

DESTRUCTIVE EPIDEMICS

Our generation is keenly aware of the meaning of “epidemic.” The destructive power of epidemics has been demonstrated by the AIDS virus that has brought death to hundreds of thousands. As this epidemic has swept around the world, all have become familiar with the causes, progress and end results of such plagues.

First there is the infection and incubation. Then the Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection appears, followed by the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. There is the fitful struggle of the body to escape the clutches of the disease. Then comes death. Hundreds of thousands of graves proclaim the importance of understanding this plague and the need to avoid situations where it might be contracted.

This sad story is remarkably similar to an epidemic now sweeping through the church of Christ. It has been given the label of “Change Movement.” Certain identifiable factors leave people vulnerable to this virus of change. Most prominent among them are man’s ancient and universal tendency toward pride, arrogance and rebellion against the authority of God and the standards set by Him.

Another is the acceptance of a new world-view as a basis for life’s decisions and a new way of interpreting the Word of God. This world-view is called **Postmodernism**. While only recently has it come to dominate our society, many of its integral parts have been around a century or more. Among its fatal factors is its teaching that all truth is relative, that there is no absolute moral or spiritual truths, and that decisions are best made subjectively rather than by some objective standard. Thus per this doctrine man, not God, is the final determiner of truth. This false system now is dominant in secular schools of higher learning and in some of the seminaries where preachers seek higher education. Like some vile disease, this system has spread into some of our schools and congregations; brought back by preachers who were infected in their pursuit of advanced education.

When the deadly virus of change sets in, it breaks down and destroys respect for the standards set forth by the founder of the church. The boundaries he set for his people are trampled down as the people rush toward forbidden pastures.

Symptoms of those infected with the change virus are loss of humility and worldly pride. Victims find it difficult to process and understand simple instructions. They have trouble obeying rules. Victims eventually come to despise Christ’s church. They no longer want to wear his name or be identified with his people. They seek aid, comfort and pleasure with other religious bodies. They depart from the faith (I Tim. 4:1-4). They have turned away from the holy commandments delivered unto them (II Pet. 2:21). With spirits wasted by their destructive disease, they wander off and eventually die spiritually.

Some of the victims of this infection, (primarily preachers and professors), have knowingly embraced it and have only themselves to blame for their condition. However many others, namely students in Christian Schools and members of congregations where such carriers preach, are unaware of the danger they are exposed to. They suffer because of the deceitful work of their spiritual teachers (Rom. 16:17-18). It is for them that we pursue this **Christianity: Then and Now** project. Hopefully we can immunize many before they are exposed to this disease and save them from the deadly infection. JHW