

Liberalism In The Church

JESUS, PAUL, AND THE THEOLOGICAL LIBERAL



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Liberalism

I have found the 2016 presidential race in America to be interesting at times. One thing that I have noted is the increase of liberalism within our society. What is known as the liberal left has really taken root and almost took over the Democrat Party in this year's election. But, though they failed, the movement is alive and well, and clearly, has its stamp on last week's Democrat National Convention. One thing I notice about this movement is the number of liberals that have absolutely no respect for our laws or authority.

Now as far as the church, the kingdom culture of Christ is supposed to be influencing the world. But, yet, I am afraid at times it is modern Pop-Culture or Secular Humanism that is all too often influencing the Lord's church, and clearly not for good. Meaning, liberalism is, unfortunately, alive and well in what is called the Lord's church today. And as many in our nation no longer respect and honor our laws as they are required to do by God, Romans 13:1-7. Many in the Lord's church today, absolutely no longer respect and honor God's laws as well. So, all across the Lord's church, congregations are changing and adding, and changing and adding without a "thus saith the Lord."

Brethren, we need to get our healthy fear of the Lord back again! And understand, God is not kidding when His word commands of us that "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," Colossians 3:17. The Holy Spirit is clear in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we are "Not to go beyond what is written," in God's word. And to emphasize that God is not playing with us the Revelator wrote, "If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book," Revelation 22:18-19. Now, some people would interject here and say, "But, John made this threat about the book of Revelation." And that is true, but clearly, God's point is made. It doesn't matter what inspired book one is discussing, if one takes away or adds to it what they want, what they feel is best, what they prefer, or what they like, there are going to be some eternal consequences.

God is concerned with what we are doing and if we are adding or taking away, Leviticus 10:1-2. Let's show and prove our love to Him, by simply obeying in all things what He has prescribed for us, John 14:15; 15:14; Matthew 28:18; Luke 23:1-3; Ephesians 5:23.

“Children’s Church”

Last week we noticed the lack of respect that so many in our country have today for our laws. And when we even have a president that refuses to enforce all the laws on the books, well, how would we expect those under him to respect the laws of the land? Unfortunately, we also have this same mindset infiltrating the Lord’s church today. Where great numbers of people, who claim to be Christians, no longer respect God’s laws in His Book. And therefore, they are ignoring scripture, His authority, apostolic example and more to do what they want to do. I don’t know how Jesus can get any clearer when He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” John 14:15. But, clearly, there is a portion in the brotherhood that could care less about His commandments and are more interested in how they feel and what they want.

The Lord’s church is to find her authority by looking for direct commands, binding examples, and necessary inferences. But, yet, when you look at what liberalism in the church promotes today, it doesn’t matter to them what the commands say, what has happened before and if something is necessary or not. And over the next few weeks, I will give examples of what some congregations are doing today, where there is absolutely no Biblical Authority for what they are doing.

Today, we are going to look quickly at the new addition called “Children’s Church.” Since Biblical authority again is found by direct command, apostolic example, and/or necessary inference, where is Children’s Church authorized in scripture? Where is any example of it found in scripture? Why is having Children’s Church, a divided assembly, necessary? And if necessary today, why was it not necessary for the 1st Century Church, whom we are trying to pattern ourselves after today? Or, are we, trying to pattern ourselves after them today?

Here are some things to consider (These are condensed arguments based on a work by Brother Dave Miller of Apologetics Press.):

- 1) Many of us here today, like our predecessors before us grew up attending worship with our parents. And we are still here, members of the Lord’s church today. Which goes to evidence “Children’s Church” is not necessary for the development of Christian adults.
- 2) The adults who leave the assembly of the saints to lead, control, direct, and keep safe the “Children’s Church” are forsaking the assembly of the saints.
- 3) Then there is the excuse given by many that children need their personal space to worship because they are young, immature and only a distraction in worship. Well, there is still no authority or example for it in scriptures. But, there is authority for parents to correctly discipline their children teaching them to show respect for worship.
- 4) The way to train children to function in an adult worship is to put them in the adult worship. Taking them out of worship and putting them in an environment filled with fun and games will only promote childish immaturity and such will carry over into their adult worship when they grow up. As Brother Miller says here, “Children’s worship actually legitimizes the immature level of spirituality.”

5) There is authority for Bible Classes and home devotionals in scripture. And if a parent feels their child needs further training in how to behave in adult worship. That can easily be accomplished by parents fulfilling their spiritual roles in the home and by bringing our children to Bible classes where such considerations are taught.

6) I am going to conclude this by quoting Brother Miller, "Where does the Bible authorize divided worship assemblies? Did the early church divide into separate worship assemblies? Shall we divide the congregation into additional groups based on age? What about dividing the church up for other considerations- like gender, knowledge and spiritual maturity, or social class?"

To conclude, there is simply no Biblical authority for authorization, establishment and practice of "Children's Church" today. We need to remember to do anything in worship there must be a thus saith the Lord. The burden for those who want to do anything in worship is to "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good." "Children's Church," is simply an addition planted by men, and Jesus warns us that anything planted by men and not by God will be rooted up, Matthew 15:13.

“Praise Team’s”

The Lord’s church for 2,000 years has come together in cooperate worship praising God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Typically in congregations, there will be a song leader or two leading the congregation in their song service as they praise and magnify the name of God, and admonish and teach one another in song. However, over the last few decades, the pattern outlined in Scripture, and certain commands found in Scripture have been set aside for a more modern approach to what is called the song service. Specifically, the addition I am discussing is the addition of “Praise Teams.”

Though, I don’t have space in this article to dig into the topic, but here are some things to consider. First, the concept of praise teams did not originate in the New Testament. “The origin of the worship team goes back to the founding of Calvary Chapel in 1965. Chuck Smith, the founder of the denomination, started a ministry for hippies and surfers. Smith welcomed the newly converted hippies to re-tune their guitars and play their now redeemed music in church,” (Pagan Christianity, Frank Viola). So, when we think of ascertaining Biblical authority, there is simply no Biblical authority for the modern “Praise Team.” There is no command, no Biblical example, nor is it necessary at all.

Secondly, what it has become in many congregations is a choir without the robes. Where they do the singing and the leading of worship, while many if not most of the audience sits back and listen. The Bible is clear in Ephesians 5:19, we are to “Speak to yourselves,” during the singing service. The plural subject within Eph. 5:19 speaks to the entire congregation. The pronoun here is reflexive, which demands that everyone sings.

Thirdly, the other day I decided to listen to what leaders of a congregation with a praise team had to say about their team. And before the preacher started his lesson, he said, “I want to thank our praise team for leading our worship.” So, this is from the horse’s mouth. Outsiders looking in may think one thing, but those on the inside clearly understand and testify that their praise teams are to lead worship. And this praise team is a collection of men and women. Whom, according to their preacher was leading worship. And, there is no New Testament authority for women leading worship, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, there leading worship goes against what the Holy Spirit wrote. Thus, an addition, where they are practicing the commandments and doctrines of men.

Due to a lack of space, I need to stop. But, to wrap this up, there is no Biblical Authority for what is called a “Praise Team.” The beginnings of this movement are not Bible based, but denominational based. It is like Israel begging for a king to be like the other nations around them. We are the Lord’s church. Denominations are not to be influencing us; we are to be influencing them. Also, many a Praise Team has turned into a choir. And there is no authority at all, for women to lead in New Testament worship.

Baby Dedications

I love the opportunity to lift up the names of my brothers and sisters in Christ. What a blessed opportunity we have to let God know, whom we love and care for, and ask His richest blessings upon them. I have often even prayed for the children of members, the children within the congregation and for children in the womb. I pray for mine - daily! We are commanded to "pray without ceasing," 1 Thessalonians 5:17, and to "Cast our cares upon the Lord," 1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 55:22. And even in cooperate worship, prayer is authorized. And since the establishment of the church, we have been praying for our widows, orphans, the sick, our leadership, our children and more. However, the question at hand is can we justify this new baby dedication fad in worship and in our congregations, on the grounds we are authorized to pray in worship?

First, in ascertaining Biblical authority we need to consider the New Testament church and ask if there is authority for such? If not, then it is an addition. And a casual reading of the New Covenant will clearly evidence that the early church did NOT have baby dedication ceremonies. Now, some might ask, well what is the harm? Well, the harm is such is not authorized. And if we are going to develop the spirit of "what is the harm," then the sky is the limit to what we can bring into our congregations, when we justify our practices by our opinions. Our worship is to be in "Spirit and truth," John 4:24, of which there is no truth about Baby Dedication Ceremonies in the New Covenant. Now, some people will try to use Mary and Jesus as justification for this practice, but an appeal to this situation clearly reveals a lack of knowledge to the historical background of the text. But, as well Simeon, NOR Anna (Luke 2:25-38) dedicated baby Jesus. And the rest that happened between baby Jesus and the temple area falls under Judaism and not New Testament Christianity.

Secondly, historically speaking "Baby Dedications" have sprung forth from the old false doctrines of inherited sins and infant baptism, which were initiated hundreds of years after the first century. According to Hugo McCord, he wrote, that Baby Dedications sprung forth in America when the Methodist Church repudiated the doctrine of original sin in 1910 and replaced infant baptism (Sprinkling.) with baby dedication ceremonies.ⁱ From there, denominations and several congregations in the Brotherhood have added Baby Dedications to their worship, and not to pattern themselves after the New Testament, but to "Go on the prowl in search of something new by which to stimulate and maintain enthusiasm within the family of God. They mean well in most instances; but they may be prone to misdirected innovations."ⁱⁱ

It is so easy to run out of space with articles like these. But, besides the fact that there is no Biblical Authority for Baby Dedication ceremonies today, and that these innovations are from men and not from God. We can add to this, what right do we have as Christians to initiate religious institutions or covenants without God's authority? And when did proxy dedication become acceptable to God? And if we can dedicate our children to the Lord by proxy, then why not a neighbor, a friend, a workmate, a spouse, etc.

To conclude. Pray, pray and pray some more for our children. We have every Biblical right to do so. Pray while they are in the womb, and pray till you take your final breath. "The bottom

line on this matter is that God has not instructed us to engage in dedication ceremonies of infants. To do so is to 'go beyond what is written,' 1 Corinthians 4:6."ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ McCord, Hugo, Vigil 22, October 1994, 78-80

ⁱⁱ Jackson, Wayne

ⁱⁱⁱ Miller, David

A History of Small Groups

In Hebrews 10:25 we are commanded not to forsake the assemblies of the church. Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 11:20, that when we assemble, we should come together in one place. And when one looks at the 54 references of congregations in the book of Acts, not one of them show that elders met as a unit over different house assemblies. Or let's clarify this by saying, said eldership ruled over the local congregation, and never did a single congregation divide into different house assemblies for worship at the same time. There was no such thing as we understand "Small Groups" today, in the New Testament church.

Historically speaking, it is the norm for small groups of people to come together to study the Bible, to evangelize or for Christian fellowship. It was even common for certain denominations like the Anabaptists, Lutherans, and Moravians to use small groups to get their denominations started. And then there is John Wesley, 1703-1791, the founder of the Methodist church, is considered the first to promote the coming together of organized small groups to study the Bible. He did so because he hated the cold formalism of the Church of England (Today knows as Episcopalians and Anglicans). Now, to be fair, he never promoted small groups as a replacement for corporate worship. Matter of fact, he continued to worship with the Anglican church and expected the Methodists to attend the Church of England as well. By the way, the Methodist Church has never put forth a formal resolution, splitting from the Church of England. That was not his desire. His desire was to bring some life back in the Church of England.

Now, in our more modern era, the name or concept "small-group movement," didn't come about until the 1920's-1930s. And the movement started at the Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City, but it wasn't a movement that was sanctioned by their leadership. It was members who had become disenchanted, along with those who were disfellowshipped, coming together for study and fellowship. However, this movement did not set aside periods of worship, for cluster groups.

And then in 1946 the Church of the Savior in Washington D.C. started small groups to bring forth commitment and personal surrender. But, again, they didn't cancel worship services for the development of such groups.

Then in the 1960's secular sources started to promote the small group theory, based upon the views of human sociological research. And quickly denominations started to take their cues from said research and to apply said principles. Simply put, the concept of the church coming together to worship as one, had been in vogue for 1930 years. Then the 1960's came about, and Americans with their new insights based on organizational theory, let their rational and practical hearts delude them into believing they could organize and control a

setting that could replace cooperate worship and accomplish more. So, all across the land, denominations started replacing their Sunday night worship, with small groups. And, since many of our congregations no longer believe in us being the influencing factor to the world and false religions, they decided to follow the influences of denominations. And now, every congregation within the Lord's church, that has added small groups, did this for various reasons; but in the end, God being worshiped, lauded and magnified on Sunday evening was/is being pushed aside for such development. We will continue this article next week.

A History of Small Groups #2

Last week we quickly considered a history of various “Small Group” movements within Christianity. To define “small groups” for the rest of this article. I am discussing congregations, who decide to set aside worship assemblies for the purpose of dividing up into small groups and meeting in homes, restaurants, parks and more for fellowship, classes or divided worship assemblies.

Let us consider:

First, is there Biblical authority for today’s small group movement? The answer is clear, there is not one example of a congregation of the Lord’s church in the Bible, splitting up into small groups and worshipping in different places under one eldership. Congregations of the Lord’s church are mentioned 56 times in the book of Acts, and there is not one example of elders meeting over, or dividing the congregations into separate house assemblies. Nor can you find such in the epistles. Now there are examples of entire congregations meeting in the same house or same building, but never did they split up into groups. So, there is no Biblical example of this modern day practice in scriptures. Any congregation that practices such does so, without a “thus saith the Lord.”

Secondly, the desire for small group meetings is secular in it’s beginning. It is the result of sociological research that claims relationships are nurtured more effectively in small group settings. And, no one denies the feelings and personal relationships that can develop in small groups. But, what many fail to consider is the primary design of corporate worship is not for the purpose of developing personal relationships. The design of corporate worship is to worship God! And if we are canceling worship for small group meetings for the purpose of developing relationships, then we have made a conscious decision to place the developing of personal relationships above the worship of God.

Thirdly, when congregations divide into such small groups, elders lose their ability to shepherd and feed the flock as God commands. Elders can pick out materials to cover, and even write outlines for the groups, but without their presence and protection, anything can be taught. Historically speaking small groups have become a hotbed for division and additions within congregations, because shepherds were not there to lead or defend the truth, 1 Peter 5:1-3; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28-30.

In conclusion, there is nothing wrong with congregations fellowshiping and developing relationships in the church. We are a family, Eph. 3:15. And the early church was steadfast in fellowship, Acts 2:42. The problem arises when we do away with set aside periods of time to worship God, Heb. 10:25. It is not only about authority but also about priorities. What we must understand is each activity: fellowship and worship are specific and should not replace the other. "We might as argue that since the contribution is not singing, we should do away with the contribution so that we can improve our singing." If congregations want more opportunities to grow with each other, then what is wrong with Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening after worship to God, or what about Friday or Saturday evenings? Why do we take one of the few opportunities we have to worship God for small groups? If it is a matter of

time convenience, well instead of canceling worship to God to fellowship. How about, at the end of every work week, we come together as the body for fellowship? So, we can grow, and love each other more? But, I can already hear the cries, "What about Friday night football?" So, congregations will cancel worship to God instead?????

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage – Part 1 - History

When government asserts itself into institutions created by God things, only go bad. As when California became the first state in the union to permit no-fault divorce in 1969, the divorce rate skyrocketed. According to the CDC, in 1867 only 3% of marriages in America ended in divorce, and this number slowly climbed until 1967 when 26% of marriages were ending in divorce. And after states started adopting no-fault divorce, where all one had to do was cite irreconcilable differences, the rate rose steadily to 50% in 1985. Now, modern trends tend to show the divorce rate is dropping. But, on the other hand, co-habitation rates are higher than ever. According to a survey by the National Center for Health Statistics. From 2006-2010, 1 in 4 women has co-habited with a man before 20. And that number jumps to 3 out of 4 women before they reach the age of 30. Of those who are living in adultery, 40% end up marrying within three years, 28% break up, and 32% are still living in sin. And these high numbers have led Pamela Smock the director and research professor of the Population Studies Center at the University of Michigan to say, "The question becomes not who cohabitates, but who doesn't."

There are other reasons divorce rates have dropped as well. History has proven that divorce forces people into poverty, which then restricts the educational, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of children. And because of these realities, some parents simply work harder to keep their marriages intact.

Within the churches of Christ, starting in the 1940's and early 1950's E.C. Fuqua was one who brought the Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage false teaching into the church. He started to advocate that non-Christians are not under the Law of Christ. At that time Brother Thomas Warren aptly debated him and destroyed Fuqua's position. And because of that, the MDR issue died down for several years. Then in the 1960's Pat Harrell began to write on these matters taking on a view that since there is no record of people living in adulterous marriages having to separate in the New Testament, then there was no need for us to do so today. But, again, his writings, as slanted and off as they were didn't take root in the church. It was not until the no-fault divorce laws came into effect that the church was willing to start watering down the truth of Matthew 5, 19; Romans 7 and 1 Corinthians 7. Again, culture started influencing the church, instead of the church influencing culture.

James D. Bales started answering the call to water down the laws on MDR by producing a false doctrine similar to Fuqua's in the mid to late 1970's. Teaching non-Christians were not under the Law of Christ, declaring that two non-believers could be married and divorced an infinite matter of times, and it didn't matter. And it was just not him, Olan Hicks in the 1970's, started teaching that God approves any marriage. And Dan Billingsly then started teaching that the Gospels are not for the church. And others have gone so far as to declare that 1 Corinthians 7:15 permits no-fault divorce and then subsequent remarriage for everyone. Also, others have gone so far as to dismiss anything written about marriage, divorce and remarriage in scripture and simply teach, "God just wants you to be happy." Now, it is not that these false doctrines, and more, were left unattended. Brother Roy Deaver

debated James Bales in 1988. Brother Andrew Connally debated Olan Hicks in 1977. And Mac Deaver debated Dan Billingsly in 1995 in Arlington.

The time has come that the Lord's church stops allowing culture to determine or influence our doctrines. What Jesus taught in Matthew 5, 19; Romans 7 and in 1 Corinthians 7 was NOT to be the doctrine of the church until America adds no fault divorce. These were NOT words written to be suggestions to the Lord's church. And God who is the author of marriage, is the one who determines who can scripturally marry, divorce and remarriage. And for us to think we have the right to change what is written on those topics is just as arrogant as our country who thinks they have the right to redefine marriage.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage – Part 2 – Doctrine

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”

One has to wonder how difficult the English language must be. Because as simple as the wording is in this paragraph, there is nothing but mass confusion when it comes to dividing and rightly understanding this verse. And, it is not that I think there is mass confusion, as much as it is that many wish it just said something else. But, no matter what one feels, the passage here is as clear as day. One cannot scripturally put away their spouse and remarry unless their spouse fornicates. And people today think this is harsh, and even the disciples present on that day answered, “If the case with the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry,” Matt. 19:10. The disciples were free not to agree with what Jesus said, and people today are free to claim what Jesus taught here is harsh. But, the fact remains, our ways are not His ways, and His ways are not ours, Isaiah 55:8-9. And, add to that, He created the institution of marriage, and He is the one who defines what constitutes a scriptural marriage or not.

Jesus even agreed in Matthew 19:11 that “all men cannot receive (Accept – HS) this saying.” But, just because a person can’t accept it, doesn’t change the facts at hand. Not everyone can accept Christ, does that negate Him being the Son of God? The truth of the matter is, as Jesus said, because of the messes some create with marriage, divorce and remarriage some just need to be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 19:12.

I know there is only so much I can say on this topic in a front page article. One thing is clear; God will judge our congregations and leaderships for allowing adulterous relationships. Have you ever read and studied 1 Corinthians 5:1-13? Here we have a couple living in an unscriptural relationship, and the leaders of the church were doing absolutely nothing about it. So, Paul condemns the entire congregation for being prideful, arrogant and failing to hate the sin of 1 Corinthians 5:1-2. And if Paul was going to write a letter to the congregation where you attend, would he need to address the same?

Friends, we need to be very careful where we worship today. Just because some congregation has the name “Church of Christ,” above the door, doesn’t make that congregation pleasing to God. God as is evidenced in 1 Cor. 5, isn’t pleased with congregations that have unscriptural relationships in them, while the leaders sit back and do nothing about it. What makes us better than Corinth, where God would be upset with them, but not us on this issue? Through scripture, God has told the church in Corinth and us in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 that we are to deliver those who refuse to get out of those relationships to Satan. Instead of trying to ignore the situation. Ignoring the situation isn’t helping anyone’s soul. But, giving them a false hope that all is well, when, according to Scripture it is not. Well, how loving is that?

Women Preachers

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,” 1 Timothy 2:12-14.

Another evidence that proves that America’s Pop culture continues to influence the church, instead of the church influencing culture is found in the women’s liberation movements. Clearly, the Bible teaches that God has created male and female and the Bible teaches that we are one in Christ, Galatians 3:28. But, though one in Christ, there are certain roles stipulated in Scripture for men, as seen in command, and example. The leadership of the church and in worship is set aside for men, who fulfill certain qualifications.

Now, for the sake of clarification, nowhere in the New Testament does it teach a woman’s place is only in the home, barefoot, pregnant and always in the kitchen, with no right to vote, work, or speak. Though some in the past, and today, may feel or have felt that way. That is not what Christ and the Holy Spirit taught in the New Testament pages. However, when it comes to certain roles in church leadership and worship, God has spoken, and He gives us some reasons as to the why on this matter, as you can read in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11. But, still, whether He gives us reasons or not, the fact is our Creator has spoken, and we are not to think above that which comes from God, 1 Cor. 4:6.

However, today, several of our brotherhood colleges have decided it is time to keep up with culture as if God will open our cultural books before us on the last day. And these institutions, have been trying to influence the church to increase the roles of women in our congregations. Colleges like David Lipscomb, Abilene, and Pepperdine, have been promoting the increased roles of women, beyond the authority of God for several years now. And they have even gone to the point where they have invited “women preachers” to speak to mixed audiences during their lectureships. And, because of their influence, more than a few congregations over the last few years have gone gender neutral. One of the congregations that bears our name in Arlington, North Davis, has recently accepted the “Giftedness Principle,” over Biblical Authority, and now accept women in every church role, except in the eldership and senior minister role. And there are now over 50 congregations that were once faithful to the truth that now has gone gender neutral, accepting the Giftedness Principle over the Authority of God.

Friends, the time, has come when we refocus our efforts and do all we can to rid the church of modern day pop culture. The Father did not send Christ, and Christ did not bring the Father’s words, just to allow America some 2,000 years later to replace them. How arrogant and stiff-necked our culture and many of our congregations have become thinking they can out rule God. We need to be warned, that God has promised that “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,” Matthew 15:13.

http://northdavischurch.org/files/pathway_to_the_principles_of_giftedness_04_22_15_final.pdf

Handclapping

Another modern addition to the worship of the church is handclapping. Now there are different types of handclapping involved in modern worship. There are those who applaud and those who handclap with the song service. The applause is generally a show of approval, a sign of recognition, a result of excitement or a manifestation of diplomatic courtesy.

With the rise of this new fad, there is a question to ask. “Is there Biblical authority for applause or handclapping in God’s worship?” In short, Brother Hugo McCord wrote, “Nothing in New Testament teaching on worship calls for hand clapping, body movements, or shouted words.” Simply put, there is no Biblical authority for it, and if that is the case then why do people handclap and applaud today in worship? Well, without Biblical authority, if they do these things, it is because they want to. But, shouldn’t our wants and desires give way to obeying the Lord, John 14:15; 15:14?

Historically speaking, according to David Miller, he says the introduction of applause in Christian worship was through an elder of the church in Antioch named Paul of Samosata in 260 AD. What he introduced was the transfer of customs from the theater to the church and he persuaded the members “To applaud his preaching by waving linen cloths.” Not being there, this sounds like the “Terrible Towels” of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Anyhow, the church censured him for this practice, and they quickly abolished it. And, now, once again, culture has infiltrated the church instead of the church influencing the world.

Again, this is only a first-page article and there is only so much one can say. But here are four things those who applaud and handclap in worship should consider.

#1 – Why do you applaud and handclap in worship? Did the authority come from God or man; God or culture; God or one’s own desires? Now, I understand it is common for humanity when challenged to allow pride to get in the way of truth. But, do away with your pride and ask, why do I applaud or handclap in worship?

#2 – 1 Corinthians 4:6 teaches us “not to think beyond that which is written.” The early church did not practice such. And the “Terrible Towel” movement came 230 years too late to have come from God.

#3 – Matthew 15:1-3 teaches us that we should not mix our culture with God’s word.

#4 – Colossians 3:17 – teaches that “whatever we do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord.” Now, some people will quickly turn to the Old Testament and proclaim that there was handclapping then so we can use it today. Friends, the O.T. is not our authority today. To try to justify practices in New Testament worship through the Old Testament is to make the life of Christ vain, Galatians 2:21.

I could have said much more. But, this is enough to evidence why anyone trying to restore New Testament Christianity should not add handclapping and applause to God’s worship, there is simply no authority for said practices.

Deacons

One of the new modern trends that are infiltrating many congregations within the Restoration Movement is the trend of replacing deacons with ministry leaders. This new trend started out in the 1980's with a call to be more gender inclusive in leading worship as a direct result of the feminist movement that hit America in the 1960's. And, what has quickly grown out of the "Gender Inclusive" movement is the "Giftedness Principle" campaign that insinuates that if you have a gift, then you should use that gift. And the conclusion of that principle is, it doesn't matter what the Bible has to say on the subject.

As far as church organization is concerned, we can see that God organized the newly established church, in its earliest development, under apostles and prophets (Acts 11:27; 13:1; Ephesians 4:11). These were individuals empowered by the Holy Spirit to present the Words of Truth during the infancy of the church.

After the establishment of the church, some claim as little as 18 months, that the apostles were spending too much of their time helping widows instead of preaching the gospel, Acts 6:1-3. God had purposed for them to take the gospel to the entire world, Matthew 28:18-20, and serving others was keeping them from accomplishing this great work. So, the apostles who were directed by the Holy Spirit came up with a solution and they told the early disciples to find "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business," Acts 6:3. This is how under the guiding hand of God they organized the early church.

Next, as the church continued to grow and leave its state of infancy, God sent forth Paul, Timothy, and others to establish a new permanent leadership in congregations of the church. And they went forth setting men in the church as elders and deacons (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). These elders and deacons were both men who fit certain qualifications as listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And in Philippians 1:1, we can see Paul was writing an epistle to one of these organized congregations and said, "To all of the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." With the apostles and the miraculous age dying out, God's desire was for local congregations to organize with bishops (elders), deacons and saints.

There are several qualifications for deacons in Scripture, but the one I want to point out in this article is 1 Timothy 3:12, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife." This Holy Spirit, God-breathed document, details that God wanted deacons in congregations to be married, married to one person and to be a man. Now, I know that sounds sexist to some in the church, but it doesn't change what God said. I know many in our society man not understand why this says what it says, but their lack of understanding still changes nothing. There are those who claim that Paul was a male chauvinist and let's say for the sake of argument he was; it still doesn't change the Spirit's desire in 1 Tim. 3:12. To be frank, it doesn't matter what argument man may devise, 1 Tim. 3:12 doesn't change.

Because of cultural shifts in America, many congregations have decided to allow culture to teach us how to organize the church and they have completely done away with the office of

deacon for ministry leaders. Elders pretending to know more than God, have set themselves upon some supposed throne of authority and have declared because of this, this or this, we know better and will organize our congregations the way culture desires. But, this isn't our church. Did the elders making said changes die for the church? Are they the ones that purchased the church? Are they head and chief shepherd of the church today (Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:4)? There is not one verse in the Bible that gives elderships the right to change the organization of Christ's Bride. May the Lord's church learn, before it is too late, "Not to think above that which is written," 1 Corinthians 4:6.

Liberalism in the Church - Conclusion

This article makes it a baker's dozen about some current trends happening in the church. I have written these articles to warn and prepare us for a future spiritual war that all of us will have to face, and some are facing right now. The reality is postmodernism has brought forth a new mindset that teaches spiritual truth is not what was spoken, written or evidenced, but truth is what one feels. Mix that with a new mushy and emotional mindset of the Emerging Church movement; we now have many congregations that believe truth is subjective/cultural based. And they believe the only absolute/objective truth is there is no absolute/objective truth.

The Emerging Church doctrines which have infiltrated most of our Christian College Bible departments, and more than a few of our congregations today, simply have an interdenominational mindset, that denies the Old Paths, the absolute authority of the Word, and the exclusivity of the church. Instead, they are seeking and using modern cultural, psychological, and philosophical concepts to develop a new mindset where "Church" is all about finding emotional fulfillment, joy, and release. So, the results are: 1) The Bible is not filled with objective truth. 2) Worship is primarily about "me" feeling good and receiving some type of spiritual enlightenment. Glorifying God in worship is no longer the primary focus.

All of us who believe in Christ are going to have to face this new Emerging Church concept. If not us, our children will. Here are a few things to consider about where you worship, where your children may worship and where you may worship one day.

Does the congregation where you worship:

1) Accept and contend for the Biblical doctrines on marriage, divorce and remarriage? Pretty much every congregation that is apostatizing today no longer is concerned with what God has presented about M/D/R. Instead, they just ignore what Jesus taught in Matthew 19. The point is, if they can't respect the teachings about the first institution God created in the Garden, why do we expect them to respect the teachings of the Lord's Church?

2) Allows culture to determine how they are going to define gender and service roles in the church?

3) Preach the entire oracles of God? Most apostatizing congregations today will not allow what they call, negative sermons to be presented. Meaning sermons about sin, repentance, and about calling the members to do better, and be more like Christ are condemned. Instead, their sermons are primarily pep talks delivered to make you feel good about yourself, with never any challenges to repent and grow in Christ.

4) Seek for modern human inventions to add to worship to make it more appealing to humanity? Inventions like mechanical instruments, praise teams, skits, plays and increased gender roles are often found in congregations who no longer find their authority in God's word.

5) Celebrate man-made religious holidays like Christmas and Easter?

6) Have what they call a traditional and a contemporary worship service? If where you worship the elders allow a worship service contrary to God's word, then that eldership is in error and so would anyone who worships with them, 2 John 1:9-11.

There is much more that could be asked and said. But the reality is, where you worship will help determine your eternal destiny. If you worship at a congregation that does not obey God, respect His word and His worship in spirit and truth. It is time for you to move on for God will judge our congregations and those who worship therein, Revelation 11:1.

