Ephesus Jesus said: “*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*”

Have you wondered just who were these Nicolaitans and just what were some of their deeds? Here is what *Smith's Bible Dictionary* says they were in part. “A sect of heretics of the first Century. They held it lawful to eat food sacrificed to idols; to join in idolatrous worship and that God did not create the universe. They held women in common.” To put it

simply, they did not believe in the word of God. They, as many today both within and without the Lord's church, believe they can direct their own steps.

I am struck with the similarity of today's “progressives” — “change agents” many of whom believe in the man originated doctrine of “evolution” which is a covert denial of God's word (Gen. 1:1). Many of the progressive elders, preachers, professors and members are eager to embrace and join in with the idolatrous man-originated churches. An idol does not have to consist of wood, stone or precious metals. It may be a humanly concocted creed, doctrine or philosophy. When it replaces the word of God, it is an idol. All such obeisance has been rendered as vain. “*But in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrine the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9).

There is even a sense in which the progressives among us “hold women in common.” They advocate for women to serve in the same capacity as men in the church ignoring the teaching of God's word and the lack of evidence for their contention. Just as Adam and Eve ignored the word of God, as did also Cain, and many other examples; so do these “change agents.” They willingly accept into their fellowship those supposedly “dry cleaned” and those who were “baptized” as infants into some humanly-originated society. They deceive congregations by saying that the elders and the preachers, after much study, have decided that what the Lord commanded, and faithful Christians have for some 2,000 years believed and preached, is not true. Only “they” have so recently arrived at the truth. Brothers and sisters in Christ, they could not as much hold the cloak of the preachers and elders of times past. Their knowledge of the scriptures is not simply shallow, the creek-bed among them is bone dry.

Jesus said, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's*

clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles” (Matt. 7:15-16)?

These “change agents” among God’s people sow not the pure seed of the word of God. They sow the corrupt seed of doubt and confusion. Their seeds produce not Christians, but the thorns and thistles of just one more sad and sick denomination.

How can it be the case that entire congregations can so easily be carried away to the broad road whose end is eternal punishment? Have so many members of the Lord’s church become Biblically ignorant? Are we seeing the words of Hosea once again to be the state of God’s people today — “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). “If you love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” (2 John 6). “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

Is it not time for God’s people to recognize the source of so many false doctrines that have troubled the Lord’s church in recent decades? Who is it that decided that the Lord’s church needs to establish a new set of “ministries” in the church? Who is it that is sending forth “change agents” out among God’s people to “restructure” the Lord’s church? Who is the champion of every new translation? Have we so soon forgotten that those who departed from the Lord’s church who now comprise the “Disciples Of Christ” and the “Christian Church” denomination, did so with the blessings of most of the “Christian schools?”

Ever wonder why the Lord did not teach Christians to establish private schools to advance His cause? Think about it!

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**SEND US YOUR
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HAND-CLAPPING & SINGING “HAPPY BIRTHDAY”

Ivie Powell

With far too many brethren, a “pep-rally” atmosphere permeates their concept of being spiritual. Even the worship service is not off limits. I frequently hear of congregations (who, in the past, have enjoyed a reputation of being sound in the faith) allowing hand-clapping and the singing of “Happy Birthday” at baptisms. Recently, when asked about the authority for such practices, the preacher replied that it was a happy occasion and there was nothing wrong with what they did. Notice, please, no Biblical authority (Col. 3:17) was cited to support the innovations! When the elders were approached about the matter, they did not like it, but could find nothing wrong with it biblically. By the “reasoning” of such brethren, ‘whistling’ and the ‘stomping of feet’ would be just as acceptable! I am amazed at such outright ignorance of God’s word and overt refusal on the part of elders to immediately stop the mouth of the gainsayers (Titus 1:9-11).

In Philippians 4:9, the inspired Paul wrote, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” One thing is for certain, brethren who have brought in these innovations did NOT learn, receive, hear and see in Paul or other inspired men’s writings any Biblical authority for such practices! Such practices came from the denominational world and so-called “youth ministers” in the Lord’s church!

Not long ago (9/13/10), brother Gary Colley, evangelist for the Getwell church of Christ in Memphis, TN, wrote the following in their bulletin which needs wide circulation throughout the brotherhood.

We have had several questions (from at least two states recently) concerning whether hand-clapping, “Praise Teams,” singing “Happy Birthday” at baptisms, and singing during the Lord’s Supper were Biblically right. Basically, they are WRONG because we do not have the Lord’s permission to practice such (Matt. 28:20) any more than we have authority to add instrumental music to our singing or buttermilk and corn bread to the Lord’s table. We are to do all things in the authority of Christ (Col. 3:16-17; 2 Jn. 9-11), and again we say these practices do not have Heaven’s approval. They are introduced by those who have more zeal than knowledge, it seems (Rom. 10:1-2). These are, therefore WRONG for the following reasons: (1) We have no authority from Heaven. (2) They produce division and confusion. (3) They do not contribute to orderly and decent worship (I Cor. 14:40). Can anyone imagine one clapping around the cross? Some want to clap when one is baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Clapping at a sporting event is in order, but in worship it is out of order! Some want to sing while taking the Lord’s Supper when they should be thinking about and remembering the death of Christ. They are mixing two items of worship, both of which demand, separately, our devoted thinking (Acts 2:42). “Brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Brethren, mark it down, the practices discussed in this article, if continued, opens the door to the raising of “holy hands” and dancing in the isles as an expression of Christ living in us. That will never happen here, some may say. But bear in mind, that’s precisely what brethren said about hand-clapping, singing “Happy Birthday” at baptisms, etc.! Scriptural worship involves reverence, NOT revelry!

It’s time for elders to stop these worldly practices or else resign! “O earth, earth, earth hear the word of the Lord” (Jer. 22:29).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I would like my daughter put on your mailing list. Please send the June paper. She needs that article very badly. I really enjoy getting the paper. Thank you so much" ...**Joan Hulse, Revenden, AR.** "I have received my first copy of the **Seek The Old Paths**. I'm looking forward for the next copy as promised. Keep up the good work. I would also like to put my brother and his wife on the mailing list. Thank you" ...**Bonnie Barnett, Eufaula, OK.** "Carolyn Williams has passed away. Please remove her from your mailing list" ...**Millport, AL.** "Please put me on your mailing list for STOP. I appreciate your faithfulness to the word of God and wish everyone had a copy. Just like the Bible, churches of the Lord should distribute it, like some of us do the Bible. My mother, God rest her soul, has received the copy for years, Odessa Russell. I came by her mail box and found a copy. My sister Norma Ragle now gets her copy. I would like to contribute an article sometime. I'm __ years old and have seen a lot of changes in messages the church is now proclaiming. May God help us all" ...**Ron Russell, Baker, FL.** "Please remove A. J. Winchester from your mailing list. He is deceased. Thank you for your corporation" ...**Bradford, AR.** "I enjoy reading STOP. I would like to share STOP with others. Please add the following three names to the mailing list for STOP. You do a wonderful job for the Lord. Thank you so much" ...**Mary Lou Parker, Red Oak, TX.** "Dear friends! Please send me "Seek the Old Paths" by post" ...**Dmitriy Gritsak, Ukraine.** [NOTE: I'm sorry, but we do not currently mail STOP overseas. The cost is more than we can handle. It is available on the internet. It can be read and/or printed from there — seektheoldpaths.com]. "I wish to change my address on the magazine. Thanks for sending it to me. I am very grateful" ...**Joyce Ferrell, Frankfort, KY.** "Enclosed is \$\$ for a subscription to **Seek The Old Paths**" ...**Lonnie Hutton, Sparks, OK.** "We would like to thank you for the years of service you have provided in sending out your bulletins and articles for our reading. I know that Mr. Lowry enjoyed these very much and looked forward to getting them. However, on June 14th, Vaughn Lowry was taken up to be with our Savior. He lived a long 95 years and will be dearly missed. Please take his name off your mailing list" ...**The Lowry Family, Arp, TX.** "I am writing regarding my address change. I so enjoyed reading **Seek The Old Paths**. I would appreciate it if you could start sending it to my new address. I have not received an issue since the May issue" ...**Jerry Hawkins, Huntsville, AL.** "I love your sound paper. I have sent a contribution in memory of my son, W. Thomas Marcum" ...**Dolly Marcum, Crum, WV.** "Here is our donation to help you to continue with the Lord's work. We enjoy STOP very much. May God bless you" ...**Name withheld by request, NV.** "Somehow, I have been removed from your mailing list. May I be put back on?" ...**Danny Penn, Dyer, TN.** [NOTE: Addresses are removed when we get the mailing back undelivered. When you move, send us your new address and we will keep you on the list. The Post Office does not forward 'Seek The Old Paths.' They return it to us and we have to pay first class postage to get it back. So many people move that we pay from \$20-\$50 a month when the Post Office returns them to us. Please send us your change of address when you move.] "Thank you so much" ...**Gainesboro, TN.**

PEACE is a word that is sweet to the ear. It seems every

day we hear about war in some part of the earth. This has been the way of man throughout history and will continue until the end of the world. Although this peace on earth is so important and desired by millions, there is another peace which is much more important. Ever since sin separated man from God, the need for peace has existed (Isa. 59:1,2). Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God*" (Matt. 5:9). Peace with God can be obtained by the Gospel. It is by "the gospel of peace" that one is made a child of God (Eph. 6:15). We are told by Paul that Jesus "preached peace" (Eph. 2:17). Paul wrote, "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). This passage makes it clear that to have peace with God, we must have faith. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). This faith comes by hearing and believing God's word (Rom. 10:17). The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews gives us examples of how faith saves. Their faith was acceptable to God because it acted. Faith alone is worthless in saving the soul. James wrote, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:26). We learn in the first Gospel sermon that the ones with faith were told to repent and be baptized to be saved (Acts 2:38). A faith that is too weak to obey God's commands is too weak to save. One's actions are proof of his/her faith. When one obeys God, he makes peace with God. Do you have enough faith in God to obey him and enjoy being his child?

—Earl B., Claud, 106 Bradley Hill Dr., Dover, TN 37058

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