

Seek Ye First...

"...the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

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WHAT ABOUT THE EMMAUS MOVEMENT

Michael Light

From time to time we get asked questions about the Walk to Emmaus Movement. We should examine this topic just as we would any other. Let's notice some basic elements of Emmaus events and then we will compare them to the scriptures.

Every once in a while a member to the Lord's church will get a letter from a denominational friend requesting that they (the member) pray for them as they go on an Emmaus Walk. What exactly is it? I actually went to an Emmaus "worship" service in Abilene several years ago. It was on a Tuesday night and among other errors the most obvious were: (1) instrumental band (not authorized – Ephesians 5:19); (2) all female singing group "leading" the song service (not authorized – 1 Timothy 2:11,15); (3) Lord's Supper was observed (on Tuesday night not Sunday as prescribed in the Bible – Acts 20:7); (4) the man who distributed the emblems was in a long robe, wore a large cross, and the audience went down front and he dipped the bread into the fruit of the vine and placed it in their mouths (not according to divine pattern – Matthew 26:26ff). Much more could be said but this should suffice to illustrate the lack of concern for doing Bible things in Bible ways.

Let's turn our attention to the weekend events (this is the most common experience with Emmaus). The "walk" is supposed to be a journey of spiritual renewal. It is a three day event usually choreographed to be comprised of about 15 devotional classes the intent of which is to draw the participants into a closer more meaningful relationship with the Lord. There are times of prayer, meditation and daily participation in the Lord's Supper. Our readers can go online and investigate first hand experiences if they desire to get more specific information relative to the day to day activities.

Denominations (and too many in the church) have conjured the expression "spiritual renewal." The Bible uphold the plan of salvation as the initial phase of spiritual renewal (John 3:16; Acts 10:17; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; acts 2:28). This born again (John 3:3-6); arisen to walk in new life one (Romans 6:3-6) is truly "renewed spiritually" (according to God's word – which is all that counts – Romans 3:4). As a child of God we always walk renewed before God as long as we are faithful (1 John 1:7-10). These catch phrases are basically meaningless from a

biblical stand point and usually indicate a move toward subjectivity in religion (often times experience based instead of truth based – John 8:32).

The Emmaus Movement is a work of the Upper Room Ministries (Methodist). It claims to have its earlier roots in the Catholic Church. This information alone should give the reader pause. The Emmaus movement has enjoyed quite a bit of success and growth in the past decade or so. There is a heavy emphasis placed on prayer and personal spiritual growth. While we certainly endorse both of these attributes, they must always be constructed on the biblical pattern (Colossians 3:17). They stress what they deem to be the "essentials" of the faith. It has always been interesting to witness man's desire to eliminate or down play certain doctrines. The very plan of salvation (mentioned about) is usually sacrificed (at least what the Bible says about baptism – Galatians 3:26,27, Mark 16:15).

One of their pieces of literature says, "The Emmaus walk is mainstream in theological outlook. Emmaus has room for a great variety of Christians who seek to grow, share, and give themselves to a three-day walk with Christ. Emmaus is a common meeting ground for the great diversity of Christians in our churches who celebrate their unity in Christ and feel they can learn from one another, be they traditionalist, evangelicals, liberals, conservatives, activists, charismatics, and especially all those who seek to follow Christ without regards to labels and camps."

I know this type of ecumenical jargon is popular, but it is wrong and totally contrary to anything Christian. Jesus Christ and his teachings are not a buffet to be picked and chosen based on the likes and dislikes of the listeners (John 6:60ff). The above quote in practical terms says, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE WE WILL ACCEPT YOU. Well, Jesus will not. There is the little inconvenient matter of truth (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16,17). Only the truth can set us free (John 8:32).

Contrast the words of the Emmaus literature to the words of Jesus (the one they claim to love), "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heave; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?"

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Our Purpose

The editors of *Seek Ye First* produce this biblical journal to provide scriptural material dealing with the issues that are currently affecting the church, our families, our nation and the world. Our intent is to challenge souls to return to the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) for their sole source of authority in religious matters. Our policy is to speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11), encouraging people to study to show themselves approved unto God, enabling them to rightly divide the word (2 Tim. 2:15). We make every effort to deal boldly with the issues that confront Christianity, with no apology, and strive to do so "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

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If you would like to make a donation to *Seek Ye First*, contact Michael Light. For changes of address or subscriptions contact Tom Moore.

All donations towards this work are greatly appreciated. Please note that every contribution, great or small, is beneficial to the paper.

CHURCH OF CHRIST DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT

Tom Moore

We are living in a world where many are suffering from various disasters. These adversities cause much heartache and anguish.

God through the pages of the Bible has always shown deep concern for those in need. This is obvious from the institution of the sabbatical year. "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard" (Ex. 23:10-11).

God promises the needy that He will not forget them (Psa. 9:18), deliver them (Psa. 35:10), raise the poor and lift the needy (Psa. 113:7), and not forsake them (Isa. 41:7).

It is also interesting to note that every time the growth of the Jerusalem church is mentioned, it is mentioned in connection with doing good and helping those in need. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:44-47). Compare also Acts 4:32-35 and 6:1-7.

It is also crucial for us to understand that God places a woe upon them that oppress those in need. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless" (Isa. 10:1-2).

The Bible is very clear on how we are to take care of those who are in need - it is to be accomplished through the church or individually. First there is no biblical example of it occurring any other way. And, secondly, our benevolent efforts should bring glory to God, and this is to occur through the church. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). "Unto him be glory **in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

One of the major reasons I have a problem with the "The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort" (CCDRE) is that it is an organization outside the church doing what individual churches ought to be doing. The Church is God's vehicle for helping in benevolent efforts - NOT some humanly devised organization. There is no authority for such an organization. Remember, "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). The church must respect God's plan for helping those in need through the

church treasury (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 11:27-30; Acts 6:1-6; Jam. 1:1, 27; 2 Cor. 9:13), and through individual efforts (Jam. 1:27; Gal. 6:4-5; Phil. 2:12). There is no direct statement, approved account of action (example) or implication in the New Testament for operating a business, nonprofit or otherwise.

Friends, the church is God's disaster relief organization. Now the church may support an orphan home from her treasury which meets God's guidelines - because the orphan homes does the work of the home and not the work of the church. Churches may cooperate in benevolent and spiritual efforts but not by establishing an organization which is larger than the local church. There is no authority for any organization larger the individual congregation to do the work of the church. If there were authority for such we would have a biblical account of such taking place. But, again, we have no approved account of such action.

Another major concern I have with the CCDRE is their solicitation of money from those outside the church. Their website says, "The Disaster Relief Effort is voluntarily supported by Churches of Christ, individuals, corporations, and other non-profit agencies nationwide." Where is the Bible authority for the soliciting of funds from the secular world to do the work of the church? There is none! Following is the biblical process of raising funds to help those in need: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Thirdly, the funds used in the CCDRE is under no eldership. Therefore the elders of a local congregation loses its oversight of the church's money, and have handed the oversight of the church's money over to a secular group. Where is the biblical authority for that?

The CCDRE is a humanly founded organization. Therefore, the organization which wears the name "The Church of Christ Disaster Relief Effort" has no authority to use such a designation. Only the divinely originated church has the right to describe itself by the biblical description "Church of Christ." We must have authority from Christ for the terminology we use with reference to the work of the Lord (Col. 3:17).

Beloved, we need to have zeal for doing good benevolent works but we need to respect the word of God and His guidelines in doing so. Again. "Unto him be glory **in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21). $\Lambda\Omega$

SPECIAL NOTE and REQUEST

Because of the continual rise in cost of mailing, we are wanting to begin emailing Seek Ye First... to as many as possible instead of using regular mail. If you are willing and able to receive Seek Ye First... by email, please send your name, address, and email address to dspoppy@yahoo.com and a note so explaining.

Thanks,
The Editors

This Issue's Theme:

PARA- CHURCHES

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And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

While the intentions of those who support the Emmaus Movement are probably good, they are miss-founded and in error. And the sad reality is that in spite of the intent, souls are being lead away from the truth and into eternal damnation (Matthew 25:46; Luke 6:46). If we truly love the Lord we will do what he says (John 14:15; 15:14). May God help us examine all religious doctrines and movements in the light of His word and hereby know that we are saved (1 John 2:3) $\Lambda\Omega$

PROMISE KEEPERS

Ryan Smithey

One of man's common failures is expressed in Joshua 9:14, "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD". No doubt the Gibeonites had deceived and flat out lied to the Israelites concerning the place of their citizenship but Israel made a severe error in making a treaty with them and not inquiring of God. We also must be careful, let we make the same mistake. When looking at an organization or some work, one will be presented with the "victuals" that highlight and promote such as a good work worthy of support; but if we desire to "do all in the name of the Lord" (Col. 3:17), we need to "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord."

Promise Keepers is one such organization that is presented as worthy of encouragement and participation. Founded in 1990 this organization estimates it has "directly reached more than 6 million men through men's conferences" with the express purpose of "encouraging men to be transformed and live godly lives."¹ Participants are encouraged to keep 7 key promises² revolving around "their family, church and community." It is billed as a "Christ-centered organization dedicated to motivating men to influence their world through a relationship with Jesus Christ."³ Thus we have their "victuals" (evidence) set forth that extols their work and encourages us to "make a treaty" with them by supporting and participating in the work.

But wait! Do not make the same mistake as Israel and fail to "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord." When one looks beyond the advertising and begins to ask what this organization upholds and teaches he should become alarmed at the differences he sees between what the Promise Keepers teach and what God teaches in the counsel of His inspired Word. One should certainly look into who composes the board of directors, who is invited to speak at their conferences, and what materials they put out to see just what exactly this organization stands for. For the purposes of this article, consider two statements from their own published statement of faith as a highlight of those things that stand contrary to God's Word.

First, consider what they teach concerning man's salvation. Rather than recognize man's individual accountability for sin (Eze. 18:20; 2 Cor. 5:10), they claim that "all humans are born moral rebels"¹¹ as a direct result of Adam and Eve's sin. Further in teaching what one must do to be saved, they state their conferences give men the "opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior"¹² and that salvation is from "the moment we believe."¹¹ Thus millions of attendees have gathered being deceived with a false sense of security in their salvation and never hearing all that God has said on the matter. Yes, salvation is by grace, but not alone; it also requires our

active, obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:6). Saul was a believing, fasting, praying individual (Acts 9:8, 9, 11) but he was still lost in his sin and needed to be baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 22:16; 2:38). Only when one does the same today are their sins washed away (Acts 22:16), they put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and they are added to the church by God (Acts 2:47).

One should also carefully consider what they teach concerning the church. Their seventh statement of faith says that unity ought to "be manifested as the faithful reach beyond racial and denominational lines to demonstrate the reconciling power of Christ."¹¹ So, one is falsely told that denominations are simply parts of the universal body of Christ and, essentially, we are all just walking different paths to the same goal. Yet Jesus' words still ring true, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Unity can exist but it is only when we are following Christ according to the word of God as the unifying standard (1 Cor. 1:10). It is not up to man to walk as he pleases but rather to humble himself to God's will (James 4:10; Matt. 5:3-6). Sadly, the uniqueness and singularity of the Lord's church (Matt. 16:18) will not be taught by the Promise Keepers; rather such truths will be attacked while the error of denominationalism will be upheld. Indeed, they may state "the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and life. It alone is the final authority establishing all Christian doctrine"¹¹ but their teachings do not reflect a belief in such a claim.

Is it good to encourage men to be faithful to God, their families, and community? Absolutely! To that end one might commend the Promise Keepers and be tempted to take of their "victuals" and make a treaty with them — that is support or participate with them. But looking deeper into their teachings, hopefully one will see the danger of doing so; for certainly joining in such a treaty would be to fail to "ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord." Carefully investigate for yourself the teachings, aims, and works that Promise Keepers presents and supports to see if what they are teaching aligns with the teachings of God. If it does then by all means uphold and encourage it, but if it fails then make sure to bid it not God speed but rather reprove it (2 John 9-10; Eph. 5:11). **ΛΩ**

¹<http://www.promisekeepers.org/about>

²<http://www.promisekeepers.org/about/7-promises>

³<http://www.promisekeepers.org/about/core-values>

¹¹<http://www.promisekeepers.org/about/statement-of-faith/faith-w-scripture>

¹²<http://www.promisekeepers.org/about/faqs/faqs-controversy>

FREEMASONRY

Terry Jackson

The actual origin of the Freemasons has been lost leaving a few theories to explain their beginnings. The most common theory being that it arose from the guilds of the stone masons who built the castles and cathedrals in the middle Ages. There is no doubt that their major influence came through the Knights Templar who was a group of warrior monks formed in 1118 A.D. to protect pilgrims making their trek to the Holy Lands. In the past few years a lot of attention has been directed at them through the agency of the film industry. It should be noted that much of the truth concerning these fellows are lost in legend.

One of the questions that are frequently asked is, "Can a Christian be a Mason?" Many defend the Masonic Lodge as being simply a social club that is involved in good works and encourages faith in God. There is little doubt that they have been involved in some worthwhile services and projects but the Lodge itself is full of religious error. The remainder of this article will consider a few.

One of the questionable elements involves the secrecy of the Masons. The big question is, why the secrecy? No other social or service organization maintains such a veil of secrecy. When we read the New Testament, one realizes that Jesus did nothing in secret. His works were of a public nature. "Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" John 18:20. One's faith is not to be clandestine or covered in secrecy.

One of the errors of the Masonic lodge is its understanding of God. In an article written as a Masonic teaching tool, the author wrote, "*Freemasonry requires its members to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being and also to believe that there is only One God. Freemasonry refers to its god as the Great Architect of the Universe. It teaches that all men, of all the various religions, worship the one God, simply using a variety of different names. It is on that basis that Masons may be Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists, or men who profess to follow Jesus. Freemasonry requires a belief in the existence of A Supreme Being, but does not define that being*". This statement makes it clear that though they believe in the Divine Architect of the Universe, that architect is not defined and is not limited to the One God of the Bible. In other words the Hindu Vishnu or Islam's Allah is as much deity as the Biblical Jehovah. Once a scribe asked Jesus to identify the greatest commandment and "Jesus answered him, "*The first of all the commandments is: 'HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE.'*" Mark 12:29. One cannot make a vow as a Mason without violating the Biblical doctrine of the *one God*, Eph. 4:6.

Freemasonry teaches men to imitate Hiram Abiff so that they may get to heaven. In the legend of the Third Degree the Worshipful Master closes with these words,

"Then, finally my brethren, let us imitate our Grand Master, Hiram Abiff, in his virtuous conduct, his unfeigned piety to God, and his inflexible fidelity to his trust; that, like him, we may welcome the grim tyrant, Death, and receive him as a kind messenger sent by our Supreme Grand Master, to translate us from this imperfect to that all-perfect, glorious, and celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides." In the 1946 edition of the Kentucky Monitor in the preface the author wrote, "*All believed in a future life, to be attained by purification and trials; in a state or successive states of reward and punishment; and in a Mediator or Redeemer, by whom the Evil Principle was to be overcome and the Supreme Deity reconciled to His creatures. The belief was general that He was to be born of a virgin and suffer a painful death. The Hindus called him Krishna; the Chinese, Kioun-tse; the Persians, Sosiosch; the Chaldeans, Dhouvanai; the Egyptians, Horus; Plato, Love; the Scandinavians, Balder; the Christians, Jesus; Masons, Hiram.*" (pages XIV-XV)

The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is our way to salvation, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" John 14:6. The Bible does not say that the truth of Hiram Abiff will make us free. But Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" John 8:32. The Bible does not tell us that the words of Hiram Abiff shall judge us the last days but rather the words of Christ, "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*" John 12:48. It was not Hiram Abiff that died on the cross for our sins!

Freemasonry embraces a doctrine that reduces Jehovah to one God of many, and Jesus Christ as one of several Saviors. How can a Christian subscribe to this kind of insult to Deity and contradiction to the Bible? **ΛΩ**

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WHAT IS THE RED KETTLE?

David Harris

Along “Christmas time” one sees the “Red Kettle” appear. You cannot go by the local Wal-Mart without hearing the ringing of the bell, and the look of the “Ringer” if you do not put coins in the red kettle. The Salvation Army has “their army” out in full force, collecting money to be distributed to the “needy.” No doubt, this is an institution that does some good work for the less fortunate of the world. The Salvation Army is involved in the operation of general hospitals, clinics, homes for unwed mothers, serves meals for the hungry, and other benevolent works. However let us not overlook just what the “Salvation Army” really is. The Salvation Army is a religion, complete with its own doctrine. This causes one to wonder why this organization does not advertize itself for the religion that it is, when soliciting money at the “Red Kettle.” The Salvation Army is a “Christian Mission” started by William Booth in Nottingham, England, in 1865. According to its charter issued in New York State in 1899, the Salvation Army is an organization “designed to operate as a religious and charitable corporation” whose paramount purpose “is to lead men and women into a proper relationship with God” (**What is the Salvation Army?, pp. 8-9**). The Salvation Army has a web-site that has its private policy statement, that says:

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. The Salvation Army is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

The official creed book of the Salvation Army is, **The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine**, published by the International Headquarters in London. The “General Order” which prefaces the book states: “This volume contains an exposition of the principle Doctrines of the Salvation Army as set forth in its Deed Poll of 1878.”

“These Doctrines are to be taught in connection with all Salvation Army Officer’s training operations, both preparatory and institutional. It is required of officers of all ranks that their teaching, in public and private, **shall conform to these eleven Articles of Faith**” [emp. Mine DSH].

As always, when man begins to change “The Faith that was once delivered unto the Saints” (Jude 3), he begins a dangerous pathway of untruths, deception, and the ultimate condemnation of precious souls.

This creed book of the Salvation Army teaches that babies are “born sinners, totally depraved” (Handbook pp.85-86).

The Bible teaches the opposite, “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father...” (Ezek.18:20).

The Salvation Army denies the Bible teaching of the gospel that, “It is the power of God unto salvation...” (Rom.1:16). The Salvation Army teaches that man has neither the will nor the power to be saved. They teach that although one may have heard “The gospel many times, by this inner illuminating he now knows it to be true, and true for him personally” (**Handbook**, pp.89, 133).

The Salvation Army does not believe nor teach that baptism is necessary for salvation (**Handbook**, pp.185-186). But Christ, in His Book, commands baptism (Mk.16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

There are also the untruths being taught about the “Lord’s Supper,” “Women preachers,” “Unscriptural financing,” the accommodation of “homosexual domestic partners,” etc. One of the most recent unbiblical developments concerning this organization, is its stand on abortion. They claim that they believe in the sanctity of life, but in their **International Positional Statement**, they conclude the following: The Salvation Army believes that termination can occur only when:

Carrying the pregnancy further seriously threatens the life of the mother; or Reliable diagnostic procedures have identified a foetal abnormality considered incompatible with survival for more than a very brief post natal period. In addition, rape and incest are brutal acts of dominance violating women physically and emotionally. This situation represents a special case for the consideration of termination as the violation may be compounded by the continuation of the pregnancy.

The Salvation Army Commissioner, M. Christine MacMillan, was contacted by a news agency recently and asked to respond to three questions: (1) Does the Salvation Army fund abortions in any way? (2) Does it lead women to abortionists in any way? (3) Why does it cite and link to the Guttmacher Institute, which is affiliated with the abortion chain Planned Parenthood? She declined to answer.

One would have to ask to question; What good would it do to fill the belly of the physical man with nourishing food temporarily, and then teach him a doctrine that, if obeyed, would send his soul to an eternal hell?

The next time you pass by a "kettle" and you think about donating to a good cause, remember, you will be supporting a religious organization that is in direct conflict with the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ. **ΛΩ**

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THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT

Franklin Camp

God has always taught His people to be different. One of the major problems of His people has been forgetting this truth and losing their distinctiveness. The nation of Israel wanted to become like the other nations around them (1 Samuel 8). They became like them and God cast them off. Surely there is a warning for the church.

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD. The church is different from the world in its attitude and ambitions. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). The values of Christians are different from sinners. Sinners live for self. Christians live to glorify God and serve others (Matthew 16:24; Mark 10:45). Are we losing this distinctiveness today? Are the attitudes and ambitions of Christians different from non-Christians?

THE CHURCH DIFFERS FROM JUDAISM. Judaism was carnal, the church is spiritual. "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary ... which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washing, and carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:1,10). Look carefully at the word, "carnal." The church is spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). It is heavenly (2:6). Its worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24; Romans 1:9). This is one reason that mechanical instruments of music have no place in Christian worship. If one granted that it was right in the Old Testament it does not suit the spiritual worship of the New Testament. Christian worship must be from the heart. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT FROM CATHOLICISM. The church differs from the Catholic Church in that it accepts the authority of the Scriptures. Catholics do not accept the authority of the Scriptures. Consider the following quotation. "One must keep the commandments of God and the church" (CATECHISM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, NO. 1, p. 31). The Scriptures are an authority but not the only authority. In truth, it is no authority since the pope must interpret it. Catholics teach that 2 Peter 1:20 denies the right of individual interpretation. This is a perversion of the passage. Peter is speaking of how Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1:21). Paul commanded the Thessalonians to "prove all things, hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). He did not say prove all things by what Peter said. The church urges all to have an open mind and "search the scriptures daily" to see if what is heard is in harmony with what they have read.

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT FROM PROTESTANTISM. The church differs from Protestantism in that it accepts the completeness of the Scriptures. The church has no creed but Christ and no book but the Bible. All teaching is based upon the Book. All questions are decided by what the Bible teaches not a manual or discipline. It also differs from Protestantism in accepting the completeness of the Scripture and denying the need for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to understand it. Protestants generally misapply 1 Corinthians 2:14. They think the natural man is the sinner without a direct operation of the Spirit he cannot understand the Bible when he reads it. It has always been strange to me that even though the Bible is made of words just like one finds in the school books or the newspaper one can understand them in the book or paper but not in the Bible.

THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT FROM THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The church differs from the Christian Church in its respect for the silence of the Scriptures. The Christian church teaches that where the Bible is silent we may speak or act. This opens the door for anything that is not specifically forbidden. This is a real difference between it and the church.

CONCLUSION: We should not be afraid or ashamed to be different from the world, from Judaism, from Catholicism, from Protestantism, and even from the Christian Church. Without a doubt one of the greatest problems we are facing in the church today is the fact that most people are afraid to be different. **ΛΩ**

REASONS TO DEFEND THE TRUTH AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINES

Because it will set one free (Jn. 8:32). Because we are to contend for the faith (Jude 3). Because we are to be ready to give a Bible answer (1 Pet. 3:15). Because we are to prove all things (1 The. 5:21). Because the church is the pillar and the ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Because Satan and his ministers are busy teaching error (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Because many have been misled (Mat. 7:21-23). Because Satan needs to be exposed (Mat. 7:15). Because one can believe a strong delusion (2 The. 2:9-12). Because false teachers need to be exposed (Rom. 16:17-18). Because those who continue not in the doctrine of Christ have not God (2 Jn. 9-11). Because some are perverting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). Because if one adds to or takes from the gospel his part will be taken from the book of life (Rev. 22:18-19). Because we are to be set for a defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:17). Because religious division is wrong (1 Cor. 1:10). Because worshiping according to creeds and doctrines of men is vain (Mk. 7:7). Because the many that are going down the broad way need to be warned (Mat. 7:13-14).

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- Bangs Church of Christ
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- Emerson St. Church of Christ
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THE PARABLE OF THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

by John Godfrey Saxe

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
Though all of them were blind,
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me, but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis very clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal
And, happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up he spake:
"I see," quote he, "The Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee:
"What most the wondrous beast is like
Is very plain," quote he;
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the
ear,
Said, "Even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can:
This marvel of an elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quote he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
They all were in the wrong!

So it is with false religions of the world

Seek Ye First...

P. O. Box 41
Bangs, TX 76823-0041

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