

CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW

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DESTROYING OUR HISTORY

When the barbaric Taliban ordered the demolition of Afghanistan's gigantic statues of Buddha, the world was aghast and outraged. But many members of Churches of Christ are standing by in virtual silence as a hostile band of liberal scholars labor to distort and destroy the history of our noble movement to restore New Testament Christianity.

Professors from some of our Christian Universities have issued a number of books that are carefully contrived distortions of the history of our people. Historical revisionism is common in both the secular and the religious world. The Japanese have revised their history books to lessen the guilt and shame of their brutal aggressions in World War II. Marxist academics are promoting a revisionist statement of our nation's history. They eliminate many things honorable and noble and replace them with sordid, ignoble insinuations and innuendoes. Every aspect of the past is interpreted in the darkest light. Every failure is magnified. Every noble deed and accomplishment is discounted or discredited. Special attempts are made to delete the influence of Christianity in the founding and shaping of the nation. It is clear that such revisionist historians hate America, her institutions and heroes.

We have revisionists among us, operating primarily in our Christian Universities.

* They tell the unknowing that Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone were the founders of Churches of Christ.

* They tell us that the goal of the early pioneers was simply a unity movement with denominational churches such as today's ecumenical movement.

* They say that Churches of Christ actually began in 1906 as a breakaway splinter group from the Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches.

* They imply that our fathers were in the wrong a

century ago for objecting to the use of instrumental music and missionary societies,

* They play down the great growth and victories of our brethren over the last century.

* They cannot see any progress in racial relations in the church, preferring to dwell on the failures of the past; failures typical of most churches of that era.

* They denigrate and dismiss great brotherhood heroes of the past, implying that they were unlearned and ignorant men who distorted the gospel and led us into the morass of legalism.

* They glorify liberal false teachers such as W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. They paint them as having credibility and influence among the mainstream churches which they never had.

* They use selected quotes and experiences from the lives and writings of early restoration preachers, ignoring the larger picture, and use them to rewrite the record of what actually happened.

* All of this is done under the guise of scholarship and a pious pretense of loving the church of Christ and just wanting to tell the story of our past.

* If they are left unchallenged, the church as she once existed, will eventually cease to be. In her place will be a another Protestant denomination bearing the image of their revised story of the Churches of Christ.

Our revisionist historians bear the same disdain for the church that the Marxist historians bear for our great nation. The message of both should be rejected and they should be ejected from their teaching posts. If the Marxists professors so dislike America and love Cuba, let them go teach in Cuba's university. If our historians have such a low appreciation for the church and such a glowing view of the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ, let them seek employment there.

It is tragic that such revisionists harbor such dislike for the church of their fathers. It is more tragic that so many Christians are watching in shameful silence while the destruction transpires.

Examples of our historical revisionism can be seen in **Reclaiming a Heritage** and **The Churches of Christ** by Dr. Richard Hughes, **Renewing God's People** by Drs. Garry Holloway and Douglass Foster and **The Crux of the Matter** by Jeff Childers, Douglas Foster and Jack Reese. All of these professors are associated with either Abilene Christian or Pepperdine Universities. **JHW** ***

TRUE AND UNTRUE FRIENDS OF CHRIST

Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:13). What if the disciple of Christ does not wish to do His will? Is he still His friend? Consider the following cases and decide if the persons described are friends of the Master.

* What of the man who reads that baptism is a command (Acts 10:48); that it is "for remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); but he does not accept that? He preaches that one receives salvation solely by faith (Jas. 2:24). Is he Christ's friend?

* What of the man who reads that we are to obey all things whatsoever Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20); that only those who do the will of the Father will be saved (Matt. 7:21); yet he rejects such an idea and insists that there are no commands to be obeyed in order to please God. He prefers to teach that we need only love God and our neighbor to please Him? Is he Christ's friend?

* What of the man who reads that Christ died for, purchased, established and saves his church (Acts 20:7; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23); yet he cannot accept that Christ's one true church exists today, so he teaches that all the different churches men have created are of equal value? Is he Christ's friend?

* What about the man who reads Christ's prayer that all his disciples be one (John 17:20-21) and that there "be no division among" his people (I Cor. 1:10); yet he argues that God accepts and blesses all kinds of denominational bodies regardless of their divisiveness? Is he Jesus' friend?

* What of the man who reads that women are to keep silent in the church (I Cor. 14:33-34); that they are not permitted to teach or have authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12); yet he is more impressed with the demands of

feminists. He teaches that these verses do not mean what they say; that really they authorize women to teach and have authority over men? Is he the Master's friend?

* What of the brother who reads Paul's exhortation to speak to one another in songs, hymns and spiritual songs, to sing and make melody in our hearts unto God (Eph. 5:19), but concludes that it really means that a soloist or choir can do the speaking; that singing and making melody with the heart really means playing a mechanical instrument? He substitutes the kind of music he prefers for that which Christ's Word specified. Is he the Lord's friend?

* What about the man who reads the warning not to add to or take from Christ's word (Rev. 22:18-19), and yet he feels no obligation to obey that. He changes anything in the Savior's religion that does not suit his taste, that is not in step with modern culture? Is he a friend of Jesus?

Such disciples may talk much about being friends of Jesus. They may sing the old hymn by that name, but since they refuse to keep his commandments, to do what he says, they demonstrate that they are not true friends to our King. **JHW** ***

TRUTH MAKES MEN FREE FROM ERROR

The conflict with the promoters of change is a battle for the minds and hearts of Christians. To sustain our faith in this present generation, we must understand what it is that our adversaries are promoting and how to respond to them in a Biblical way. The following books will help you understand, meet and defeat those who would wreck and destroy the church we love.

* **Surviving the Storms of Change** \$17.95

* **Books About the Change Movement.**

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FRAGRANT GIFTS FOR GOD

In ancient Israel the priests burned incense of sweet spices every morning and evening (Ex. 30:8). They made, "the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer" (Ex. 30:29). When the high priest entered into the holy of holies with a sacrifice for the atonement, he was to first offer sweet incense upon the altar provided for that purpose. The fragrant cloud of incense covered the mercy-seat "that he die not" (Lev. 16:12-13).

Today we Christians live under a better covenant, enacted upon better promises (Heb. 8:6). Christ is our sacrifice (Heb. 9:14), we ourselves are royal priests (1 Pet. 2:5). Our worship is not the ritual services of Moses' law. Rather it is the true worship ordained by Christ and offered to God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

Our hymns "are a sacrifice of praise to God...the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (Heb. 13:15). Doing good and communicating, or gift giving, are sacrifices with which God is well pleased (Heb. 13:16). When the Christians in Philippi sent financial assistance for Paul's mission endeavors, he likened their gift to "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18 NIV). David asked God: "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). Saints in heaven are pictured holding "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5:8).

Each day we live in Christ, we have the privilege of offering up our fragrant sacrifices to our great Jehovah. With our songs, prayers and financial support of His work we do so. It is sad to see priests who spend their days so busy in secular occupations that they never get around to offering those pleasant sacrifices so pleasing to their Creator and Savior. **JHW *****

ESSAYS ON WOMEN IN EARLIEST CHRISTIANITY

This is a massive two volume study edited by Dr. Carroll Osburn of ACU and published by College Press of the Independent Christian Churches. This review covers only Vol. I.

This book was designed with an agenda in mind. The editor is a proponent of the change movement. His later book **Women in the Church** makes it clear that he embraces the views of Feminism and would like to

see women filling roles of public leadership in the church. The authors assembled for this project, with the exception of Everett Ferguson and possibly John T. Willis seem to question the traditional understanding of public leadership of the church being restricted to Christian men. While they labor to impress their readers that they are really neutral scholars in search of new light, each in his or her own way seeks to clear the road of obstacles so that women may assume roles hitherto closed to them. To most of these scholars any scripture that might appear to limit women from filling public leadership roles is overcome by applying newly found methods of interpretation (The New Hermeneutic) or by declaring it a cultural matter. To them contemporary Postmodern culture trumps the Biblical norms.

It is also noteworthy that those participants with connections to churches of Christ have a common bond. They either received their education from or are presently teaching for Abilene Christian University, Harding Graduate School of Religion, David Lipscomb University, Pepperdine University and Harding University. All of these schools save Harding University have been in the forefront of the change movement that is plaguing the church.

The book does contain some interesting information on the role of women in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds by G. Sterling and Jewish women in the Greco-Roman era (by R. Chesnutt), but those looking for helpful exegesis of texts relating to women will be disappointed. In their attempt to be scholarly they have produced a book that few will read and fewer will find understandable and profitable. **JHW *****

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH (A Review)

Dr. Everett Ferguson has produced an excellent study on the role of women in the Lord's church. This slim book of 80 pages is the best I have encountered on the subject. It is a more than adequate response to the three volumes recently produced by change agents advocating that women be given a place in the public leadership of the church. Bro. Ferguson comes to his task with outstanding educational credentials and a lifetime of scholarly research, teaching and writing. Those of the opposite view cannot scorn him as an unsophisticated writer lacking the scholarly ability to discuss the issue.

His book covers the full spectrum of the subject of women's role in the church. He opens his discussion with a review of the several roles women filled in apostolic times, showing that none of them establish that women preached in the general assemblies of the church.

He then gives us excellent exegetical studies of the passages that most directly deal with the subject.

* From I Cor. 14:27-40 he shows in a clear, concise way that Paul did forbid women to serve as public teachers in the assemblies.

* In analyzing I Cor. 11:2-16 he identifies the permanent principles of divinely ordained male leadership and throw helpful light on the cultural factors expressed by the head-covering for women.

* His interpretation of I Tim. 2:1-15 point's out Paul's instructions that men lead the church in public prayer and that women are forbidden to each or have authority over men in the same setting.

* From Gal. 3:28 he shows that although men and women are equal recipients of salvation and a place in God's church, the Lord has given them different functions or assignments.

He then answers the claims of those who think they have found a biblical basis for women preaching in the church.

The second chapter of his book looks at the evidence from Early Christian History. He surveys the cultural and social history of Jewish, Greek and Roman society, noting the roles filled by women. He notes that the few examples of women preachers are not found among the broader stream of the early churches, but principally among the Montanists and other heretical sects. The overwhelming majority of the churches limited the public teaching and preaching to men.

The author devotes his third chapter to Doctrinal Considerations. In this he considers the doctrinal instruction regarding men and women in the context of the New Testament. He notes that the divine assignments of men and women are based not on culture but on the nature of God and the order of creation.

He establishes that even though all are equal in Christ, be they male or female, Jew or Greek, bond or free, that equality does not abolish the differences inherent to all. In Christ, a slave was still a slave, a Jew was still a Jew and a woman was still a woman. The limitations imposed by God on women stills stand for those in Christ.

He closes with the lines of an ancient Christian author.

"Heresies increased greatly because those who received them were unwilling to learn the mind of the apostles, but followed on their own desires, doing what pleased them and not what was right" (**Apostolic Tradition**, 43:3).

In only one point did I find myself in disagreement with the author and that in a matter he expressed as his opinion. As pressures mount to open the church's leadership to women, every preacher and elder needs to read this book for the information and ammunition it provides. This book may be ordered from **Yeoman Press, 110 Meadowdale Dr. Chickasha, OK 73018.**
JHW ***

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Paul urged the Christian in Ephesus, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might" (Eph. 6:10). The Christian life is not a parlor game, nor a viewing sport for couch potatoes. It is liken to a warfare. Our enemy is the evil Satan who like a roaring lion is seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8). To win the victory in this cosmic war, God's people must be strong in their faith. Three things make Christians strong:

* God promises to strengthen us with his Holy Spirit that dwells in our inner man (Eph. 3:16). It is possible for us to quench the Spirit by not yielding ourselves totally to his guidance (I Thess. 5:19).

* God's Word fills us with spiritual strength. It is the sword with which we fight our battles (Eph. 6:17). But unless we read, study and apply the message of the holy Word, we will be like a soldier without a weapon.

* Our faith is a source of personal strength. Faith is man's love, trust and dependence upon God (Heb. 11:1). Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). Again we can see how the depth and quality of our faith is tied to the Word of God. Read and study it and grow strong. Neglect it and grow flabby and weak.

The church desperately needs an army of strong Christians to fill her ranks. Will you be one of them?
JHW ***