



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 27, No. 8

August 2016

COMING OUT OF PENTECOSTALISM #1

Bill Davis

One of the greatest challenges for any Pentecostal to overcome is to accept the fact that God no longer works miracles today as he did in times past

Three years ago I wrote a series of three articles in *Seek The Old Paths* on *Why I Left The Pentecostal Church* (June, July, August 2013). In those articles I spoke of how I had been in Pentecostalism for over 50 years of my life. I was raised in it, worshipped in it, served in it and preached in it. Even though I was a loyal Pentecostal for all of those years, it doesn't mean I didn't see problems within it. At times we seemed to have some of the finest people in the world. At other times we seemed to have more than our fair share of spiritual fruitcakes and charlatans. At times we seemed to be very sound in doctrine and at other times we seemed to be out in left field. Yes, there was good and bad, but I was loyal.

I wrote of how my roots went down deep into Pentecostalism. As a matter of fact, I was a third generation Pentecostal. I believed if anybody had the truth, we did. But over a period of time, the inconsistencies, the foolishness, the shallowness and the errors in doctrine grew more and more glaring. All of these things became hard to overlook. The more honest I was with myself, the more I realized I could not go on as a Pentecostal.

Anytime someone leaves the denominational world there are always hurdles to overcome because of the many years of indoctrination one has been subjected to. We don't realize it

at the time, but we are being indoctrinated into various lies, manmade theories, false doctrines, scripture-twisting and verses isolated and taken out of context. We often see a carryover of this influence even after we have obeyed the Gospel. We become so indoctrinated by manmade doctrines that when we read the Bible we can't see what it clearly says. Our subconsciousness will even erase certain words from a passage or automatically change the meaning of the words.

When a person has been taught all their life that a certain thing is true, it's hard to believe it's not true. Someone once said, "It is easier to believe a lie that's been heard a thousand times than to believe a fact you've never heard before." We need to remember that at one time almost everybody believed the world was flat and anyone who disagreed with that popular concept was looked upon as strange and ignorant. This is what happens in the realm of religion. It's amazing what a person can believe without any scriptural support. People tend to follow what's popular or either what they were raised to believe. So, overcoming my religious upbringing was a challenge. That's the reason it took so long for me to come to the knowledge of the truth even though I saw and heard things through the years, that deep down inside, I knew were not right.

One of the greatest challenges for any Pentecostal to overcome is to accept the fact that *God no longer works miracles today as he did in times past*. It is difficult at first to believe that God's purpose for working miracles ended with the completion of the 27 New Testament books. So much of the Pentecostal religious world revolves around a belief in a miracle-working God and that he still works miracles today. After all, isn't he the same today as he was yesterday? How could the day of miracles be over? This is their reasoning.

What a lot of God's people don't realize is that to the Pentecostal mind, a rejection in the belief of present day miraculous gifts and miraculous signs is tantamount to rejecting God himself! Pentecostals have a strong belief in God's omnipotence — that he is the all-powerful God that created all things. If God has anything, he has power. God would not be God without power. So, to get a Pentecostal beyond this belief in modern day miracles is difficult, if not impossible.

Though most Pentecostals would not admit it, they have a hard time differentiating between God's *ability* and his *purpose*. The church of the Lord (church of Christ) in no way denies God's **ability** to work miracles.

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Editorial...

MAN DID NOT WRITE THE BIBLE

Garland M. Robinson

Not only “believe” the Bible is the Word of God, I “know” the Bible is the Word of God. The most powerful influence in the world is the all-inspired Word of Almighty God. Paul was caused to write, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). All the forces on earth cannot match its power. It transcends and penetrates concrete and mortar, iron and steel, wood and stone, land and sea, flesh and bone (cf. Heb. 4:12-13). It pierces man’s heart and soul and changes lives from the evil to the good, from corruption and depravity to morality and uprightness — from the inside out. It makes a vile person pure. It transforms a pervert into a saint. And sadly, the world is full of perverts today whose number is multiplying through the current trend of **political correctness**. Leading and pushing its way through this trend is “**progressivism**.” It contends for everything that is opposite to the Truth. And, since God’s Way is Truth (John 17:17), the progressive movement seeks to completely destroy the Bible, attacking it on every point. They may succeed at corrupting the minds of the many but they will never succeed at destroying God’s eternal Word. Jesus said, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Matt. 24:35). God has always reserved himself a remnant. The faithful few are in that number (cf. 1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:4). Are YOU?

Man believes and promotes everything disgusting, foul and degenerate. The Bible pronounces judgment upon it all. The “good book” from heaven says, “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*” (Isa. 5:20)! Today’s world “justifies the wicked” and “condemns the

righteous.” Proverbs 17:15 says “*both are abomination to the LORD.*”

Liberals and Progressives, especially those in the church of Christ (whose number is many), are pawns in the devil’s hands. They are twins, bosom buddies, who work their evil against the Lord and call it good. They trash the Bible saying it cannot be trusted since we don’t know which parts are inspired and which parts are not. They may consider themselves the elite among us, spouting their claims that everyone else is ignorant and not up to their level, but they will crash and burn under God’s almighty hand (Word). They are aiding and abetting the devil’s work of leading souls straight into hell. Yet they can’t understand why the people of God would oppose them instead of joining them. They and their doctrine (philosophy) are taking the souls of men into depravity and eternal destruction. But, it’s been this way through the ages as First John 5:19 says, “*...the whole world lieth in wickedness.*” However, that doesn’t include the few who choose to follow the Bible as God’s faithful remnant.

Unless decent people, God’s people, wake up and get in line with God’s righteous Word, the world is doomed and lost. The Word of God can save sinners, including liberals and progressives, if they want to be saved. But they have to humble themselves and repent to fully embrace the all inspired, infallible Word of God in complete obedience. Whose side are you on? Do you side with the many or with the few? The Lord said, “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad [is] the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait [is] the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matt. 7:13-14).

The Truth is the Bible and the Bible is the Truth. It is all the Truth. Jesus said to the Jews who believed

on him, “*IF ye continue in my word, THEN are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). The only way to be the Lord’s disciples is to know the Word, obey the Word, and continue in the Word. The Word will make us free from our sins. Peter boldly said to Jesus, “*...thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:69). We, like him, can confidently say that WE KNOW the Bible is the all inspired, infallible, plenary, verbal, word of God — every jot and every tittle — every ‘i’ dotted and every ‘t’ crossed (Matt. 5:18)!

Many so-called theologians do not believe the Bible is the product of God. Sad to say, this idea raises its ugly head among our own brethren. Learned men among us deny inspiration by their loose handling of the Word in their commentaries. One even says that Luke made a mistake when he used a certain Old Testament Psalm and applied it to Christ. Such is blasphemous! I venture to say that anyone that will not stand for the truth and preach a “thus saith the Lord” is an individual who does not believe the Bible is inspired by God!

One thing is certain: either the Bible is the verbally inspired word of God, or it is not. That means the Bible is either human in origin or divine in origin. If it’s of human origin, then it is not divine in origin. If it’s divine in origin, then it’s not human in origin. In other words, if it is not from God, then it is from man. And, if it is not from man, then it is from God! Let’s show that it is not of human origin; therefore, it is of divine origin.

Without God’s inspiration/intervention, we can rightly say there are only two classifications of men: uninspired non-religious men and uninspired religious men.

Uninspired non-religious men did not write the Bible. The no-good, indecent, immoral persons did not write the Bible because their deeds are condemned throughout its pages: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals, doing that which is against nature), thieves, re-

vilers, extortioners and such like. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Lev. 18:20-25; Lev. 20:9-16; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21). **Atheists** did not write the Bible because they would not have written Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” It’s very obvious and plain to see that non-religious men did not write the Bible.

Uninspired religious men did not write the Bible. Obviously, the **Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems**, and all other “non-Christian” religions did not write the Bible because they do not believe it. It’s not the standard by which they live. Even **the religious world of so-called “Christendom”** did not write the Bible because they would not have written the multitude of passages that condemn their very existence as well as their teaching (doctrine). While Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21), they pray for division; asking people to “join the church of their choice.” Man does not have a choice if he expects to be pleasing to God and go to heaven when he dies. It’s either God’s way (narrow — the right way) or man’s way (broad — the wrong way). More specifically...

Catholics did not write the Bible because they would have included verses about Peter being a pope, kissing his feet, and receiving worship. There are no such passages. Instead, Acts 10:25-26 reveals that when Cornelius fell down at Peter’s feet and worshipped him, Peter said, “*Stand up; I myself also am a man.*” When the apostle John fell down at an angel’s feet to worship him, the angel said, “*See [thou do it] not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God*” (Rev. 22:9-10). When have you ever seen the pope saying such things? Since Catholicism teaches popes cannot marry, they would have not written Matthew 8:14 and 1 Corinthians 9:5 about Peter being married. Likewise, they would not have recorded the words of Jesus when he said, “...call no [man] your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9).

Lutherans did not write the Bible because they would have included verses authorizing sprinkling for baptism. Instead, Acts 8:38 reveals that when the man from Ethiopia

wanted to be baptized, Philip “...commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” They would not have written Romans 6:4-5 which confirms that baptism is an immersion in water, not a sprinkling with water. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection.*” Of course also, they would have used a different Greek word than *baptizdo* which means to immerse.

Baptists did not write the Bible for they would have included passages that teach salvation is by “faith only.” They certainly would have not written James 2:17,24,26 where all three verses plainly report that salvation is “NOT by faith only.”

They would have said something about “voting” people into the church. According to this doctrine, it’s easier to go to heaven than to get into the Baptist Church. The Bible says the Lord “adds” those who are saved to the church (Acts 2:41,47). Church memberships voting on individuals in order to include them in the church is foreign to the Scriptures.

They would have never included Galatians 5:4 which plainly says one can fall from God’s saving grace. They believe and teach that a person cannot fall away from the Lord and be eternally lost. They would not have recorded 2 Peter 2:20-22. “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known [it], to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog [is] turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*”

The Disciples of Christ and/or Christian Church did not write the Bible because they would have added passages that allowed mechanical in-

struments of music in worship. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 drives a death-knell into their practice. “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” These passages authorize “singing and making melody in the heart.” They do not authorize playing, humming, clapping, etc.

Even the **Church of Christ** (our own brethren) did not write the Bible for we would have left out Hebrews 10:25 where saints are commanded to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There’s hardly a congregation anywhere whose attendance is not diminished (many times by half) at Sunday night worship and Wednesday night Bible study. What are these people thinking? Don’t they remember their love and commitment to the Lord the day they were “born again” (baptized)? They’ve pushed the Lord to the “back burner” for greater, more important things (NOT)! Their thought has to be, “any place and every place instead of assembling with the saints.” How will they answer on judgment day? Ye who are guilty, please don’t wait to find out!

Our brethren would not have included 1 Thessalonians 3:6 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 where we have God’s command to withdraw fellowship from those who walk/live disorderly (the wayward/immoral). Far too many times our brethren walk by “sight” instead of “faith” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Romans 16:17-18 would have never made it into the Bible for it commands to “...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Why is it that so many want their ears tickled? Heaven’s command in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 is just as valid today as it was when it was written: “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time*

will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” Jude 3 is rarely read and observed. “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” Where’s the

congregation and/or preacher who will stand up and be counted among those who will honor God by obeying his word?

One other thought, all the population of the world falls under two headings (as we think of it): Bad men and Good men. The Bible condemns bad men, therefore they would not have written a book that condemns their practices. That only leaves good men, but they did not write the Bible either, even if they had a desire to do so. The Bible claims to be from God

and not the product of man. The Bible claims to be divinely inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, good men did not write the Bible because if they had done so they would have lied when they said it came from God. And, good men do not lie!

It is evident that neither uninspired non-religious men nor uninspired religious men wrote the Bible. Neither bad men or good men wrote the Bible. The conclusion is obvious, **THE BIBLE CAME FROM GOD.**

Pentecostalism...

(Continued from page 57)

Members of the Lord’s church do not deny his power, greatness or omnipotence. We are not in the modernist camp that believes biblical miracles are a myth. Every miracle in Scripture is true and happened just like the Bible says. God is just as powerful today as he has always been. He is the unchanging, never altering God (Malachi 3:6). He cannot grow old and weak. He is ever the same (Heb. 13:8). The issue has nothing to do with who God is or his ability. The issue concerns God’s **purpose**. For example; no modern day Pentecostal is expecting a prophet to come down off of a mountain with a stone tablet with new commands written on it. Why? Because the time and purpose for that miracle has passed. No modern day Pentecostal goes to a river expecting it to part so they can walk across on dry ground. Why? Because the time and purpose for that miracle has passed. No modern day Pentecostal wakes up in the morning and goes out in their yard looking for fresh bread from heaven for the day, because the time and purpose for that miracle has passed. In the same way, I am not looking for an apostle to show up in worship this coming Lord’s day to give some new revelation or to heal a cripple or raise a dead person. Why not? Because, I understand that the time and purpose for those miracles have passed.

The apostolic ministry and gifts were for the establishing of the church and the revelation of God’s will, the Bible (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 2:20-22). “That which is perfect” (the

New Testament canon) has already come. The Bible is complete. No more revelation is needed. The “faith” (God’s Word) has been once and for all time delivered to the saints (Jude 3). There is no more to be added to it (Rev. 22:18-19). We don’t need any more miraculous confirmations (Acts 2:22; Mark 16:20). We have what we need; God’s Word which does not change. If a person does not understand the purpose for miracles then he will always be confused and gullible. He will be carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). This is the reason we see a religious world full of instability and confusion. They claim faith in God yet they are not anchored in God’s word. It can be said of them as Jacob said in describing one of his sons, he is “unstable as water” (Gen. 49:4). Instead of being anchored in God’s word that is solid and unchangeable, they have tied themselves to emotions, feelings and religious fads.

People run around from church to church looking for a “feel good” religion. Most of the so-called Christians of today are more like the pagans Paul found at Mars’ hill who were looking “to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). This is the reason they, like the Athenians, don’t know who the real God is. If they did know, they would realize their worship is unacceptable to him (Matt. 15:9). Men cannot create a form of worship that is different from what the apostles established. Early Christians followed the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). Anyone who stepped outside of the apostles’ teachings were considered heretics and apostates (Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

In all of God’s miraculous acts

from the very beginning, he has had a purpose for those acts. From the miraculous events of the creation week until the closing of the New Testament canon, miracles have served God’s purpose. Simply because man does not always understand what God is doing does not alter the fact that he has been working his purpose. We cannot force God into our box and make him perform what we want whenever we want it. God is not a genie in a bottle.

In listening to many Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers, they make it seem like God’s miracles are always available anytime anyone needs one or wants one. They make it seem like God doles out miracles like a benevolent grandfather doles out candy to a favored grandchild. However, such an idea is foreign to the Bible. Many years ago a well-known pop singer who became a charismatic wrote a book titled; “A Miracle A Day Keeps The Devil Away.” Of course, his definition of a miracle was so watered down that practically anything positive that happened was a miracle to him. Such books are ridiculous beyond reason. They literally make a mockery of God’s true omnipotence. Speaking hypothetically, if God were to work a real genuine miracle in modern times it would be powerful, unusual, undeniable as well as serving the specific purpose of glorifying Christ. It would not serve the purpose of enhancing the showmanship of a television personality or promoting the sales of someone’s latest book. It would also be something more significant than an available parking place downtown in front of the donut shop. God has a specific reason for what he does and it is not trivial nonsense or

to bring glory to a man.

Miracles are not doled out to anyone, anytime someone wants one. Notice what Christ said to the people in the synagogue in Luke chapter four. *“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian”* (Luke 4:25-27). From these verses it is noted that miracles were not being handed out every day to anybody who wanted or needed one. Christ makes the point that there were many widows in the days of Elijah who could have used a miracle of divine provision but they did not receive it. Only one widow did. There were many lepers in the days of Elisha that needed healing but only one was healed. Why did these receive a miracle? We may never know all of the details but one thing we do know is that in each case it served God’s purpose.

When we look at the life of Christ, the greatest miracle worker of all, what do we learn about miracles and their purpose? John records the very first miracle performed by Jesus. But John does not simply give us the details of the miracle. He gives the purpose for all miracles Christ would perform in his earthly lifetime. *“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him”* (John 2:11). What purpose did the miracle serve? It manifested the glory of Christ and confirmed the words he spoke. This miracle, like all of his miracles was like a huge neon sign saying “this is the Messiah, the One that was to come. Believe on Him!”

In the fifth chapter of John, Jesus points out to the Jews that there are witnesses that prove who he is. *“But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me”* (John 5:36).

John the Baptizer gave witness that Jesus was the Christ. However,

Jesus had a greater witness than John. It was the very works that he performed — his miracles. The evidence was there for anyone to see. This is the reason Nicodemus said to Christ, *“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”* (John 3:2). To those stubborn, hardhearted Jewish leaders who rejected that Jesus was the Christ, he kept pointing to the evidence — his miraculous works. John 10:25, *“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.”* John 10:37-38, *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”* John 15:24, *“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”* The “works” (miracles) were drawing attention to who Christ was. They served a purpose. They were a sign of his messiahship. They were a sign that he was the promised One who was to come (cf. Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23).

Do you remember what the Samaritan woman said to Jesus? *“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things”* (John 4:25). The Samaritans as well as the Jews knew that the Messiah was to be a man of omnipotence and omniscience; a man of miracles. Miracles set Christ apart from everyone else. This is the reason Jesus’ statement to the Jews is so powerful; *“If I do not the works (miracles) of my Father (God), believe me not”* (John 10:37). The neon sign was there saying, “This is the Christ!”

When the Jews accused Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons, he spoke of his power to perform this miracle as the very finger of God (Luke 11:20).

When John is closing his letter he reveals the purpose of his record. *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:30-31).

On the Day of Pentecost Peter reminds the Jews of the credentials of Jesus that proved he was the Christ. *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know”* (Acts 2:22).

Miracles served to confirm the ministry of Moses, that he was a man sent from God with the word of God to establish a law for the people of God. Miracles served to confirm that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised One bringing God’s message to man. Miracles confirmed the teaching and preaching of the apostles, that they were sent or commissioned by Christ to establish the one true church of our Lord and set forth it’s doctrine and perimeters.

Jesus did not come to establish a “feel good” religion as many Charismatics imply. Victory in Jesus is not about living in ease and comfort in life. Spiritual blessings are not about having the biggest house, car and bank account in the neighborhood. Miracles are not about making modern man happy. They served a purpose and the time of that purpose has passed.

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Jackson St. C/C, Alexandria, LA	\$100
Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN	\$50
Del Brantley	\$50
Beginning Balance	\$6,117.74
Contributions	\$2,495.00
Debits	
Postage	\$1,716.36
Ending Balance	\$6,896.38

A LITTLE LITURGY, PLEASE WORSHIP

Rusty Stark

What? Calling for a liturgy? This can't be right. When we think of liturgy, we think of rites and ceremonies. We think of word-for-word recitation of certain prayers and verses. We think of a leader saying something and the congregation responding in unison with prescribed words. But, this is not the kind of liturgy we're calling for.

Consider what the word "liturgy" means: Liturgy is the customary public worship done by a specific religious group, according to its particular traditions.

Much of modern religion runs from all that is liturgy, scorns all traditions, and mocks anything that is old-time and familiar. In many modern worship services, you have no idea what is coming next or what new idea someone is going to try to implement today. These groups promote themselves in their advertising with claims of non-traditional worship by saying: "We're Not Your Grandmother's Church." "We're a Church that Breaks the Mold." "Prepare to be Surprised." "A Different Way to do Church!"

All of this is part of a larger trend that panders to the modern dislike of "church." Since religious groups are trending downwards, it seems evident that people don't like "church." So, the popular response is to be as little like a "church" as possible. This leads to worship that is extreme in avoiding "liturgy."

This article calls for liturgy, but not the canned, wrote prayers and responses of Catholicism. The Bible does not authorize sprinkling holy water, waving incense, burning candles, etc. These things cannot be found in the New Testament.

However, God gave us five acts of worship. These acts of worship have been in use for 2,000 years. To do the same things over and over again makes those things customary and traditional. God's tradition, not man's tradition, is plainly called for in 2 Thessalonians 3:6. On God-ordained tradition, consider also Acts 16:4, Romans 16:17, Philippians 4:9, and 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

We do not respect and engage in

these things because they are customary and traditional; we respect and engage in these five acts of worship because God authorized them and he expects them. We do not look to custom or traditions of men to determine what we will do in worship. The Bible demands we have authority for how we worship God. "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*" (Col. 3:17).

Just as we do not allow customs and traditions of men to determine our worship practices, we also do not throw away or modify the acts of worship authorized in the New Testament simply because they are customary and traditional.

Since the New Testament is approximately 2,000 years old, those who claim to have something new in worship are clearly admitting that their worship does not come from the New Testament.

Let's make some observations about the five acts of worship. First, there are only five acts of worship authorized in the church of Christ. They are outlined in 1 Corinthians beginning in the 2nd half of chapter 11.

- The **Lord's supper** was part of the public worship of the first century church (1 Cor. 11:17-29; Acts 20:7).
- **Singing** took place in the public worship (1 Cor. 14:26).
- **Prayers** were offered to God in the worship (1 Cor. 14:15-17).
- **Teaching** was part of the public worship of the church (1 Cor. 14:26; Acts 20:7).
- **Giving** was also done as an act of worship when they assembled together on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Speaking in tongues and prophesying are also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14, but according to chapter 13 verses 8-13, the miraculous gifts were done away when the New Testament books were completed. Furthermore, even in the first century when these gifts were in practice in the worship assembly, they were only to be done for teaching purposes (see 1 Cor. 14:12,26).

It is not our right to add new acts

of worship to those authorized in God's word. Instrumental music is not simply an aid to singing. In the Old Testament, it was clearly commanded as an act of praising God (Psa. 150; 2 Chron. 29:25). But it is conspicuously absent from the New Testament, and therefore cannot be added to the worship God has authorized.

Each of the five acts of worship is independent. There is no authorization in Scripture to engage in more than one act of worship at the same time. We have no authority to combine them together. True, prayer is part of the Lord's supper and that pattern was set out by Jesus himself. But singing is not part of the Lord's supper, and actually interferes with the focus needed for both singing and for the Lord's supper. When we partake of the supper, we need to focus on the cross and the death of Jesus, discerning his body and his blood (1 Cor. 11:24-29). When we sing we need to focus on the words of the song with meaning and sincerity. It is not possible to combine these acts and do them correctly.

All five acts of worship make up the worship assembly on the first day of the week. We may assemble other times for other purposes: Bible classes, singing services, prayer services, etc. But when we assemble on the first day of the week in the general assembly of the whole congregation (see the words 'come together' in 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34; 14:23, 26), we need to engage in all the acts of worship that are under consideration here.

All of this adds up to a type of liturgy. We don't offer written prayers, and we may not always have the same number of songs or the same order for these five acts of worship. But these things are heaven's custom and tradition because they come from God's word. They represent his expectations, his revelation as to how we can approach him and praise him and 'give him the glory due unto his name' (Psa. 29:2).

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THERE MUST BE LEGITIMATE PROOF

Roger D. Campbell

***If you want us to believe that something is true in the spiritual realm,
then you are going to have to provide us with genuine evidence.***

***Give us book, chapter and verse in its context and correctly used in
accordance with the rest of the Bible.***

First-century saints were instructed, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The charge “believe not every spirit” makes it clear that Christians should not believe everything they hear. The context of 1 John 4 shows that some spirits (teachers and their messages) are “of God,” while others are “not of God” (4:6). We must be neither naïve nor gullible.

When someone tries to persuade us about a religious matter, one of the challenges we face is to be able to discern the difference between real proof and so-called proof. Some approaches and some lines of reasoning are not evidence at all.

Feelings are not evidence. One might feel their actions are appropriate when, in fact, they are a violation of God’s will. Saul of Tarsus felt good about himself when he was persecuting Christians, but his feelings were not legitimate evidence that God was on his side (Acts 26:9-11).

Claims are not evidence. One might claim he was saved as a youth because he prayed to the Lord and asked for forgiveness. Look at the facts in this situation: 1) he prayed; 2) he prayed to the Lord; 3) he asked the Lord to forgive him; 4) he’s convinced he was saved at the moment he prayed that prayer. What is missing from this list of “facts?” That the man obtained salvation. Why is it omitted from our facts list? Because he was not saved by prayer. “But he said he was saved.” Oh, yes, he claimed to be saved; but claims are not proof. One must obey Jesus in order to be saved (Heb. 5:8-9), and a lost person praying

for forgiveness is not what the Savior prescribes to be saved. Remember, a “claim” is an assertion, not evidence.

Humanly-thought-up illustrations are not proof. When we teach the Bible, we use illustrations frequently; some of them are Bible examples, but others we make up ourselves or borrow from other sources. Why do we use illustrations? We do so in order to make a point — to help those to whom we are speaking understand just what it is we are trying to get across. But, a man-devised illustration does not constitute proof that what we are teaching is true. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the singular Head of His body/church (Col. 1:18). In an effort to emphasize this truth, a Christian might say, “It is just like a country’s government. A country does not have more than one president or prime minister, and in the same way the Lord’s church does not have or need more than one head.” This reference to worldly affairs may make sense to the listener(s), but in reality, it does not prove how many heads God’s church ought to have. Only the Bible can supply such information and evidence.

Accusations are not evidence. The Jews who detested the apostle Paul and his preaching made serious accusations against him before a Roman governor (Acts 24:1-9). Paul denied the charges, saying, “Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me” (Acts 24:13). Mere accusations of wrongdoing are not proof that such really occurred.

Being a *skilled orator or writer* is not evidence. One’s ability to speak or write may persuade others to accept the position(s) he sets forth, but in fact, such skills have nothing to do

with whether or not the statements made are accurate. Tertullus was an “orator” (Acts 24:1) who served as the spokesman for the Jews who accused Paul of misconduct. Yet, his speaking ability, regardless of how impressive it was, did not prove that what they were saying about Paul was true. Do not allow your appreciation of someone’s ability to cloud your vision and judgment.

Saying “*that is what we’ve always practiced*” is not proof. What we have done or believed in the past has no bearing on whether or not something is acceptable in God’s sight. Some people of Jeremiah’s day tried to justify their worship of the queen of heaven by saying they were just doing what they and their fathers had always done (Jer. 44:17). Yes, they did carry on what had been started in the past, but that did not prove that it pleased Jehovah. We must be careful lest we “build our cases” on human traditions instead of God’s word (Mark 7:7-9).

Give us evidence. Provide us with proof. Be sure it is legitimate. Make it convincing. That is our plea. If you want us to believe that something is true in the spiritual realm, then you are going to have to provide us with genuine evidence. Give us book, chapter and verse in its context and correctly used in accordance with the rest of the Bible.

On our part, as you and I teach the Bible or discuss it with others, we must be certain that we, too, set forth legitimate, scriptural reasoning and proof. Yes, if we speak, it must be “as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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