

# Seek The Old Paths

*"Stand up in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein."*

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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## ARE YOU READY FOR "THE NEXT CHURCH?"

Lynn Parker

Tired of the same cereal every morning? There are plenty of choices on grocery store shelves. Feeling adventuresome? Disregard those shampoo directions, "Lather, rinse, repeat," and just soap your hair one time. You rebel, you! If you don't like your American-made car, you can always opt for a sporty model with a foreign heritage. Tired of "two songs and a prayer?" Do you long for religious excitement? I mean, do you ever feel like "book, chapter, and verse" is too archaic, too monotonous, entirely too tame? Eureka! Like the grizzled prospector who finds the mother-lode, you are living in an age of the religious smorgasbord!

The *Atlantic Monthly* carried an article under the title, "*The Next Church*," which documents and describes the "megachurch" phenomena sweeping the nation. It is marked by large congregations (thousands of members in number) that are seeking to attract the "unchurched," particularly those of the 40 years and under group who are tired of the main stream denominational affiliation. Additionally, these "megachurches" appeal to the masses because they: 1) emphasize unity amidst diversity in doctrine, 2) offer "exciting" worship services that resemble Broadway productions, 3) provide a "ministry" to every family member (every agenda is answered) even (and especially) the secular. Now, this does not surprise astute

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observers of religious error. But as I read the article, I began to have that "sinking feeling" as it occurred to me that "The Next Church" might be prophetic of where many congregations of the Lord's church will be in a decade or so. Many are headed in that direction, and some are already there.


Leaving the "ancient landmarks" (Prov. 22:28) is the express goal of many "change agents" whose vision of nobility and heroism includes leading the poor ol' uneducated Christian from the dark confines of narrow-minded religious bigotry, down the yellow-bricked road of sweeping change to a bright, new, shining community where the church of Christ is just one of many denominations - buildings swelling with religiously diverse crowds, everybody holding hands with his denominational neighbor. This liberal movement envisions a place and time where doctrine is insignificant, unity at all costs is paramount, and perpetual smiles are the order of the

day. It is this vision that clamors for a lowering of the sword, and a shift in emphasis. In this dream of the spiritual mavericks, no longer would you be concerned with "trivial matters" like instrumental music in worship, women teachers and preachers, the day and frequency of partaking of the Lord's supper, elements of worship, the purpose or even the necessity of baptism, the distinctive nature of the church, ascertaining Bible authority, or a myriad of other topics that have been outgrown by liberated church-goers. Now, you have arrived in the land of the "social church." Here, the emphasis squarely shifts from doctrinal distinction to self-gratification. "I like it; therefore, it must be sweet in God's sight as well" is the mistake of men, past and present.

*"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

Our feature article informs us that, "Even the most stubbornly traditional churches, if they have any critical mass at all, are putting children's education, child care, and

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"The Next Church"...



*Editorial...*

## The Bible Versus "Change Agents" #2

Garland M. Robinson

**C**hange agents seek to destroy the Biblical limits of fellowship and openly embrace those who are not children of God. Notice the following comments from some who are desperately seeking to change from God's Way.

*"I agree with the brother who wrote that disagreements over instruments should not prevent us from enjoying a common Lord's table. I can commune anywhere if it is in honor of our Lord and in a matter fitting with His will. Maybe if all of us who are divided over the instrument communed together more we would see the importance of our unity and work 'harder at maintaining it.' (Calvin Warpula, A Rejoinder to Letters in Response to 'Can We Have Unity With the Christian Church?'" **One Body**, Fall, 1993, 10:4, p.19).*

*"Do I consider 'our brotherhood' (non-instrumental Churches of Christ) a denomination? Yes. ...Well, do you embrace denominationalism? No. Oh no. I embrace Jesus. And brothers and sisters in Jesus scattered throughout most denominations" (Lynn Anderson, "Big, Sick, Denomination: Revisited," **Wineskins**, Vol. 2, No. 10, p.36).*

*"There are sincere, knowledgeable, and devout Christians scattered among the various denominations" (Rubel Shelly, **I Just Want to be a Christian**,*

1984, p.132).

*"Brothers and sisters, we do not have to live in estrangement and isolation from those who honestly differ with us inside or outside our fellowship. We don't have to agree with them on every point nor do we have to convince them to agree with us on every issue. All we have to do is look to our left, to those who have felt the sting of our rejection, and everywhere we see one who has committed his or her heart and life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we may rejoice that we have found a brother or sister. And we may extend to that child of God the same inviting hand of grace and acceptance which we ourselves have received from the Lord Jesus." (Mark Henderson, **People Need the Unity-Committed Church**, 1997 ACU Lectures).*

**Promise Keepers** rallies as well as **March for Jesus** are two denominational programs which provide a means for the "Change Agents" to spread their doctrine and openly fellowship those in denominationalism. Faithful Christians cannot engage in either of these activities and meet with God's approval.

The Bible does not allow fellowship with those who are not Christians or even those who have left their "first love." Notice these passages:

*"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (Eph. 5:6-7). "And have no*

*fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). We are not to be partakers with them in their deeds. We are to have NO fellowship with them. "No" fellowship does not mean "some" fellowship or "limited" fellowship. And, it is simply not enough to have no fellowship with them, this verse also demands that we actively oppose them. Our mission is to "reprove" them. The word reprove means to: convict, refute, show someone his fault or error, show something up for what it is, prove guilty, condemn, to bring to light, to expose, to reprehend severely, chide, admonish. We cannot be quiet when error is involved! To refuse to expose error and instead, embrace it and extend an open hand of fellowship to it and those promoting it, is complete apostasy from the "one faith." Those not faithful to the doctrine of Christ are enemies of Christ (cf. Phil. 3:18). Shall we support the enemy of Christ? No, a thousands time no! It matters not whether the evil doer is an erring Christian or one who has never obeyed the gospel, the end result is the same.*

*"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). This verse commands that we "mark" those who teach contrary to sound doctrine. The word *mark* means: to look at, observe, contemplate, fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to, be concerned about, watch out for, be careful. The reason we focus our attention upon these individuals is that we may "avoid" them so as to have no fellowship with them in their evil deeds. Such persons "...serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18). By no stretch of the imagination could we support those who teach contrary to sound doctrine and cause division in the Lord's body (whether they were members of the Lord's church or not). No faithful Christian, preacher, eldership or congregation, can remain silent and lend support to those who teach and practice things contrary to the doctrine of Christ. God counts those who do so*

just as guilty as those who commit such evil deeds themselves (2 John 11).

*“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils”* (1 Cor. 10:20-21). The Lord’s people cannot hold onto God with one hand and those who are in league with the devil with the other. No matter how “sweet spirited” some seem, no matter how sincere they appear, when they are not in fellowship with God (by obeying his commands), then neither can we fellowship them lest we be out of fellowship with God. When anyone does not “walk in the light” (live and abide in the truth), he does not have fellowship with God (1 John 1:7). How can we fellowship those whom God does not fellowship? We cannot!

*“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 1:9-11). Those who do not hold to the doctrine of Christ are not to be “received.” The word *receive* means to “associate one’s self as companion, attendant, to receive a person, give him access to one’s self.” We are commanded to not bid them God speed. We are not to do anything that would give such persons comfort or aid that would assist them in their deed. We cannot lend help to or send them along their way with our blessing. We cannot wish them well or pray for their success. We must not allow them to believe we are in fellowship with them, but on the contrary, we must oppose them (Eph. 5:11). If we do anything that aids them in their evil work, we are counted just as guilty as if we had done the evil ourself. This is guilt by association. When we associate with those guilty of false doctrine, we are counted guilty of false doctrine.

*“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord*

*Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us”* (2 Thess. 3:6). The word “walketh” has to do with one’s behavior or conduct. The word “disorderly” means “out of ranks (often so of soldiers), deviating from the prescribed order or rule.” This is speaking particularly of withdrawing fellowship from a fellow-member of a local congregation of which we are also members. However, its application (in principle) would also include that we must not extend fellowship to all who “walk disorderly,” even though such persons are not members of the local congregation of which we are members. To withdraw fellowship means that we must not associate with one so as to aid, comfort, support, condone or assist him in his teaching and/or practice. When one’s conduct is contrary to the inspired, established “tradition” of the apostles, we must not help or aid them in their belief and practice.

*“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed”* (2 Thess. 3:14). The words “company with” here means: to mix up together, to keep company with, be intimate with. There is simply no scriptural (Biblically justified) way to have company with such persons so as to aid and support those who do not follow the Lord’s Way. One of the purposes of our refusing to “company with” them is that such would cause them to be ashamed of their teaching and conduct and move them to repentance.

*“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 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”* (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The words “unequally yoked together” are from the same word in the Greek. The word means “to have fellowship with one who is not an equal.” Those who have never obeyed the gospel or who have strayed from the “old paths” of “the way,” are not our equal. They do not stand in the right and proper relationship with God. They are not our faithful brethren in the Lord. Those who have strayed away are as the prodigal that must return home (Luke 15:17-20) or Simon that had to repent and pray (Acts 8:22). Until they do, the faithful cannot fellowship them.

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## "The Next Church"...

(Continued from page 1)

teen activities up there with music as essential ingredients to attract Boomer families...."<sup>1</sup>

This new religious scene is tailor-made for the change-agent and his disciples. They view the church of Christ, in the main, as a group of people who "have become fixed in the tracks of dogmatism," "twisted and misapplied Scriptures to support our contentions," and "limited the liberties of others."<sup>2</sup> **Randy Mayeux**, former preacher for the **Preston Road Church of Christ** in Dallas, informed listeners of the changes on the horizon when he spoke in 1989 of "receiving letters from two of our women," one of which complained, "I am so sick and tired of being able to do nothing." Further, Mayeux predicted that doctrinal differences would "increase instead of decrease" and that "because our people are reading [Charles] Swindoll's books and listening to Swindoll's messages, they are going to end up thinking more and more liked Swindoll."<sup>3</sup>

**Rubel Shelly** pleads, "We must find a way to forego the rancor and quarreling about our denominational traditions."<sup>4</sup> **Max Lucado** trumpets that "there are fresh winds in the church of Christ denomination" and he recently received an award from Southern Baptists.<sup>5</sup>

Now, if you sympathize with **Cecil Hook**, **Randy Mayeux**, **Rubel Shelly**, **Max Lucado** and others of their stripe in this, you can always head off in search of "The Next Church" - a place where there is "no biblical-gobble-dy-gook. No prayerly rote. No fire, no brimstone...no dreary eighteenth-century hymns. No forced solemnity. No Sunday finery. No collection plates."<sup>6</sup>

These "megachurches" are to be the rave of the near and distant future as they "diversify almost infinitely in order to develop new 'product lines' that meet the congregation's needs..."<sup>7</sup> One of these "shopping-mall churches" houses some 14,000 people at four services each weekend. Inside, "an orchestra played upbeat soft rock...the dress was California casual. Children scurried everywhere. A cappuccino cart with parasol stood to one side,

## *Elders and preachers, renew your vigilance and inform the church.*

dispensing the secular sacrament."<sup>8</sup> Here they offer parenting seminars, alcohol and drug recovery meetings, a class for "homebuilders, something called 'Bunko Night,' a baseball league, drama, and dance, and "seven days a week of kid-oriented activity - a lot of it."<sup>9</sup> The music in these services is performed by a "sextet of male and female singers...a twelve-piece orchestra of saxophones, synthesizers, guitars and drums" and all the songs were new-composed since 1990, and most importantly, "all of them were of club quality."<sup>10</sup>

"By taking on roles as various as those of the Welcome Wagon, the USO, the Rotary, the quilting bee, the book club, the coffee shop, and school, they have become much more than traditional churches that many Americans grew up in and have long since lost."<sup>11</sup>

A leader of this "next church" provides his strategy: "We give them what they want."<sup>12</sup> The church services here are "multi-media affairs."<sup>13</sup> Testimonials, dramatic actors, a message from the "pastor," and communion services on "special rather than regular occasions" round-out these assemblies. And while the author of this magazine report centers in on this change that's rolling through the denominational world, you will sadly note that the church of Christ figured into the article: "I met the young pastor of a Church of Christ congregation who was lamenting that his denomination still forbids the use of any musical instruments in its worship services."<sup>14</sup>

This is not the picture of a church "just for people who are already Christian" but rather a "church of options" with a "chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry" "worship menu."<sup>15</sup>

In Irving, Texas, the "Fellowship Of Las Colinas" uses direct-mailings to "target" zip codes with advertisements of a well-received Saturday

evening service. And, "Sports are a big deal at Las Colinas. The church organizes a thirty-eight-team basketball league, starting with children of both sexes in grades one through six. It has sponsored a baseball clinic led by the new York Yankees. To anticipate the objections of just about every male Texan, services conclude in time for watching parties for the Dallas Cowboys football games - which are on view on a big screen outside the sanctuary for church attendees to take in as part of their post-worship fellowship. For those for whom Sundays are truly sacred, Las Colinas offers the Saturday-night service."<sup>16</sup>

Here, women can be in leadership roles. The "Church Of The Open Door" engages in 40 minutes of sustained singing at a service in which the "outstanding lead vocalist carried the energy of her praise to the limits of modesty."<sup>17</sup> Of course, **Randy Mayeux** chided the Lord's church some seven years ago for intolerance, and refers to professional singer **Amy Grant**, an artist in the field of (as Mayeux calls it) "contemporary Christian music." Mayeux said, "...Amy Grant who grew up in a church of Christ. And we didn't have a way to let her be in the church of Christ, and so we've lost her...I don't want to keep losing the people that God raises up in this fellowship, whose roots are deep and who understand us and then drive them away because there's no outlet for their gift."<sup>18</sup> He told the same meeting of ministers (hosted by **Lubbock Christian College**), "In one youth group represented by somebody sitting in this section, there is a woman, a teenager in that youth group that wants to be able to preach in some fashion to men and women when she gets older. You want to kick her out?...The bottom line is that in the 1990s, diversity is the only game in town, folks."<sup>19</sup>

Some may charge me with being an alarmist but I say as kindly as I can, "Where have you been? Wake up and see the handwriting on the wall!" The drift toward denominationalism, starting decades ago, has turned into a tidal wave, and has not yet run its course.

Several years ago, the **Cahaba Valley church of Christ** in Birmingham, Alabama, through its

elders, sent a letter to the membership which stated:

"For the year 1990, during Sunday morning assembly for worship, we will continue to ask that men be in the leadership role. This is because our need as a group to respect the fact that there are differences of opinion and conviction...We simply need time to allow our church to continue to think and pray about the role of women at CV as change comes...For the years 1991-1994, we, the elders, will initiate gradual change in the Sunday morning worship assembly for worship. Each year we will increase the freedom of women to participate in worship...We will continue this process until by 1994, women are given freedom to volunteer, if they so choose, to participate in the activities that are currently restricted to the men during the worship assembly."<sup>20</sup>

Those "activities" to be opened to women are further specified as "Reading Scripture, Serving Communion, Leading Prayer, Presiding At Table, Speaking To The Assembly in Sermon, Leading Singing." Now, that was years ago, and maybe Cahaba Valley church of Christ has changed, you might think. You would be absolutely right. A quick phone call to Cahaba Valley on March 6, 1997, was answered by one of the ministers, Katie Hayes, who along with her husband, Lance Pape, share the ministerial duties at their self-styled "ecumenical church." Ms. Hayes was frank in her assessment that Cahaba Valley church of Christ is a denomination, and she further stated that they accept into "full fellowship" those adults who have not been immersed. Hayes stated that the issues dividing churches of Christ were very "petty and small" and that attention needs to be given by Christians to problems like hunger, poverty, racism, and illiteracy – without regard to the background of other "Christians" helping to correct these

social ills, whether they be "Episcopal, Baptist, or church of Christ." The candlestick is surely gone out at Cahaba Valley!<sup>21</sup>

The **Southern Hills church of Christ in Tulsa, Oklahoma**, in a bulletin article published some seven years ago, set forth "*A Southern Hills Hermeneutic For The 90s*" in which **Gary Tandy** lists, as an implication of their "hermeneutic," that Southern Hills will provide "more roles for women, singles, and children in worship and recognize ministry opportunities in cultural concerns," but cautions that "...we are a people of many viewpoints. We have a responsibility to love, respect, and defend our brother's and sister's right to their viewpoints..." and "...we all have difficulty with change. It is important to proceed at a sensitive pace."<sup>22</sup>

Today, a phone call reveals that it is no longer the Southern Hills church of Christ but rather the "**Southern Hills Fellowship Of Christ**," where the "critical issues of worship are no longer place, time, nor ritual..." and worship assemblies are "...an experience of deliberate focus on God for the purpose of an encounter with him..." and "...relevant to the unsaved and unchurched community." It is here that "Southern Hills women participate in leadership and support roles of public worship, communion, Bible studies, small groups, and other functions necessary to effect the church's mission."<sup>23</sup>

Katie Hayes, minister for "Cahaba Valley Church of Christ—an Ecumenical Church," was offended at the thought of being lumped in with the megachurch mentality since they had decreased in number to about 100 members because they had stepped out of the mainstream. But then, by her own admission she pictured Cahaba Valley as a place for those who had grown "tired of the rigors of legalism" and "tired of religion in the U.S.," and were looking for religion that was "real" (whatever that means-L.P.) rather than "fake." Well dear reader, the typical "megachurch" may be larger in number than the Cahaba Valley/Southern Hills type, but the mindset is quite similar, if not identical: de-emphasize doctrine, practice unity-in-diversity, make worship services

more "politically correct." Too, do you see how that in less than a decade religious error has worked like a gangrene to spread in these congregations and engulf them completely?

**Chris Seay**, 24 year-old "pastor" of the 1,200 member **University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas** touts the unique nature of his congregation: He said it offered the best rock music by the best rock musicians in Waco. He talked about their "sound" – "a cross between Pearl Jam and Hootie and the Blowfish." Seay says of his worship services, "We don't know what's going to happen next, or we make it seem like we don't know what's going to happen next."<sup>24</sup> That couldn't happen in churches of Christ, or could it? **Rubel Shelly** and **Randy Harris** are quoted in their book, *The Second Incarnation*, as demanding that the "tired, uninspiring event called worship...must give way to an exhilarating experience of God," and they further claim that worship assemblies in the Lord's church are "boring" and "irrelevant."<sup>25</sup> Shelly and Harris want "spontaneity" and "raucous celebration."<sup>26</sup>

The "Next Church," is a "new, large, independent church" that is enjoying more success than mainline denominations in living with "intense divisions in their flock over abortion and homosexuality."<sup>27</sup> **Michael Foss**, pastor of **Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Minneapolis** is labeled "fiercely agnostic," and states, "I'm convinced you can be a Christian on either side of those [homosexuality and abortion – L.P.] issues." Foss goes on to state, "One of the tragedies of the culture is the tendency to draw lines where they needn't be drawn. *Christians ought to quit throwing rocks at Christians. We don't have to agree on everything.* And, these are side issues [emphasis mine—L.P.]. What we're about is spiritual renewal."<sup>28</sup> Hmmm, now where have we heard that before? How long before those more liberal than the "mainstream" at Cahaba Valley and Southern Hills demand that unity-in-diversity embrace abortion and homosexuality? The mindset of the religious left in the church, marked by disdain for law and rule, and tolerance for only those who are tolerant of every doc-

trine, has no end. It, like an oil spill, encompasses and slimes more and more until nothing is wrong, and every matter is a gray area of personal liberty and opinion.

Randy Mayeux went on from his heretical teachings in 1989 to leave the Preston Road church of Christ. His "main aim was to start a new church," and his model would be the "Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., which is considered a model for mega-churches." It uses the megachurch type approach to worship with a band and contemporary music. Mayeux lauds, "this is a church that wants to have fun—it's substantive, but fun."<sup>29</sup>

Nine years ago, the Ft. Worth Star Telegram ran a feature article on the Richland Hills Church of Christ, entitled, "Church mission is meeting needs of hurt people." Bill Vincent, Richland Hills member, is quoted as saying,

"The philosophy of the church has changed - the church is more interested in meeting the needs of the people. It used to be the type of church that preached hell, fire and brimstone, and a lot of other things that didn't really relate to how you get along in life. Today, it's one of the most responsive churches in the area to the needs of people...Members of the Church of Christ used to have a reputation of feeling like they were the only ones going to heaven. But that's changed in Churches of Christ by and large, and it's certainly not true in this church. The church welcomes you with open arms no matter where you come from."<sup>30</sup>

Why not? Why not go for the biggest church that has the most to offer? After all, brethren are doing this daily when they by-pass small sound congregations for large liberal ones that have more offerings to appease the kids and a less demanding message from the pulpit and leadership. This, we are told, is the future of religion in America. People will "drive right by small churches in their neighborhood to get to attend a larger one that offers more in the way of services or programs...It's Wal-Mart versus the corner grocery. It ain't a fair fight."<sup>31</sup>

No, I do not consider myself to be a prophet, but then history is an unusually fine prognosticator of trends. The liberals among us may swell in number. They are doing this in many instances. But then, I remember Matthew 7:13-14, the few and the many, the saved and the damned.

This "religious cafeteria" concept has a charm and appeal, especially to the young folks but then both the blind leaders and their followers can find their way into the ditch (Matt. 15:14).

The presumptuous and self-willed souls in the church may revel in their ecumenical stance that is just so loving, broadminded, and comfortable, and they may look with longing eyes at the megachurches as success stories. Their worship services will become more theatrical, more entertaining, and more appealing to the less spiritual mind but John 4:24 remains unchanged. Their work will center on erasing physical hunger rather than providing spiritual food (John 6:26-27) and removing physical poverty rather than providing clean spiritual garments (Rev. 3:18). After all, why bother anyone about the steps to salvation if you do not believe they're lost?

The megachurch proponent in

America says, "Give them what they want." The same mindset has been stewing for a while in Shelly, Mayeux, Lucado and others.

Be ready. Arm your children. Elders and preachers, renew your vigilance and inform the church. Don't think it cannot happen where you live. Wake up, and smell the cappuccino!

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles Trueheart, "The Next Church," Atlantic Monthly, August, 1996, p.46.

<sup>2</sup> Cecil Hook, *Free In Christ*, p.8. 3 Randy Mayeux in a speech at Lubbock, Texas in 1989, to conference of Ministers hosted by Lubbock Christian College.

<sup>3</sup> Rubel Shelly, as quoted by Curtis Cates in his book, *The Second Incarnation - Pattern For Apostasy* (Memphis, TN: Cates Publications, 1992) p.41.

<sup>4</sup> As published in the *Tulsa World*, March 12, 1989, p.C.26, Lucado referred to a the Lord's church as a denomination. The *San Antonio Express-News*, Sept. 17, 1996 published an article under the headline, "Texas Baptists Extend Award To S.A. Pastor-Author Lucado." Lucado received the "Texas Baptist Communications Award" and Baptist Pastor Buckner Fanning commented that Lucado and he have exchanged pulpits over the last two years.

<sup>5</sup> *Next Church*, p.37

<sup>6</sup> *Next Church*, p.38

<sup>7</sup> *Next Church*, p.39

<sup>8</sup> *Next Church*, p.39

<sup>9</sup> *Next Church*, p.39

<sup>10</sup> *Next Church*, p.40

<sup>11</sup> *Next Church*, p.40

<sup>12</sup> *Next Church*, p.42

<sup>13</sup> *Next Church*, p.44

<sup>14</sup> *Next Church*, p.47

<sup>15</sup> *Next Church*, p.47

<sup>16</sup> *Next Church*, p.50

<sup>17</sup> Randy Mayeux, Lubbock speech.

<sup>18</sup> Randy Mayeux, Lubbock speech.

<sup>19</sup> Undated letter from Elders to members of Cahaba Valley church of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> Ms. Hayes went on further to state that she and her husband prepared for their work by educating at Abilene Christian University, The Institute for Christian Studies (in Austin, TX), and Yale Divinity School. While she would not agree that either Abilene Christian University or The Institute for Christian Studies, as an institution, would support the stand of Cahaba Valley, Ms. Hayes did state that there were individuals on the faculties of both institutions who would.

<sup>21</sup> Gary Tandy, Southern Hills church of Christ bulletin, undated.

<sup>22</sup> Identity Statement of the Southern Hills Fellowship Of Christ, p.4

<sup>23</sup> *Next Church*, p.50

<sup>24</sup> Rubel Shelly and Randy Harris, p.47, as quoted by Curtis Cates in *The Second Incarnation*, p.47

<sup>25</sup> *Next Church*, p.52

<sup>26</sup> *Next Church*, p.52

<sup>27</sup> As published in the *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 12, 1992, p.38A, under the caption, "Preacher Follows His Own Conscience, Starts Church."

<sup>28</sup> As quoted in the Ft. Worth Star Telegram, Oct. 5, 1988, pp.1-2, under the caption, "Church Mission Is Meeting Needs Of Hurt People."

<sup>29</sup> *Next Church*, p.47

This valiant verse and the tremendous truth embedded therein reads, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The ASV renders the verse in this fine fashion, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teach-

## 2 JOHN 9, WHAT IS THE MEANING

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

ing of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." This message was addressed to the

elect lady and her children (vs. 1,4,5,13).

### HOW ARE THE TRANSGRESSORS IDENTIFIED?

This verse is in the context of verses 7,8. Therein John depicted a deceiver, i.e., one who went about spreading dangerous delusions and poisonous practices. The world was full of them in John's day. They were

Docetic Gnostics who refused to confess that Jesus had come in the flesh. They said he only appeared to have a body but was just a phantom. They were antichrist – those opposed to Christ and totally hostile to his divine claims. They were the sort of people that, if heard and heeded, could make the elect lady and her children lose their heavenly rewards. They are the ones who go onward or take the lead. “Transgresseth,” “goeth onward” or “taketh the lead” derive from the word *proago* in the Greek text and from which we derive such terms as progress, progressive and progression. However, this progress is AWAY from, rather than TOWARD the Christ. As such it becomes daring, defiant digression. It becomes reckless retrogression. It is a rebellious refusal to stay with what Christ and apostolic authority taught. The transgressors refuse to abide in the doctrine of Christ. It is too straight-laced for them; it is too old-fashioned for them; it is too much lacking in modernistic progression for them. The Christian church in their digressive dives into the missionary society, mechanical music in worship and literally dozens of other digressive practices view themselves as progressives. They did this a century ago; there has been no appreciable change in them in modern times. They did and do depict their opponents (churches of Christ) as non-progressives, moss backs, lacking in toleration and non-possessors of that irenic spirit in which they take pompous pride.

#### ABIDETH NOT AND ABIDETH CONTRASTED

“Transgresseth” or “goeth onward” and “abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” describe the same atrocious act. One is a positive description; the other delineates a negative description. To abide not is a refusal to remain adamantly in apostolic doctrine. It is a digression from such; it is a departure from truth into error – fatal error, damnable falsehood. Such people do in the noxious name of religious progression what is unauthorized by Holy Writ. They do what they want to do; this is the all pervading principle behind their religious beliefs and practices. They do what Cain did in Genesis 4, what Nadab and Abihu did in Leviticus 10, what Saul and the people did in 1 Samuel 15 in saving alive the finest

of the livestock for self-appointed and self-satisfying sacrificial purposes, what David and the people did with the new ox cart in transporting the ark of the covenant in 2 Samuel 6, what Jeroboam did in the new religion he devised for the newly formed Northern Kingdom in 1 Kings 12, what arrogant Uzziah, king of Judah, did relative to incense burning in 2 Chronicles 26, and the worship devised by human will that constituted part of the Colossian heresy in Colossians 2 – whatever pleases the human heart. Some years back I had a frank conversation with a college student of mine when I taught Bible for college credit in the University of Tennessee at Martin. She was a member of the Christian Church. We talked freely and frankly about their usage of mechanical music in worship and our refusal to use such. Quite candidly she said, “I realize there is no New Testament authority for its use; my brethren and I use it BECAUSE WE LIKE IT.” That is the real WHY of its usage among all religious devotees of the same, though few will be as frank and honest as this young lady was.

The one who abides is the person who remains with the doctrine of Christ minus addition, subtraction, modification, alteration or any sort of substitution. To abide in truth means to give it a warm welcome, to provide a home for it and to allow it a permanent residence in attitude and action, in motive and mission, in language and life.

#### WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST?

It is not the doctrine *about* Christ but the doctrine he *taught* personally or that which he taught through apostolic agency. Here are what some outstanding Greek scholars have said relative to this verse, A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p.254, “The teaching about Christ, but that of Christ which is the standard of Christian teaching as the walk of Christ is the standard for the christian’s walk (1 John 2:6). J. R. W. Stott in his commentary on John’s epistles, about the “Usage Of The N.T.” (Westcott, Crooke) requires that the genitive be interpreted not as objective, “the teaching about Christ,” but as subjective, “Christ’s teaching.” This no doubt includes what Christ continued

to teach through the apostles. Henry Alford in *Alford’s Greek Testament*, not abiding in the doctrine of Christ (i.e.) in Christ’s doctrine, – that truth which Christ himself taught. Joseph Henry Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon, The doctrine which has God, Christ, the Lord, for its author and supporter.

In his superb commentary on the epistles of Peter, John and Jude brother Guy N. Woods says, “The ‘teaching of Christ’ here is not teaching about Christ, or teaching which is Christian in substance or nature; it is the teaching which Christ did personally and through those whom he inspired. It is the teaching of Christ, because he is, in the final analysis, its author, and from him it issued. It is thus an infallible standard, and no deviation from it is possible without apostasy.”

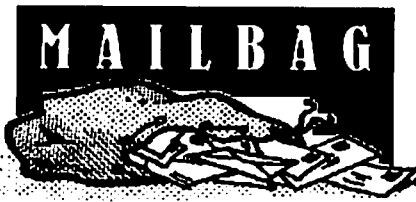
The doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16 is the doctrine they taught – not what was taught about them. The doctrines and commandments of men in Mark 7 and Matthew 15 are what they taught – not what others taught about them. The doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans in Revelation 2 is what they taught – not what others taught about them.

Some wish to make the doctrine of Christ equal just to an expressed belief that Jesus is God’s Son and thus the only ground or condition of fellowship with him regardless of what else he believes or does not believe. **The doctrine of Christ is the entire Gospel which God’s Son taught personally and continued to teach by apostolic agency when he went back to the Palace of the Universe on heavenly high.**

#### HOW DOES ONE HAVE BOTH THE FATHER AND SON?

By abiding adamantly and remaining permanently in the doctrine or teaching of Jesus Christ, i.e., the Gospel of God’s only begotten Son. We have the Father when we have the Son; we have the Son when we have the Father. We have both when we hear and heed their doctrine, the glorious gospel of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. No other has the Timeless Trinity.

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

expose error. I wonder if those brethren will be offended when the Lord says on judgment day, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). Please continue to expose false doctrine for what it is because we know that many precious souls are at stake" ...*Ben Justice, Knoxville, TN*. "I enjoy your papers very much. I enclose \$\$ to help with your expenses. Keep up the good work. May God bless you all" ...*Dorothy Washington, Houka, MS*. "Please discontinue sending *Seek The Old Paths*" ...*Dee Kingsbury, Tyler, TX*. *Seek The Old Paths* is certainly scriptural and appropriate for all to read. It has helped me immensely" ...*TX*. "Thank you so much for sending the paper to us. I really enjoy reading it and pass it on to others to read. It keeps us informed about the things going on in our churches. May God bless you with a long life in his service" ...*Randolph & Merle Barner, Lake Cormorant, MS*. "Please accept this small donation for the mailing of *Seek The Old Paths*. I look forward to reading it each time. I appreciate the stand that the East Corinth congregation and brother Robinson takes for the Truth. It amazes me how brethren twist the Scriptures, knowing in the end we will be judged by them" ...*Gary Price, Murray, KY*. "Please put me on your mailing list for *Seek The Old Paths*. I like to read your paper. It is very informative about the false doctrine that is creeping into the Lord's church. Keep up the good work" ...*Faye Burch, Hartford, AL*. "Attached is a check to help in a small way the financial needs of publishing and mailing this publication" ...*Charlie Dunn, Auburtown, AL*. "I would very much like to have you put me on your mailing list. I picked up one at Shiloh Church of Christ building a few weeks ago and I really appreciate the articles of truth contained therein. Also, do you accept contributions to publish *Seek The Old Paths*?" ...*Malcolm Glover, Killen, AL*. [NOTE: Yes, we do accept contributions for the paper. It is only by our readers' help that we are able to financially bear the expense of such a large mailing list. We sincerely thank all who help us. Right now, our funds are running low, so if you could help us, the thousands who receive the paper will appreciate and benefit from it.] "I would like to once again start receiving your publication because they are very enlightening when it comes to learning Bible Truth" ...*Kenneth Hegler, Dermott, AR*. "I very much appreciate your stand for the truth as displayed in *Seek The Old Paths*" ...*MO*. "Please remove my name from your mailing list" ...*Bob Bray, Flint, TX*. "Please put me on your mailing list. A brother loaned me one and I liked what I saw" ...*Charlie Rose, Flatwoods, KY*. "I enjoy receiving your monthly issue of *Seek The Old Paths*. Continue contending for the faith" ...*Eric Dawkins, Kosciusko, MS*. "I enjoy receiving your publication, keep up the good work" ...*Jimmy Gribble, Newport News, VA*. "I appreciate the great work you are doing" ...*Charles Maxwell, Cookeville, TN*. "Keep up the good work" ...*Gus Munden, Gentry, AR*. "May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance" ...*Ronald Brewer, Overland Park, KS*. "You are doing a great work in the kingdom" ...*Jason Ridgeway, Hannibal, OH*. "I saw a copy of *Seek The Old Paths* at the Rowlett, Texas church of Christ, picked up your address and when I came home, mailed in a request to be put on your mailing list. I received the first copy, July 1997. I have enjoyed it very much" ...*Melvin Chandler, Rockwood, TN*. "I had you remove my name because I moved. Please renew my subscription" ...*Eric Lyons, Henderson, TN*. "Please remove my name from your mailing list. I have enjoyed your publication but I am moving and will not be at any address very long for the next year. Thank you" ...*Terry Hill, Marlow, OK*. "I appreciate getting *Seek The Old Paths*. Keep up the good work" ...*Louise Welch, Union City, TN*. "It has been recommended to me that I subscribe to your publication. Please put me on your mailing list" ...*Merle Knuckles, Clarksville, IN*. "Enclosed is a small contribution to *Seek The Old Paths* to help advance the kingdom of Christ and to continue to fight the good fight" ...*Pat Williams, Cookeville, TN*. "I enjoy it very much" ...*Linda Young, Baxter, TN*.

"I am a student at the East Tennessee School of Preaching. I have been receiving your paper for a few years now and continue to find it most helpful and one of the best. I have often wondered why brethren are offended in doing what the Bible teaches and that is to

### LECTURESHIP COMMENTS

"The lectures were to the Book, the Word of God! The food was great! The fellowship was great! The singing was great! Thanks to the elders, deacons, preacher and all the members who worked so hard" ...*Milton Mathers, West Jefferson, NC*. "I want to say "thanks" for such a wonderful lectureship. We appreciate your leading the congregation in this event and the sacrifices you made to make such possible. Thanks also to Garland for doing such a superb job in directing the lectureship, as well as everything else he does at East Corinth. It was an honor for us to attend the lectureship, and a special honor to be asked to speak on it. We regret not being able to attend more than we did, but we do look forward to supporting it with our presence more next year, Lord willing. Again, thanks for an edifying week and keep up the good work. Godspeed" ...*Wayne, Tanya, Adam & Abby Cox, Verona, MS*. "I would like to express my thanks for allowing me the honor of speaking on your fine lectureship. It is always a joy to be in the presence of so many sound gospel preachers, elders and faithful Christians. All the lessons which I heard were well prepared and much needed. The ladies of your congregation should certainly receive praise for the delicious meals they prepare each year for so many who attend. I realize that the elders of the church at East Corinth have a difficult task before them in deciding the best way of leading the flock there. May they continue to see the importance of the lectureship in regard to how many lives it is helping and congregations it is protecting. Garland, your determination to direct the lectureship does not go unnoticed for you do an outstanding job and I know that God will bless you for it. It was sad for me to have to attend this year without my wife as she was with our daughter who is very ill in the hospital. I was blessed in that a good preaching friend, Joe Nichols, was able to come with me. God bless all of you in keeping you well both physically and spiritually" ...*Don Tate, Ferriday, LA*.

*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the East Corinth Church of Christ and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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