

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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Things The Church Is Not To Do

James W. Boyd

*Some have befuddled the work of the church
by seeking to do something without authority.*

It is not God's intention that the church direct the affairs of civil government. While we have legitimate interest and concern about civil affairs as citizens of our country, we should not involve the church in these matters that are purely political, economic, and government policies regarding trade, foreign affairs, police work, elections, road building, etc. But in matters of morality, ethics, truth, though often thrown by some into the political arena, the church should and must be involved because that involves the business of righteousness. For example, the issues of abortion, alcoholic beverages, gambling, same sex marriages, the teaching of evolution, intrusions against the moral standards of God, these are the concern of the church.

The church is not intended to provide for the social life of its members — furnishing entertainments, sports, gymnasiums, playgrounds, camps, recreational facilities, etc. To those who think so, we simply ask for the Scripture that authorizes such things. The craze to have the church to entertain has, in some digressive churches, turned the worship services into near revelry, show, "a holy wow," and a religious Hee Haw.

While places for assembly and facilities to do the work are necessary, **it is not the work of the church to simply build buildings, temples, sanctuaries, etc.** For too

long many have depended upon glamorous buildings to be the attraction of the church. Disproportionate amounts of money have been spent building and maintaining elaborate buildings. But the church grew more rapidly, physically and spiritually, when our buildings were more "on the other side of the tracks."

The church is not in the money making or money saving business. Some churches hold huge savings accounts, drawing interest, hoarding funds, while people all over the world are dying lost without the Gospel. Good stewardship of funds is one thing. Greedy and grasping brethren who just hold on to money while the work languishes is something else. I would fear to be an elder of a church presiding over large savings while the Gospel is not being preached.

It is not the work of the church to provide secular education. Secular schools are businesses and do not belong in the church budget. For many years school people have dug into the treasuries of churches for their school work. Christ did not die to provide chemistry labs, tennis courts, computers, or make "scholars." Schools can be helpful or harmful to the cause of Christ. At present, 1997, most of the colleges established by brethren, have become enemies of the cause of Christ rather than friends because they have led the way into digression

and apostasy. Brethren have for too long bought the false teaching that whatever an individual can do, the church can do.

The church is not simply to make people feel good, draw crowds, build self esteem, get numbers and funds, be accepted by the community, etc. The church should seek to please God, not men. You will never please all men anyhow. It's like the man and boy and the donkey. They started out with the man riding the donkey and the boy walking. Some criticized, thinking the man should let the boy ride. So they changed places. Then some criticized because the boy should have had more respect for the man than to ride while the man walked. So both got atop the donkey. Again, some criticized because they thought both of them on the donkey was too heavy for the donkey. So they both walked. Then they were accused of being fools for having a beast of burden but not using him. You cannot please everybody. Why try?

Some have befuddled the work of the church by seeking to do something without authority, but then asking, "What's wrong with it?" If it is without authority, it is wrong. We must have authority for the work of the church as we must have it for the worship, the plan of salvation, organization, and terms of entrance.

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Editorial...

The Bible Versus "Change Agents" #3

Garland M. Robinson

If you believe these current errors are not affecting you and will not affect you, then you are in a dream world.

Change agents seek to destroy the nature of the CHURCH and its WORSHIP. They despise the simple worship authorized in the Bible. Bible tradition based upon the apostles' inspired Word is looked upon as cold and legalistic. According to them, we presently are in an age of change where feelings and emotion rule. If it seems good and feels right, then it must be right. Simple worship dictated by divine rule (the Bible) is not what draws the crowds. Worship must be jazzed up and made to fit the whims of the baby boomers and baby busters.

First Peter 4:4 speaks well of those with such a concept. *"Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."* They ridicule and scoff, mock and scorn those who do not follow their wayward descent from the right ways of the Lord. They do not understand our continued appeal to the tested, tried and true - the Holy Bible.

Have you ever known a time in which promoters of the departure from the old paths have been so brazen in their agenda? They are running wild to excel in the devil's lies. According to them, the lovers of truth are left in the dust and shambles of outdated Bible respect and a "thus saith the Lord." Dear reader, where do you stand? Will you be counted on the side of the Lord or the side of Satan (cf. Exodus 32:26).

Change Agents don't want anything we do in worship. Change, Change, you've got to change. We don't want the cold, drab, lifeless worship of the past. We want participation, we want movement, we want a renewal of the Spirit. They do not really believe the church is the eter-

nal kingdom of God and that it exists in its fullness today. They have contempt for the restoration plea. Notice these quotes from *The Second Incarnation*, a book co-edited in 1992 by Rubel Shelly and Randall Harris.

"As the church, then, we resist the arrogant claim that we embody the fullness of the kingdom of God. Yet we long for 'a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. 1:11). Until then, we continue to pray, 'Father, your kingdom come!' We commit ourselves to pursuing the kingdom lifestyle. We live the life of a pilgrim church moving toward a clearly identified goal" (p. 76). "The tired, uninspiring event called worship in our churches must give way to an exhilarating experience of God that simultaneously exhibits and nurtures life in the worshippers" (p. 13). "We have no interest in building a first-century church or a 16th or 19th or even 20th-century church in the 21st century. To do so would elevate human culture to the status of divine truth" (p. 20). "Is there either the need or theological warrant for ongoing change in the church? Our answer is affirmative to both elements of this question" (p. xv). "We propose an ecclesiology that is oriented more toward the future than the past for ultimate significance in God's eternal purpose. The church

will not arrive at its goal within historical events" (p. xvii).

They tell us God is immutable and then say,

"The church, however, is different. It does not possess the immutability of divine personality. Nor does it have the unalterable quality of propositional truth.... The church does change. Moreover, it needs to change" (p. 3). "For the corporate body of Christ, there is no historical prototype of the church for duplication. The kingdom of God is yet to come in its ultimate form. In all its instantiations, the church has been (and is) flawed." (p. 6). "Change and newness did not end with his arrival. The wine is still fermenting.... The wine is the bubbling, churning gospel. It is the ever-arriving-yet-never-fully-realized-on-Earth kingdom of God" (p. 11).

In a sermon preached at the Missouri Street Church Of Christ, West Memphis, Arkansas, April 20-21, 1990, Rubel Shelly said,

"My children will not stay with the church I grew up in. They will not be a part of an irrelevance." "The church has never existed" we are not the "true church - an arrogant claim." "The church has never existed except in the Father's mind."

Wineskins, a paper edited by Rubel Shelly and Mike Cope, is dedicated to the "change agent" movement. Notice this enlightening statement of their belief and purpose.

"Our goal is to move that group ("the Church of Christ Denomination") closer to the church of Christ revealed in Scripture."

They actually believe the church of Christ is a denomination among denominations! According to them, we may look in the yellow pages of

the phone book and believe there are Christians scattered among the various denominations listed there.

“As surely as there must be individuals who hold membership in groups called ‘the Church of Christ’ in the Yellow Pages who are not members of the church of Christ whose membership roll is kept in heaven, surely also there must be individuals who are not identified with the Yellow Page group called the ‘Church of Christ’ but whose names are nevertheless entered in the heaven-kept roll (roll?) of the church of God.” (*I Just Want To Be A Christian*, 1984, p.61; 1986, p.69.)

The Bible is clear and decisive concerning the church and its establishment. Jesus said to Peter, “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Jesus spoke of the church as his kingdom. To Pilate he said, “*...My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36).

Jesus said the church/kingdom would begin as promised in the days of the Roman Empire (cf. Dan. 2:44). Jesus “*...said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power*” (Mark 9:1). The Lord told his apostles not to leave Jerusalem until they be endowed with power. “*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endowed with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them. “*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak*

with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

From what we read above, the Kingdom was to come “with power” (Mark 9:1), that is, the kingdom would come along side of power or at the same time the apostles received power. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Therefore, the kingdom/church came on Pentecost in Acts 2.

When the apostles preached, there were about 3,000 people who obeyed the Gospel. “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41). Concerning those early days of the church we read in Acts 2:47, “*Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*”

Those who were being saved were added to the Lord’s one body of which there is only one. “*There is one body*” (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is in the Lord’s one body, the church, the kingdom, that he receives glory. “*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end*” (Eph. 3:21). Jesus is the savior of the body, the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:22-23). I certainly will not ridicule and despise the Lord’s church/kingdom, will you?

Faithful worship includes praising God in song (Heb. 2:12) without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Preaching the Word, not flattering words of men, is involved in worship (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Thess. 2:5). Partaking of the Lord’s supper each Lord’s day is a part of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30). A contribution is given by every member of the church on the Lord’s day (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). Prayer is a part of the worship of the church (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15).

Dear reader, where do you stand? Do you believe the church/kingdom was established in its fullness in 33 A.D.? If so, are you “fighting the good fight of faith” to maintain its purity (1 Tim. 6:12)? Or, are you standing idle while such perverters of truth are ravaging the precious bride of Christ (cf. Matt.

20:6)? Do you desire to continue worshipping the Father according to the divine pattern? And, do you desire your children to do so also? Then stand up and speak out and demand that the digressors and compromisers shall not pass!

If you believe these current errors are not affecting you and will not affect you, then you are in a dream world. If these errors or the tendency toward them are not already in the church where you worship, they are in the one(s) next door. Brethren, it’s far past time that lovers of Truth get in the battle. “*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*” (Isa. 58:1, the Lord’s church/kingdom is the spiritual house of Jacob today).

All the Lord’s people must “*preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*” (2 Tim. 4:2). The place is here, the time is now that “*...they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The command of the Scriptures is clear. “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph. 5:11). “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Rom. 16:17-18). “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds*” (2 John 9-11). Those who do not oppose the agents of change are counted guilty of their evil deeds.

When an area congregation invites a false teacher or compro-

miser (sympathizer) in to preach and you attend, you are guilty of his evil deeds. It matters not how long you have known the man, the church or the brethren there. Error is still error! To be faithful to God, we must oppose him and them and show the error of their ways. Blood may be thicker than water but it is not thicker than Truth. The Truth is thicker than kinship or friendship. To practice Bible fellowship and the limits of fellowship won't make you popular with the compromisers among us but it will with God. Remember what Peter and the other apostles said, "...We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). I had rather receive the disapproval of some brethren "for a season" than to be condemned by God for an eternity.

Dear beloved brethren, wake up before it's too late!

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WHAT IS OUR GREAT OBJECTIVE?

James E. Farley

Recently I have been reading again the *Hardeman Tabernacle Sermons*. These are a series of sermons preached by the late N. B. Hardeman in Nashville, Tennessee in 1922, 1923, 1928, 1938 and 1945. The first four of the five series was held in the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, and the last series was held at the War Memorial Building and the building of the Central Church of Christ in Nashville. I certainly recommend these volumes to all, for they can serve as a good help in our daily walk as members of the body of Christ. These books can be a great help in converting the sinner.

As I was reading from Volume IV, which is a record of the sermons that brother Hardeman preached from October 16-31, 1938, I came across a wonderful, thought provoking quote. It is from a sermon called, "Is Christ With Us?" He began by reading Luke 2:40-45.

Brother Hardeman said, "Is it possible for us to pass on to the judgment and there to wake up, only to realize for the first time, as did his mother at the close of the day, that Jesus Christ has not been with us all the day. I am asking all of you brethren, what are all of our efforts about? What are the congregations in the city of Nashville trying to do? Is it to organize or form some special organization unknown to the Bible? What is our purpose? If I can discern and properly understand it, our great objective, brethren, is to cut loose from things of human relations and hark back to Jerusalem, and there again, start out determined and firmly resolved to make all things according to the pattern revealed in the New Testament...."

As I read those words, and contrast them with what is now happening among us, even among "the congregations in the city of Nashville," I too am made to ask (but for a different reason), "What are the congregations in the city of Nashville trying to do? Is it to organize or form some special organization unknown to the Bible? What is our purpose?"

When one looks at those who once seemed to be sound, but who are now espousing open fellowship with the sectarian churches, we can know that these have failed to realize our real purpose, or they have abandoned what they once held dear and have another purpose altogether now. When we hear one of them say that he can "sing a capella while the instrument is playing," we must realize that this one has lost sight of our great objective, not to mention his sense of logic! When we read that one of them (Max Lucado) encourages people to "be baptized," but then adds, "But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved," we must conclude that he has gone "out from us." As 1 John 2:19 states, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Those like Rubel Shelly, Mike Cope, Max Lucado, etc. must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17)! They are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ, they do not have God, and they must not be bid God speed (2 John 9-11). These cannot be said to be "disciples indeed," for they are obviously not willing to continue in Christ's Word (John 8:31-32).

Brethren, when we were going "forward...back to Jerusalem" we were growing. We were contrasting truth with error, the Bible with the creeds of men, the church of Christ with sectarianism. People could readily see the difference, and many of them left the errors of the denominations, repenting and becoming members of Christ's one body!

Let us pray, plead for, weep for, and defend our great objective! Let us call people back to the Bible, for "THE BIBLE ONLY, MAKES CHRISTIANS ONLY!"

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“BE YE FOLLOWERS OF ME, EVEN AS I AM OF CHRIST”

James Fisher

In First Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*” To be a follower of Paul is to be a follower of Christ as the above verse teaches. Is it possible then to be a follower of Paul and also a follower of modern religious institutions? If so, then of what denomination was Paul? As the text explicitly states, Paul was a follower of Christ. Jesus was not a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, or any other man-made religious name found in the yellow pages of the phone book.

Jesus was not a part of any denomination or sectarian group. As a follower of Christ, neither was Paul. If Christians are to follow 1 Corinthians 11:1, then we cannot be a follower of Paul and of these man-made institutions at the same time. They were non-existent in Paul’s day. Even if they did exist, he would have certainly condemned them because they were not established by Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

“...*The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26). They were not known by sectarian names. Those who obey the Lord today are still called Christians because in this name only is God glorified (John 13:31). All other names and titles only serve to dishonor Christ (1 Cor. 3:3-4). Peter exhorts, “*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf*” (1 Peter 4:16). It is not possible to glorify God in denominational names and titles. That is why Peter could say to the Jews, “*Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

The Bible teaches the church had its beginning in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. However, God did not see fit to call the church the “Pentecostal Church.”

The Bible teaches water baptism in many places, yet nothing is said

concerning a Baptist Church. That came about by man’s own wisdom (Rom. 1:22).

Paul explains in Romans 10:17 that “*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” In verse 14 he asks, “*How shall they hear without a preacher?*” Preaching is the means by which God makes the Gospel known to men (1 Cor. 1:18-21; Rom. 1:16). The church is to spread the gospel by this method, but the church of the Bible is not known as the “Methodist Church.”

In the giving of the great commission (Mark 16:15), Christ shows that the church will be universal, “*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*” However no command can be found to refer to the church as the “Catholic Church.”

These various names and titles are not the will of God. If they were, one would have no difficulty whatever locating them in the Bible, as the Bible is the expressed Will of God (2 Peter 1:3). Paul says it is by the scriptures “*that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Since these names and titles are absent from the scriptures, they are not good works. Lest we forget, it was Christ’s blood that purchased the church (Acts 20:28) and it belongs exclusively to him. Paul affirms this when he penned, “*The churches of Christ salute you*” (Rom. 16:16).

Paul was a follower of Christ and a member of his church as the Bible teaches. All the saved are added to the church by the Lord himself. If you have obeyed the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:8; John 8:24; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37; Acts 22:16), then you were added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:47) and not to a denomination.

There is one body (Eph. 4:4). The body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24). The body is of Christ (Col. 2:17). Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13). It is amazing how some

people can get 500 churches out of these few verses of scripture. Christians cannot be followers of Christ and be divided. Paul writes, “*Let there be no divisions among you*” (1 Cor. 1:10). To be divided is to disobey Christ. The Bible says Christ is the Savior of those who obey him (Heb. 5:9).

There are many thousands who have given up their allegiances with human organizations in favor of simple New Testament Christianity. Our faith lies in the power and wisdom of God as expressed in his Word and not in the wisdom of men as expressed in their divisions. Paul makes this clear when he says, “*That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Cor. 2:5). The church exists only inasmuch as the pattern exists. If one departs from the original pattern, then one has departed from the Lord’s church. This pattern is clearly revealed in the New Testament. Would the apostles or any Christian of the first century recognize denominational churches today? No, they would not. My friend, accept no substitutes! These institutions are not the church of the Bible. Common logic alone proves this fact. These institutions never even existed when the New Testament was written. They had their beginning at the wrong places, at the wrong times and by the wrong persons.

The church of Christ is the only religious institution today that is molded exclusively after the original church in both doctrine and practice. If it is not in the scriptures, one will not find it in the church of Christ. To follow Christ is to follow his church as Paul was a follower of Christ and his church. Peter declared, “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). This timeless command of our Lord is the highest rule for all lovers of the truth of God’s word (John 17:17).

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Tennessee, Digression and Foreign Missions

Jim E. Waldron

My wife and I rejoice that in April we were, after fifteen years, able to move back to our beloved Tennessee, which will now be our base for my work of training native Christians in other countries to reach their own with the Gospel. Of the last 30 years we have lived only five in Tennessee. Much of the time we have lived overseas.

I was born in Nashville in November, 1935. I attended schools in Davidson, Rutherford and Coffee Counties. I finished high school at Bellevue in Davidson County. Calvin Parker baptized me in August, 1953, at West Nashville Heights. I preached my first sermon at Old Charlotte Road west of Nashville in June 1955, and began preaching regularly at Five Points in Hickman County in 1956. I preached my first gospel meeting at Crewstown near Lawrenceville the same year.

My wife to be, Laura Gary, was born in a log cabin beside Plunders Creek on a Bon Aqua route in Hickman County in July, 1939. She grew up in Oak Ridge. We met at Lipscomb in 1957, and were married February 22, 1958.

While at Lipscomb I frequently heard the beloved Marshall Keeble preach in meetings for the Jackson Street church. On one occasion in Nashville in 1956, I heard the venerable N. B. Hardeman speak. These two are examples of giants in Tennessee in this century who preached the urgency of holding to God's pattern for His church (2 Tim. 1:13) and who stood like the Rock of Gibraltar for the one original church of Christ against all denominationalism. They maintained it was the kingdom foretold by our Lord and the prophets (Matt. 16:16-19; Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:40-44). Preaching in Nashville at that time was done with boldness and few if any in the church of Christ did not know the difference between it and any denomination.

Now, it is different. For an uncertain sound has, for some years, been coming out of Nashville via what is called, Jubilee. This year, 1997, was to be no different consid-

ering the featured speaker. Rubel Shelly announced in March: "Best-selling author Max Lucado will be in Nashville on Tuesday, April 22, and I want you to have the chance to meet him. Max will speak at a dutch-treat luncheon for area ministers that day at the Sheraton Music City." "Max will be speaking at the new Nashville Arena on July, 2, 3, and 4 this year. He will be the nighttime keynote speaker at Jubilee '97, an annual event sponsored by Churches of Christ. But we want to spread the word by means of this luncheon that Jubilee '97 is intended for the larger Christian community of Nashville." (Woodmont Hills' Letter, March, 11, 1997).

Brother Lucado is a known writer who also preaches for the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas. However, besides working with the church of Christ, he is also known for his work and co-operation with various denominations. He sometimes works with Catholic priests and even though Jesus commanded that no one should call any man "father" (Matt. 23:9), Max will use that title for priests when working with them. He also sings with their instrument (*Behold The Pattern*, Goebel Music, Colleyville, TX, pp. 113-118) and has told the Oak Hills church, "many of you know I have no trouble whatsoever with using instruments in worship."

Yet, he doesn't always line up with Catholics, for Max teaches Calvinism and John Calvin was a Protestant. As an example of such teaching, Max in his radio broadcast, called "Upwards" last December, 1996, over station KJAK from Lubbock, taught Protestant false doctrine which says a sinner can pray through to salvation. He then declared to the listeners: "I want to encourage you to find a church, ...to be baptized, ...to read your Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do that because you are saved." Brother Lucado says this in spite of the fact that Jesus died for the church (Acts

20:28) and He said, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Max has co-authored a book on Easter with Billy Graham and others (*Yokefellow*, Knight Arnold Church of Christ, Memphis, Tenn, May & June, 1997).

Max addresses Protestant clergymen as "Reverend," swaps pulpits with them and promotes their campaigns. For example, on October 21, 1996, the Oak Hills church conducted a "Crusade Information Seminar" in San Antonio in order to promote the Billy Graham crusade, which was to be held this year in San Antonio — April 3-6, 1997 (*Ibid*). Last Fall our brother Lucado wrote in the Oak Hills Church bulletin about Graham's upcoming crusade, "We heartily urge you to support and encourage this outreach any way you can" (Nov. 10, 1996). The Holy Spirit has said, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Yet, Rubel Shelly, who himself works in harness with denominational clergy around Nashville, featured Max Lucado at his 1997 Jubilee. Such men are working to restructure the church of our Lord into a denomination.

The Spirit has also declared in conjunction with the work of elders, "there are many...whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:10-11). Have you and will you as an elder warn your flock against such false teachers? Space fails me to tell how the books and tapes of Shelly and others with the same liberal agenda are being distributed abroad among young Christians. Just this year we have lost three men from the Bible School in Kiev, Ukraine, due to such error. Beloved, I urge you to help stem this evil in our own beloved land.

(*Jim Waldron serves under the oversight of Frankie Boynton and Barney Hollis, elders of the Dunlap church of Christ, P.O. Box 123, Dunlap, TN 37327*)

Being one of the most popular devotional writers in the denominational world is no small feat. To head the best-seller list, one would have to write in such a way as to not offend, or convict anyone of sin. Basically, all one would have to hold is a belief in God and in Jesus. A church affiliation might disturb some and keep them from laying down the cash to purchase your books. So, one would never write in such a narrow fashion as to teach that there is only one true church; one baptism; that church membership is essential to salvation; that the New Testament is the pattern; and most of all, one would never write the Bible only, makes Christians only, and the only Christians.

Max Lucado, preacher at the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, does not recognize the lines of fellowship that God has drawn in the Bible. After all, when one denies the Bible as the pattern, certainly, one can adjust the lines to suit himself. Brother Lucado endorses the sectarians. He has done so for quite a while.

WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

Toward the end of his article in *Wineskins*, entitled, "A Dream Worth Keeping Alive, Liking the Fruit But Not the Orchard" (January/February, 1993. p. 17-20), Max Lucado reveals to his readers that he has preached at the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. Max describes this church as "an immense non-denominational fellowship." Brother Lucado describes his experience with them as follows: "Each evening before the assembly a group of elders would meet to pray with me. I asked the elders to tell me about themselves. 'I used to be a Baptist, but now I'm just a Christian,' one shared. 'I grew up a Methodist,' stated another, 'but now I'm simply a believer.' 'I was Dutch-Reformed,' said a third, 'but now I just follow Jesus.' And this went on around the table. Both nights. And both nights I thought to myself, 'That's our line! That's what we in churches of Christ are supposed to say. What I heard in Chicago must have been akin to what early restorationists heard all around the

LUCADO'S SECTARIAN CONNECTION

Steve Miller

country: 'We aren't the only Christians, but we are Christians only.' How about that for "unity in diversity?"

It is rather interesting that brother Lucado tells us that he met with the elders of the Willow Creek Community Church and prayed with them before he spoke. We wonder if there were any women elders present in these meetings? According to Willow Creek's leading preacher, Bill Hybels, "my daughter is 11 years old, and it's great for her to see women role models in the church. It's important to me that she knows there can be a place for her in church leadership some day, somewhere" (*Daily Herald*, Suburban Living, Wednesday, May 18, 1988). The same newspaper article reveals "another striking feature about Willow Creek is that women are in positions of power. Three of the eight church elders are women." Brother Max, did a woman elder lead a prayer for you? Do you also accept women in positions of power, or did you try to teach them out of their errors?

DENOMINATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Brother Lucado seems to have no problem with preaching for and fellowshiping denominations. He has spoken at St. John Neumann Church, Trinity Church Family Center, First Presbyterian Church (See *Behold The Pattern*, Goebel Music. p. 113-127), and the Willow Creek Community Church.

UNITY DAY WITH THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Brother Lucado continues his associations with the denominational world. In the March 25, 1995, issue of the *San Antonio Express-News*, was an article announcing a "Unity day" on April 2, 1995. This event was a pulpit swap between Max Lucado and Rev. Buckner Fan-

ning, the preacher at Trinity Baptist Church. It transpired as planned. Brother Darrell Conley referred to this event as a "Tragedy in San Antonio," and rightly so! Elder Benjamin Franklin spoke of the sinfulness of exchanging pulpits with denominationalists, giving the example between a gospel preacher and a Roman priest.

The book of God forbids the saints from keeping company with such a man, or eating with him, or to bid him God-speed. We can meet a Romish priest and treat him as a citizen, if he is one, a neighbor, or gentleman, but we do not know him as a preacher of Jesus, or as a teacher of saints, or as a Christian. He bears no such relations as these to us, and we recognize him in none of these relations. (*A Book Of Gems*, p. 209)

Brother Franklin viewed the sectarians correctly, non-Christians! To engage in fellowship with them, is having fellowship with the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

Cases of joint fellowship with the sectarians by apostates have taken place over the years in various locations. Now that many brethren have rejected the Bible as a pattern, they have lost sight of the distinctiveness of the church of Christ. With no guide from heaven, no lines of distinction, and no Bible authority, men will seek fellowship with anyone who claims to believe in God.

We cannot endorse Max Lucado because the Bible forbids fellowship with false teachers (Titus 3:10). Christians must oppose heretics and their influence. Lucado works through his books, his speeches, and his association with various denominations. He has his own Max Lucado video series and is even getting into congregations via the video series "Raising Faithful Kids in a Fast-Paced World" by Paul Faulkner. Departing from the faith happens over a period of time, and faithful brethren have seen it coming for years. Many bright, talented gospel preachers leave the faith once delivered to the saints and embrace modernism and liberalism. These factors have contributed to the reality that the churches of Christ are experiencing a major division within her ranks.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"Receive your Seek The Old Paths and enjoy it very much. Thanks so much for sticking right with the Bible" ...*Charles Barnes, Crossville, TN*. "I truly enjoy the articles for they are very scriptural and helpful to me. God bless you in this great work" ...*Barbara Johnson, Lyons, GA*. "I have been receiving and enjoying it very much" ...*Charles Dyer, Louisville, KY*. "I request that my name be taken off your mailing list. Thanks in advance for your prompt attention" ...*Scott Pagel, Joplin, MO*. "Thanks for sending me Seek The Old Paths" ...*Earl Claud, Dover, TN*. "A sister in Christ brought Seek The Old Paths to church and asked if I would like to read it. I read the June 1997 issue and enjoyed it very much. Please put me on your mailing list" ...*Ernest Don Neil, Brandon, MS*. "We enjoy Seek The Old Paths each month. May God bless you in your work and for standing up against false doctrine" ...*Myles & Nina Clement, Duck Hill, MS*. "I received the April issue of your publication and enjoyed and benefitted greatly from it as it was sent to me by my dear friend and Bible instructor, Mr. W. F. Parker" ...*Scott Gift, Carson City, NV*. "We have received some copies of your fine paper. Appreciate the "sound doctrine" therein. God bless you and your co-workers. Keep on keeping on. Have been preaching for more than 80 years. Will soon be 93 years of age, wife will soon be 90. We both are in ill-health. Wife is under the treatment of three different doctors. I have been confined to a wheel chair and that has been going on for 3-4 years with no sign of relief. I am writing sermon books. May God bless you in our good work. Command us if we may lend our helping hand. Your fellow servant in Christ" ...*Ector Watson, Cleveland, OK*. "Enjoy reading Seek The Old Paths each month" ...*Don Curtis, Killen, AL*. "I appreciate the information contained within your paper. There are not many papers in the brotherhood that will take on some of the topics that you have (women translators, etc.). Keep up the good work and God bless you" ...*James Rennaker, Deport, TX*. "Thank you so much for sending the old issues of Seek The Old Paths. I will put them to good use. We thank God for the Kissimmee Church of Christ and their firm stand for the truth. It's like a breath of fresh air to hear the truth explained so clear after being in a denomination most of my life and hearing lame sermons with weak reasoning, never a clear answer to my questions. Your papers that I've been privileged to share from others have been a big help for private study and trying to show others the truth. Thank you again" ...*Howard & Marion Stark, Kissimmee, FL*. "First of all, I want to compliment you on your paper, Seek The Old Paths. It is excellent and I appreciate receiving it, very much. Thanking you in advance and bidding you God's speed in your work" ...*V. W. Harris, Louisville, KY*. "I have enjoyed reading S.T.O.P. Continue this good work. I have enclosed a check to help with the postage. Thank you" ...*Asbury Williams, Madison, GA*. "Enclosed please find a check to help with your mailing" ...*Connie Jarrell, Bidwell, OH*. "I would like to thank you for the bulletins and lectureship books. Keep up the good work" ...*Ben Porter, Davison, MI*. "Thank you for sending me Seek The Old Paths. I appreciate you standing for the truth of God's way. Continue to fully comply with Romans 16:17-18" ...*Don Shiflett, Irondale, AL*. "You are doing a good job. We need more preachers like you, not to hold back the truth as some preachers do" ...*Silver Point, TN*. "I thank you all for the good work that you do with Seek The Old Paths. It is needed and helpful. Charles Pledge's good article "A Man That is an Heretic" was EXCELLENT! Much needed! In the same issue, Jimmie Hill had a very good article concerning Romans 16:17. I am enclosing a small donation to help you with expenses. I know how expensive it can be. Keep up the good work, brother. I am constantly praying for you and all who will remain faithful" ...*James Farley, Gallipolis, OH*. "After reading your bulletin I feel that it is nothing but a bashing magazine against people who love Christ, but just don't preach the gospel the way you do. I don't think they are preaching false things, I believe they just have a more exciting method of getting the message across. No where in my bible do I read that you must not be excited about spreading God's word. I have been a member of the Church of Christ all of my life, I am the daughter of an elder and am appalled that there are people who would publicly bash people who love the Lord! We would love to help with your mounting bulletin expenses, please remove me and my family from your mailing list" ...*Daryl & Patti Conner, Shamrock, TX*. [NOTE: To "love Christ"

means you DO HIS WILL. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: ... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings..." (John 14:21,23-24). "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? What is so often pawned off as "love" today is not love at all. Love demands obedience. If all the confusion in the church today were simply over different methods of carrying out God's commands, then I concur that we ought to cease immediately, apologize and repent. However, we are not examining authorized "methods," we are examining false teaching and false practices (methods). All that we do must be authorized by God (Col. 3:17). I honestly cannot comprehend anyone who does not love the Lord enough to obey Him. I imagine such folks would not even oppose the devil. They would think that would be bashing him. Isaiah was told to "spare not" (Isa. 58:1). Was Jesus bashing those whom he called blind, blind guides, hypocrites and fools (Matt. 23:16ff)? Paul speaks about those who are enemies of "the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). I pray more would repent and turn to LOVE the Lord. — editor]. "Please keep up the good work" ...*Donald McGuyer, Sheffied, AL*. "We enjoy and appreciate the articles" ...*Rose Ulrey, Ashland City, TN*. "Please send the publication to us. I believe it will be a big help to us as we earnestly contend for the faith once delivered. Thank you very much" ...*Wynell Freeman, Lamesa, TX*. "We thank you very much" ...*James Norman, Montgomery, AL*. "I appreciate getting Seek The Old Paths. Keep up the good work" ...*Louise Welch, Union City, TN*. "I enjoy Seek The Old Paths. I reread it and I read my Bible day and night. Wonderful to read and when one reads it with their eyes open they know it is true. Why they don't is beyond me. Sept. 30 I'll be 99" ...*W. H. Dell, Tupelo, MS*.

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

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