

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 RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD FALSE DOCTRINES and FALSE TEACHERS

James W. Boyd

The Christian can expect to encounter many problems as he tries to live according to the doctrine of Christ. There are few problems that give the Christian more concern or requires more thought than what his attitude and action should be toward those who teach false doctrines, whether in or out of the church.

The problems regarding those outside the body of Christ are more easily understood than when such exist inside the body. *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Eph. 5:11). *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come ye out from among*

them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:14-16). But the attitude and action of the Christian toward false doctrines among brethren are where the gravest portions of the problem really lie because the false teachers are in the same spiritual family, the church.

Why should we be concerned about this? It is because false doctrines destroy, and that is all it can do. Truth is what saves (John 8:32). Christ warned against false doctrines. *"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"* (Matt. 16:6,11-12). Again in Matthew 15:9, *"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for*

doctrines the commandments of men." Paul also warned, *"But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8-9). Scriptures that condemn false doctrines can be multiplied in their reading. There are few, if any, who would contend false doctrines are good, but there are those who think they make little difference.

When Paul was dealing with false ways he says, *"...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened"* (I Cor. 5:6-7). To allow false doctrines to go without opposition is to invite rebellion against the truth. Gal. 5:9 repeats, *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."* Paul's attitude toward those who taught falsely in the church was stated in Gal. 2:5, *"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the*

truth of the gospel might continue with you."

That false ways are often followed is evident from observation of history and present society when these ways are compared with what God has declared to be true and false. That even the church is subject to following false ways is evident from the history of the church, plus the many warnings that are repeatedly given in the New Testament against following false doctrines and false teachers.

We ask, "How is it that the church, the very institution God set to be the pillar and ground of the truth, can become involved in and even overcome by false doctrine?" As we analyze the apostasy which Paul prophesied in I Tim. 4 and I Thess. 2, we see that God's people were led away from the truth a step at a time, bit by bit, a little here, a little there, steps ever so slight, so slight that they went undetected by most Christians. We know the church did fall away. We are not to think that the Lord's church fell away in a single bound, not by one big step or even a few. Such was not the case. But we know the difference between the New Testament church and the ecclesiastical system of Romanism that existed in the dark ages. The difference is glaring. But we are not to think that what was erroneously called Christianity took that leap from truth in one giant bound. Not so. Paul warned how the apostasy would come. "*Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils...*" (I Tim. 4:1). Notice, not all would depart at once, but it will begin with SOME departing, first a few, then more and more. Paul speaking to the overseers of the church of Ephesus, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God,*

which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). That is how apostasy became a reality. The attitude toward error was tolerant.

As one gazes into the pages of the Old Testament and sees God's chosen nation, Israel, we see time and time again they worshipped idols and committed other acts of abomination. We are made to wonder how such a people who had been exposed to God's truth could ever reach such a state. It was because of their **peers, prophets, princes, priests, and people**, and today we could add, **professors**. They were like peas (**p**'s) in the same pod, rebellious against God. Their neighbors influenced them into such things. Their failure to adhere closely to what God's Word commanded carried them into such a deplorable religious state. They did not jump into it with one leap, but gradually drifted into it. As Jesus said, "*If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*" (Matt. 15:14). And they did.

When error arises, the first thing to be done is to make an attempt to correct it. There is the right attitude toward it. It does not correct error to simply deny it exists. It takes more than a simple decree that evil is good for it to be good. It takes Biblical evidence, Biblical teaching, to prove the correctness or the falsehood of a doctrine or practice. Too often the standard used during gradual digression is simply discovering what most are doing, rather than what the Bible teaches. Truth is not determined by counting noses. When evidence and teaching are presented to show a matter to be wrong, that evidence and the force of it ought to be accepted, or the evidence

itself discredited by Scripture. We should make efforts to correct what is wrong. But when we are denied that opportunity and the truth is ignored, and there are such times, do we just go along with it anyway to keep peace and fellowship? Absolutely not!

As we seek for the Christlike attitude toward false doctrines and false teachers, especially among brethren, we must consider II John 9-11. "*Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting (or as the KJV states, neither bid him Godspeed). For he that biddeth him Godspeed is a partaker of his evil deeds.*" The teaching or doctrine of Christ is a possessive phrase, meaning the teaching or doctrine that is of, comes from, belongs to, and by the authority of Christ. We are forbidden to bid Godspeed to those who teach outside that realm. We are forbidden to approve of the course they pursue and promote. We have a responsibility in what we encourage and endorse. We become guilty of sin by promoting things that have been proven to lead the church into error. John again warned, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (I John 4:1). By what standard do we try, prove and put to the test what we hear? Can it be anything other than the all-sufficient Scriptures (II Tim. 3:16-17)? "*But there were false prophets also among the people even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth*

shall be evil spoken of" (II Peter 2:1-2) It is an unfortunate fact of life that many are led away by false doctrines and false teachers.

This is not to say that all who teach error, nor all who follow error, are deliberately and necessarily dishonest and desire to defy God. Such could well be the case with some, possibly most, but not all. Saul of Tarsus was a demonstration of honesty in error. So was Apollos. Some are simply lacking in knowledge of what the Bible teaches, and do not see the trend of events. Too often brethren are like the pig that the farmer easily led to the slaughter by dropping grains of corn just in front of the pig. The pig, never looking up to see where he was going, grabbed each kernel, one at a time, until he was led to his doom. The fact that people can be honest and sincere and still be wrong is well established in Scripture. They are still wrong, and none ought presume such could not be the case with himself. There is a way to know whether you are believing truth or error, and that is measuring by the Word. That is the only way.

Often, brethren are led away by well-meaning friends and lifetime associates. We are influenced by the so-called scholars, which way children go, marriages, by those with charismatic personalities. Some can have error pointed out to them, but because of those who are involved in it, they remain reluctant to oppose it. True enough, opposition to false doctrine may well cost you friends, even family. You may run aground with those who profess to be "somewhat." Paul warned the Galatians that they were "*bewitched*," meaning they were deceived. They were not stupid, but they had not opened their eyes and used their knowledge in detecting which direction they were going and what they were supporting. It was far more deadly than what

they first realized. If they had been more cautious, and remained loyal to the Word that had been proved before them, they would not have found themselves in the absurd position which Paul noted. He called them "*foolish Galatians*." His words were not words of hate for them, for that is never the right attitude, but they were words used in his desperate attempt to keep them from pursuing a path that would inevitably lead where they did not want to go. They had been subjected to an influence that seemed innocent on the surface, an influence that even contained some truth, but an influence that was taking the church away from the pure and noble standard of truth; an influence that eventually subverted the entire church of the first century, at least the churches of which we read in the New Testament.

The early and ancient church was deceived into accepting error by being overwhelmed with the magnetism of personalities that mixed large portions of truth with smaller portions of error, enough truth to entice brethren to support and rely upon them, and enough error that it eventually so poisoned the church that it fell away.

Who would like to drink a large, cool, refreshing looking drink that had only one trouble with it, that trouble being that it contained a small portion of poison, enough to kill? People can be deceived to think they are doing no harm in what they do, support, and encourage because there is also some good presented along side of it. But it is folly to shut one's eyes to the overall direction and trend many promoters and promotions are taking in the Lord's church today. It is not wrong to urge an attitude of caution.

If Aquila and Priscilla had possessed the same attitude toward error some "loving" brethren possess today, they

would never have bothered with correcting Apollos and his imperfect message in Acts 18. Apollos was still teaching John's baptism after it was no longer valid. He taught a lot of truth regarding Christ. He was mighty in the Scriptures. But if false portions of his message had not been corrected, it would have subverted the souls of many everywhere it was believed. Fortunately, Apollos accepted the truth when it was presented. Everyone does not. But what if he just continued to ignore the truth once presented? Would that have mattered? Certainly it would. It would have been improper for brethren to support him just because he taught some truth alongside his error.

Paul wrote how he was often in many perils of various sorts, one of which was being in perils of false brethren (II Cor. 11:26). Paul warned Timothy, "*I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, 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. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry*" (II Tim. 4:1-5). One can easily see in our time how those who warn of liberalism, modernism, worldliness, unauthorized activities, are maligned, ridiculed, berated, and disparaged by the very ones who loudly claim a superiority in love and piety. It does not take a church historian or a so-called Biblical scholar to know that the church today is not near too informed in the Bible as in past years. Brethren on the whole are

less determined to insist on "thus saith the Lord" for what they do, teach, and practice. Many shun doing battle even when necessary in order to preserve faithfulness. Too many are simply willing to compromise, surrender, or go along with error and those who promote it. That is not the right attitude toward false doctrines and teachers. Thankfully, all are not that way.

Some have claimed the change of attitude in the church toward what is false is wholesome, maturing, coming of age, and a demonstration of love and tolerance. The change in attitude toward error is none of those things. God's Word says God hates every false way (Psalm 119:104). Shall we do otherwise? Shall we allow ourselves to drift (Heb. 2:1)?

Let me be more specific so we all can understand. The differences between the Christian Church and the Lord's church are glaring and numerous. It was not always that way. At first, the difference was serious because it pertained to the matter of authority, but there were few manifestations of it. Then came the missionary society, then instrumental music, and from there came women in places of authority in the church, women preachers, change in local government, observance of "holy days," cooperation and acceptance of denominations, open membership, doing more and more unauthorized things, denial of the necessity of baptism, until they are a full-fledged manmade denomination. But it did not start out that way nor was that the intent. It began with a compromising attitude toward truth and a tolerance of false doctrines and false teachers. They failed to commend what Scripture commends and failed to condemn what Scripture condemns. They followed the lead and influence of those who advocated digressive words and ways, leaving the

"thus saith the Lord" position that is the only right attitude toward everything. In time, division occurred. A division that could have been avoided if more brethren had "blown the whistle" on it and more would have respected God's will above their own.

We are experiencing similar things in churches of Christ today that have disrupted the unity, fellowship, and growth of the church. Many have changed their attitude toward authority, the work, the worship and worldliness. Souls will be in hell because they have spent their energies promoting what is opposed to the Word of God. Many others, who might have been saved, will never know the truth. As in Paul's day when the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work, it is at work in our day, being led by the colleges that uphold false doctrines and false teachers, large, monied, worldly, compromising churches, with their highly financed clergymen and staffs.

As in yesteryear, those who warn of apostasy are called everything ugly, even by those who claim to have superior piety and love. But let us not think false doctrines and false teachers can be ignored. To be friends with God's enemies is treason. Christ did not ignore them but fought against them. So must we.

Only truth will make us free. God's Word is truth. Addition to or subtraction from, perverts the clear stream of saving truth. While we must work in growing in grace and knowledge, we must remain alert to search the Scriptures to determine what is true, diligently stand for the right, and just as diligently resist false doctrines and false teachers. Anything less is to fail in loyal service to the Christ who died for us.

Rt. 11 Box 90
McMinnville, TN 37110

CLAPPING...?

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that "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). What's wrong with hand clapping in our worship assemblies and as part of our worship to God? The answer simply is: there's no authority for it!" (Biblical Notes, November/December 1990, p.12) A-men!

Some say, "Why worry about hand clapping when the world is going to hell? Answer: simply because there will also be members of the church spending an eternity in hell for not following and obeying the teachings of Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:47-50). There have been, and always will be, people in the church who are willing to go beyond or fall short of God-authorized worship. If these issues aren't addressed from our pulpits and papers, we may be applauded on our next sermon!

9874 Knowlton Road
Garrettsville, Ohio 44231

CONTRIBUTORS

Edward White	\$20
Verona Church of Christ	\$50
Bardwell Church of Christ	\$50
Joseph C. Britt, Jr.	\$20
Bronson T. Ostic	\$10
Willie G. McLerran	\$10
Herb Hurd	\$5
Perry Sexton	\$10
Edward Allard, Jr.	\$10
Anonymous	\$25

AMEN AND AMEN

Bill Graddy

Amen is interesting and full of meaning both in Hebrew and Greek. The lexicons tell us it means truth, truly, verily, sure and certainty. It is used as a name for Christ (Rev. 3:14). When God says Amen, it means, "It is and shall be so", and when men say Amen, it means, "So let it be" (Dictionary of New Testament Words, W. E. Vine, Page 53).

I Corinthians 14:16 raises the question, how can the unlearned say Amen if they cannot understand what is said? Another way of stating the question, do we teach and preach the truth plainly and simply enough so that the hearers comprehend the message? For example, in our Bible classes and from the pulpits do we fully instruct so all can say Amen on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage?

God speaks to us through His inspired word which is final and complete (II Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 2:1-4; II Peter 1:20-21; Jude 3). The gospel must be taught (Mark 16:15-16; I Cor. 1:21; II Tim. 2:2). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). How can the unlearned say Amen if they cannot understand the message? This not only places a condition of salvation on the hearers, but a tremendous responsibility on teachers and preachers.

How frightening, how far-reaching and how forceful the thought, "If the unlearned say Amen, they must digest the message."

IN OUR BIBLE CLASSES. Teachers must be prepared! The adage "A lesson well prepared is half taught" is applicable. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers lead students to say Amen. A lack of preparation spells disaster.

IN OUR PULPITS. If a man

How can the unlearned say Amen if they cannot understand the message? This not only places a condition of salvation on the hearers, but a tremendous responsibility on teachers and preachers.

preaches in Latin, the hearers should be able to understand Latin. One who does not understand Latin could not say Amen at the end of the sermon. It is time wasted. Today, many sermons may as well be in a foreign language because of the lack of explaining the Bible text. In preaching the word, preachers must give the meaning and an application of the gospel (Neh. 8:8). How can those with a lack of knowledge say Amen if they cannot discern what the preachers say? Preachers have the unique challenge of not only declaring the Word, but explaining it so as to guide all to the truth (Acts 8:31). It may be the case that people depart from the assembly wondering just what the man said. When members of the church cannot remember what preachers preach from Sunday to Sunday, the preachers may not be prepared well enough to stir their minds to comprehension and obedience (II Peter 3:1-2).

NOW TO THE SCHOLARS. Scholarship of the Bible should agree on doctrinal matters and in matters of opinion (I Cor. 1:10). If the scholars cannot say Amen

among themselves, what hope do the students have? Ignorance results from the lack of understanding, but rebellion from what is understood (II Thess. 2:10-12).

"As goes the proposition, so goes the demonstration" is a valid hermeneutical principle. If we as teachers, preachers and scholars do not demonstrate the principles of the Bible, will the learners ever say Amen? Confusion will continue.

Relative to Bible principles among members of churches of Christ, where are the least Amens said? The wind blows from the colleges to the congregations, and the "Amens" are lacking because of the confusion among so-called scholars! Is it the case today, that Bible class teachers and preachers in local congregations must deteach and re-teach many erroneous concepts which came out of "our" institutions of learning? Is it so with the Papers among us?

Miraculous gifts ended (I Cor. 13:8-10). The pure language came on the day of Pentecost (Zeph. 3:9; Acts 2). If we fail to relate this pure speech, how shall the unlearned say Amen? Language, the Word of God, will not cause people to be lost (John 6:45). What a sad commentary upon us as instructors to miss the mark of instructing so as not to evoke a hearty Amen! Inconsistent and confused teachers will not untie the Gordian Knot; thus, those who sit at their feet will be contentious, divisive and unity will never prevail (Phil. 2:1-2). If we echo the "It is and shall be so", more people would be saying Amen and the congregations would be edified and bearing much fruit (I Cor. 14:17). Amen and Amen!

#22 Sugar Creek
North Little Rock, AR 72116

WHAT ARE WE CLAPPING FOR?

Steve Miller

It is becoming more and more common to find members of the Lord's church engaging in hand clapping in worship services. This is very popular at youth rallies and devotionals put on by brethren who would rather roll in the aisles than to worship in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24). People who try to justify hand clapping in worship have as much authority from the scriptures to hand clap as they do to justify that a person wouldn't have to obey the gospel plan of salvation to be saved. There is simply no authority for it in the New Testament.

In various gatherings of our brethren where a spiritual message is presented, the majority applaud the speaker. Vain worship is when people invent their own way to worship Almighty God (Matt. 15:9). Most likely if the people were polled, there would be a variety of answers as to why they clapped after the message. Some would say "I liked the speaker." Others would say "I liked the message," while others would reveal that they did it because others were clapping. There could be no scriptural reason given because there isn't one.

If people are permitted to applaud a sermon or spiritual talk, why can't they do it at their home congregations? It's only a matter of time. I know someone will say, "Oh you are getting excited over nothing." "It won't hurt anything." Listen, we should heed the examples of history and realize what is happening. In the beginning of the restoration movement members of the church never dreamed an instrument would be brought into the worship of the church of Christ. It has happened. If we don't confront error when it occurs, we will be sorry down the road.

Why has hand clapping become so popular with our youth? One of the reasons could be that certain pharisaical music groups have had a big influence on our young people. When these groups perform religious songs in our meetinghouses, our youth are led to believe that hand clapping, shouting, and jumping up and down is part of the worship service. The groups encourage these kinds of practices which have no place in our worship. They are pharisaical because they want to be seen doing something for the Lord (Matt. 6:1-8). Another reason may be the failure of preachers actually preaching the word (II Tim. 4:1-5). Many congregations have gone for years without ever hearing a sermon on authority, instrumental music, or worshipping in spirit and in truth. The results of not preaching the full gospel (Acts 20:27) on these subjects and similar fundamentals of the faith have given the devil fertile ground for nurturing the seeds of error.

Here are some reasons why hand clapping in worship is wrong.

1) It is false worship. Our worship must be directed and guided by the authority of the word of God. Everything that is to be included in our worship must have divine authority (Col. 3:17). Otherwise, it becomes vain worship (Titus 1:14). Paul's admonition "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (I Cor. 14:40) would be violated by hand clapping.

2) It is response to entertainment. When a singer sings a song, we applaud. When someone puts on a show such as a circus, we applaud. Hand clapping belongs in the entertainment

business. Leave it where it belongs! If singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, listening to a sermon, taking the Lord's Supper or reading the scripture is entertainment to you, then you had better take a serious look at your spiritual life because you have been severely misled.

3) It is an innovation into the worship of God. If you accompany a song with hand clapping, you are adding to God's order of things. Hand clapping is just like instrumental music in the sense that it is an unscriptural accompaniment. It is also childish and produces unwholesome emotionalism.

In an attempt to try and justify hand clapping in worship, some refer to the Old Testament. They seem to overlook the fact that we are no longer under the old covenant. "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*" (Col. 2:14). Many also attempt to justify instrumental music by the Old Testament, which is also a failure. Our religious practices come from the authority of the New Testament only.

It all boils down to whether or not we have Biblical authority for such practices. Brother Roy Deaver concluded an article on hand clapping in worship by saying, "New Testament Christianity is the religion of Bible authority. To be pleasing to God, we are obligated (and privileged) to "*walk by faith*" (II Cor. 5:7), understanding that "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Rom. 10:17), and knowing full-well

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CLAPPING...?

The Subtle Influence Of False Teaching

Steve Gibson

The question has been raised, "What is our duty toward someone who advocates false doctrines, but has no influence and is not believed?" The answer is that our duty toward advocates of falsehood is basically the same whether they are believed or not. When they persist, they must be ostracized (Titus 3:10).

Jesus chastised the church at Pergamos, "*So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*" (Rev. 2:15). The congregation showed that they did not hate this false doctrine as much as Jesus did by the simple fact that they tolerated those who held it. There is no indication whether these members had an influence or not. According to Inspiration, it is harboring false teaching, even where a majority rejects it, that brings the Lord's rebuke.

This is so because a "false teacher with no influence," if one exists at all, is as rare as a widow indeed who was immersed for the remission of sins in a Baptist church. "False teaching" denotes that which proceeds from the mouth of a teacher, not necessarily its acceptance by a hearer. Otherwise, Satan did not stand guilty of false teaching until Eve believed and Paul did not teach the truth before Agrippa.

Proud man seems bored if he stays as far from sin as the Bible mandates. So the government subsidizes liquor on the one hand and runs public service announcements against its influence on the other. It had as well turn the gunslingers lose and use jail funds to buy everyone bullet proof vests. But the very idea of measuring falsity by influence springs from a permissive society that derives satisfaction from flirting with evil. It has convinced the church that error preached is harmless, so long as hearers have been taught better, and has brought denominational films into our worship services. By this reasoning it would not be wrong for a truly well-taught church, that has resisted the influence of the Adversary, to have the Devil himself fill their pulpit.

We pray, "*Lead us not into temptation*" (Matt. 6:13). And just as immodest dress is

wrong, whether any one looks or not, false teaching is wrong, whether any one believes or not. We are not commanded to plug the hearer's ears, but to stop the speaker's mouth (Titus 1:11). How many deceived souls must be collected before it is done?

People rationalize false teaching when they "see no harm in it." But this is the fallacy of those who "do not see any harm" in dancing, lewd music and stories, or the first drink, not to mention pianos in worship. Yet Paul said, "*We walk by faith, not by sight*" (II Cor. 5:7). So when God condemns something, we should have *faith* that there is harm in it, whether we can "see" it or not. Israel never saw the danger of harboring a mixed multitude, but it eventually cost her dearly. But it is seen that Paul likens false teachers to spies, and when preachers of error are all around us, even a single spy can as easily open the church to their influence as Rahab opened Jericho to destruction (Gal. 2:4; Joshua 2).

By "false teachers which no one believes," we do not refer to the psychotics or senile old men that sane folks overlook, humor, and play pretend with. We refer to aspiring, well-read, time-tested men of misguided mission and message who are given too much rope by onlookers who are about as naive as Loretta Lynn's first trip to town. Experience reveals that these advocates themselves know best the influence they are having and will leave when their influence is threatened. When they stay put, it is prima facie evidence that they are having an influence, else their desire for it would drive them elsewhere for reward. Moreover, the very fact that someone believes the nutty doctrine that falsity is defined by influence is itself positive proof that somewhere some nut is having some influence.

A Rabbi, a priest, an atheist, a Buddhist monk, and a Jehovah's Witness were shipwrecked on a desert island. All taught, but none were false, for no one could influence the others. Believe it, who can?

5905 Willow Crest
Arlington, TX 76071

“ROOT HOG OR DIE”

Jim E. Waldron

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall November 9, 1989, most of us in the western world had very little understanding of the people in the former Soviet Union. Under communist rule, many of them risked their jobs and lives to be “baptized” into the Russian Orthodox Church. A general religious nature of the people has meant an open door, which has resulted in the large number of baptisms we hear about when our brethren go there. Going, teaching and baptizing are urgent needs to fulfill the great commission. For the Lord Jesus said, *“all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world”* (Matt. 28:18-20). Yet, sad to say, the fourth part of the great commission is being woefully neglected. That is, there is a general failure to train new Christians. The general method of converting people in Russia or the Ukraine is for 2 to 8 brethren to go there for two to three weeks, hold classes or gospel meetings, baptize a large group of people and then leave. It is happening over and over again. Brethren go, come back and say we baptized 40, 50, or a 100, and when asked who is there with the new Christians the answer is — “we are looking for a man to go.” Such is the equivalent of bringing a newborn home from the hospital, leaving him on the doorstep and saying, “root hog or die, boy.” These new converts have very little knowledge as to the need to attend regularly and virtually no experience as such. Recently a group of campaigners came from the States to work in a city south of Kiev. They had been told 70 people had been baptized there in the last two years. The brethren were able to find and restore seven of them. In 1992 we were informed of some 26 persons being baptized the previous year, left to carry on worship by themselves and eventually going over to the Mormons. Why? Because the Mormons were there. They now report having two hundred “elders” in Kiev alone.

If no one is going to stay with new converts until they can be taught *“to observe all things”* then the fourth part of the great commission has been overlooked or ignored. Elders surely need to ask some sobering questions of those preachers or singing groups who want money to make these little two or three week excursions, like: “which ones of you are going to stay with the new Christians until they are able to stand on their own?” Better not to go than to leave them to be snatched up by the Mormons or other sects.

P. O. Box 171
Kiev, 252001 Ukraine
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Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**
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