

Seek The Old Paths

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

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WHY I LEFT THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH #1

Dan Goddard

Members of the church of Christ need to realize that it is not just the use of the mechanical instrument of music that separates the Lord's church from the Independent Christian Church.

I was a member of the Independent Christian Church (also known as the Conservative Christian Church, the Church of Christ-Instrumental, and the Christian Church) for over twenty years.

It was while I was preaching for the Bell Gardens Christian Church in Southern California that I began to question some of the practices of the Independent Christian Church, as to whether they were Biblical. After several months of study with various preachers from the Independent Christian Church and the Church of Christ Non-Instrumental, my wife and I decided to follow New Testament Christianity in a more perfect way and to identify ourselves with the church of Christ Non-Instrumental (the Lord's church).

It was in 1973 while I was preaching near Los Angeles, California, that Nancy and I began to question the practices of the Independent Christian Church. I kept asking myself questions like, "Why do we practice things not authorized in God's Word?" or "Is

this New Testament Christianity?" But I would always comfort my soul by saying, "We've always done it this way, so it must be alright."

I knew of several men who were thinking as I was, but did not know what to do about the situation. What would they do for an income if they stopped preaching? Who would they turn to for help?

The one event (among others which will be listed later) that caused me to seriously consider leaving the Independent Christian Church was our special "Fill-A-Pew" Sunday. The building was packed to overflowing with entertainment provided by a hundred member choir and a forty piece orchestra. The one who brought the most people got to hit the preachers in the face with cream pies. As I watched the events begin to unfold, I asked myself, "Is this New Testament Christianity - a rock 'n roll church service and a jungle beat that filled the auditorium drowning out all the singers?" I asked myself again, "Is this New Testament Christianity?"

From that Sunday forward I began to make a list of practices I could not find authorized in God's Word. I began to share this list with other preacher friends. Comments were made including "Well, Dan, you've done your homework." "Be careful who you show that list to." "If word gets out about this list, or this list falls into the wrong hands, your effectiveness among the Christian Churches in Southern California is dead."

These were matters that just weren't talked about. Everybody was doing them, but nobody wanted to show book, chapter and verse to authorize such practices. Whenever I would ask someone why we did a certain thing, or practiced a certain event, the pat answer that I always seemed to get was, "We have always done it" or "What harm could it cause even if the Bible doesn't authorize it?" For example, we had an elder that had never been married. When I showed the other elders

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the qualifications for elders set forth by the Word of God (one such qualification being that an elder must be the husband of one wife) and asked how this man could be an elder if he had never been married, the "Biblical" answer I received was, "He's a nice guy, and one of the good old boys. And besides, everybody likes him." He was never asked to step down.

I would like to briefly describe some of the other concerns that prompted me to leave the Independent Christian Church and seek out New Testament Christianity. Members of the church of Christ need to realize that it is not just the use of the mechanical instrument of music that separates the Lord's church from the Independent Christian Church.

1. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH: One concern that prompted our decision to leave the Christian Church was their use of women. We had women choir directors, women on the church board, women teaching mixed adult Bible classes, women educational directors, women youth ministers, and women who filled in for their husbands in elders' meetings. I began to see that such was a violation of I Corinthians 14:34 and I Timothy 2:11-12.

2. SPECIAL MUSIC: Another area of concern was "special music." We had our choirs, chorales, rock bands and orchestras - all during the worship services. Our philosophy was, "The more you entertain them, the more people will come." Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 do not authorize such practices during the worship service.

3. PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: Partaking of the Lord's Supper on days not authorized was another practice of concern. We partook of the Lord's Supper on any night we chose with the logic, "The Lord is

here, the Lord is near, so let's acknowledge this by partaking of the Lord's Supper." Where does the Word of God authorize such? Acts 20:7 authorizes first day of the week observance ONLY.

4. SPECIAL DAYS: Special days were observed almost weekly. Christmas and Easter were observed as religious holidays. Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny made appearances during the services. Paul warned about this in Galatians 4:9-11 and Colossians 2:16-17.

5. FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONS: We fellowshipped denominations. I exchanged pulpits with denominational preachers. I was a member of the local ministerial society. I accepted denominational baptism - if it was by immersion. (This was why there were no active evangelistic programs toward denominational people - we did not believe they were lost.) I supported denominational revivals, conventions, conferences, and rallies. Second John 9-11 warns us about this attitude and practice.

6. CONSTITUTIONS AND BY-LAWS: Constitutions and By-Laws took the place of Scripture. The length of the office of elders and deacons was determined by what the By-laws said - not by the Word of God (cf. II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3).

7. DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM: Congregational voting was the means used for decision making, including hiring preachers, installing elders and deacons, etc. (cf. I Peter 5:1-4). The Lord's church is not a democracy, but a theocracy, with Jesus as head.

8. THE OFFICE OF DEACONESS: Every congregation that I preached for had the office of "Deaconess." It was a voting office and there was a "head" Deaconess that was a member of the church board. We know that in Acts 9:36-43 Dorcas was commended for her good works, but this was not an authorized "office."

9. RAISING FUNDS FOR THE CHURCH: Funds were raised by means of car washes, bake sales, yard sales, rummage sales, etc. - all in the name of the church. First Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches the correct way to support the work of the church - by free-will contributions of the members.

As you can see, it is not only the mechanical instrument of music that separates us from the Independent Christian Church. An attitude exists called the "Martin Luther Principle" which basically states, "Whatever is not expressly forbidden in the Word of God is authorized." This is why many of the preceding acts are practiced in the Independent Christian Church. There is an attitude of "I want it, I like it, and I don't care what the Bible says, I am going to have it."

How many of the things listed above are being practiced in many congregations of the church of Christ today? Is it true where you worship? Oh, how we like to be like those round about us!

*Part 1 of 2
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[EDITOR'S NOTE: We hope in coming months to include several reviews of different denominational doctrines and churches. Many of these will be written by those who have come out of denominationalism.]

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WHY I LEFT THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH, #2

Dan Goddard

*Many of the things I thought I left in the
Independent Christian Church are now found in
several of the "churches of Christ."*

In 1973 my wife, Nancy, and I decided to leave the Independent Christian Church and become associated with the Churches of Christ Non-Instrumental. With hours of Bible study and assistance from Jim Smith (preacher from Sumter, SC) and Wayne Williams (preacher from Bell Gardens, CA), we came to realize that we were not practicing New Testament Christianity and needed to make a change.

Nancy and I now have been members of the Lord's Church for over twenty-two years, and there has never been a moment of regret over our decision to leave the Independent Christian Church.

I look back to the 1970s and ask myself, "How could I have practiced (in the name of religion) and asked others to join with me in activities not authorized by the Word of God?" Through my years as a gospel preacher in the Lord's church I have tried to warn members of the church about looking to those round about us for their religious authorization for things practiced — and not the Word of God. Many of the things I thought I left in the Independent Christian Church are now found in several of the "churches of Christ." If no religious authority could be found for such practices then, what makes peo-

ple think religious authority can be found now?

For example: If no religious authority could be found in God's Word for the using of **women in the worship services** then, (In the Independent Christian Church we used a woman to direct the choir and one to direct the congregational singing each service. We used women to teach the mixed adult Bible classes — usually an elder's, deacon's or preacher's wife. Elders' wives filled in for their husbands when they could not attend the elders' meeting. We used a woman as an educational director, a woman as the youth minister, women attended the monthly men's meeting and had a voting power on the church board. We had the office of deaconess, with the head deaconess who also could vote on church policy. In fact, women were in charge of just about every committee and one could say that women ran the church.), while I was preaching for the Independent Christian Church, what makes us think that we can find the authority for women in these positions now? Did I ever think I Corinthians 14:34 — *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith*

the law" (KJV) or I Timothy 2:11-12 — *"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection, But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"* (KJV) was ever being violated? Not on your life! WHY? Because we wanted it, we liked it, it wasn't causing anyone any harm and we were going to have it regardless of what the Bible said! I beg members of the church of Christ to consider these matters and not to follow what I did when I was preaching for the Independent Christian Church. Follow God and his Word!

Looking back again to the 1970s, consider my **association with the denominations**. I was told at various Independent Christian Church schools I attended that the Independent Christian Church was not a denomination. But I began to ask myself, "If you fellowship the various denominations and practice what they practice and make no effort to convert them to New Testament Christianity, are you not one of them — a part of them?" While I was a preacher for the Independent Christian Church I never considered myself a member of a denomination, but

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"follows" his faulty reasoning. He does not well understand rules of logic and implication, obviously. Will such as Anders care to enter into polemic discussion what he believes "follows what implications?" Second, what "legalism" was broken? He is making the repulsion of society equal with the Law of Moses. Talk about legalism! Jesus broke no such law, nor did he tread upon any social standard. Third, what ceremonial rule was violated? He tries to substantiate his case by citing Leviticus 5:3. We hasten to point out that what Jesus was doing when he touched the leper was not in ignorance, nor did he become contaminated by a leper in that **at the moment** he touched him, he was no more a leper. What "uncleanness" spread to Jesus? How sad for Anders to claim to follow a "defiled" savior...one who was a law-breaker no less! Do not forget, friends, Jesus had the authority to do what he did. He was not acting above the Law as Anders suggests, but was fulfilling the promise of Isaiah that One was coming who would do the very things Jesus was doing. In fact, he gave to his apostles also this same authority. Matthew records it thus, **"And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority...to heal...the sick raise the dead, cleanse the lepers"** (Matt. 10:1,8).

Finally, he tells us **"Jesus was more concerned about a suffering human being than he was about some ceremonial regulation. Which receives our greatest attention: meticulous keeping of traditional rules, or genuine helpfulness to others?"** It ought to be plain that Anders charges Jesus with situational ethics. The lesson he wants us to learn is: "Don't be so concerned with what the Bible says—do the loving thing." Notice that he again compares the Law of Moses with mere "traditional rules?" Folks, such blasphemous and misleading doctrine as this is not going to stop. Far too few are standing up against this nonsense. Will you not stand up against this attack upon our Lord, his Bride and his Word?

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when I left and looked back and examined my practices, my view began to change about this matter. How could I be a member of the local ministerial society (a meeting of all the area's denominational preachers), exchange pulpits and church choirs with the denominations, support their denominational revivals, attend their denominational conventions, go to their denominational conferences, encourage support of their denominational youth rallies and accept their denominational baptism (if it was by immersion), and not be a part of them? I did not heed the warning found in II John 9-11, **"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."** This passage of Scripture meant nothing to me when I preached for the Independent Christian Church! The Word of God would not have condoned what I was practicing in this area of denominational fellowship while I was preaching in the Independent Christian Church, nor would it condone like practices today.

Another concern was the use of **the instrument of music** in the Independent Christian Church. I was taught in Christian Church colleges that the Church of Christ Non-Instrumental was responsible for the division that occurred in the Restoration Movement. Words like "anti-pianis" and "non-plunkers" were used to describe members of the Church of Christ Non-Instrumental.

My wife, Nancy, played the organ and piano in every Independent Christian Church that I preached for. In 1973, in southern California, she played the piano and a member of the Baptist church played the organ. He would attend our services on Sunday morning and the Baptist church Sunday night. No one saw anything wrong with such an arrangement.

One Sunday morning we had a 40-piece orchestra entertain us. I asked myself, "Is this New Testament Christianity?" If you have the

opportunity, ask an Independent Christian Church preacher why they use the mechanical instrument of music. During the years that I was associated with the Christian Church, I never preached a sermon, nor did I hear a sermon, on the subject "Why We Use The Mechanical Instrument of Music." However, I did ask some Christian Church preachers in southern California that question. Here is a summary of the answers that I received: (1) David used them and that's Old Testament authority for their use in the church; (2) Jesus didn't say you couldn't use them and that's New Testament authority for their use in the church; (3) They are used in heaven and that's heaven's authority for their use in the church. When I preached for the Independent Christian Church I used this type of argument for the use of the mechanical instrument of music. This kind of logic and argumentation has been shown to be false over and over in several debates (Highers/Blakely, Hardeman/Boswell, etc.)

Why, then, do members of the Independent Christian Church use instrumental music in the worship service? — because they like it and because they WANT to use it! It is a matter of attitude toward the Word of God. If you want it and you like it, what difference does it make what God said about it? Such teaching and practice is false!

My wife once asked an elder where I was preaching in the Independent Christian Church why we used the piano and organ in the worship services. Here is the "Biblical" answer she received. "It's always been here. That's why we use it. The people who built this building put it in that corner and we have used it ever since." If you are not going to follow the Bible in this matter, what difference does it make what reason you give for using something God never authorized?

Changing churches is difficult. You lose many friends that you have known over the years. People think you don't love them and think you don't want to associate with them just because your religious views are now different from theirs. But there is a friend that is closer than a brother and to him we must answer on judgement day.

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