

CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW

Report for July 2004

Dear Friend and Supporter of Christianity: Then and Now:

Thank you for making it possible for us to publish and mail Christianity: Then and Now to the preachers and elders of over 5,000 congregations this month. Without your support our outreach would be pitifully small.

For your information, when compiling our mailing list, we gather the addresses of congregations that identify themselves as part of the mainstream of the church. Those congregations that consider themselves as part of a separate fellowship such as "One Cup, or No Bible Classes," we omit. We do this because as a rule they are not interested in the health or success of our congregations. Sadly some of them rejoice when they read of our problems. Also we do not mail those congregations with less than 15 members. This is based on our financial limitations. The tiny churches are not generally bothered by the promoters of change.

* We are now mailing the paper to all the targeted congregations in California. This brings the number of states where we reach all the congregations to 39.

* This month we have sent the bound volumes of the first three years of CTN to the libraries of 20 of our Colleges, Universities and Schools of Preaching. There are twelve other schools we need to mail. For \$100 we can send those remaining. Our logic in this is to get the materials into the schools where Bible teachers and prospective preachers can have access to them. Most schools will place such materials in their collections since they are bound and because they address a current point of discussion in the brotherhood.

* We need to have an accurate understanding of how widespread is infection of the virus of change that is plaguing our churches. To arrive at that, I have been working on a survey or opinion poll that we could mail with a future issue of CTN. Since we are now reaching approximately half of our congregations here in the states, we hopefully could get a fair reading of what our church leaders are thinking. I am hoping to find someone who is skilled in polling and statistical research to help with this project.

* As the change movement gathers momentum, every responsible Christian leader will need to exercise great caution in the speakers they invite to their congregations; the workshops and youth meetings they recommend to their members and the people they employ to work with their congregations. It would be helpful if we had some knowledge of those who have chosen to abandon the old fashioned ways of God's Word for the new ways of man. From their own literature I have begun collecting a list of congregations, preachers and teachers who have declared themselves part of the change movement. Our

goal is to build a fire wall around those who are promoting this movement so it will not spread any farther.

* One venue for spreading the doctrine of "change" has been "The Christian Scholars Conference" conducted by some of our highly educated men. These conferences are generally held in connection with some of our larger universities. We have many good men among us who have attained a high degree of scholarship without compromising their faith in the Scripture and their love for the church. I have sent out exploratory letters to a number brethren who are truly "Christian" scholars, encouraging them to consider the possibility of organizing a conference or lectureship where those who address the topics chosen will search for God's answers as revealed in his Word. Such a gathering would be a healthy alternative to the current Scholars Conference and it would serve to encourage those faithful men who find themselves in lonely situations in schools where such faithfulness is not considered to be "in season." The research these believing scholars would do and the materials they would produce could be of great value in our effort to educate brethren about the errors and dangers of the change movement.

* It is most interesting that the change movement is not just affecting our brotherhood. Many Protestant bodies are also feeling the pressure of this movement. In large part it is the practical application of the Church Growth Movement that is the current fad among churches. The two principal sources of this movement are the Willow Creek Church of Illinois and the Saddleback (Baptist) Church of Orange County, California. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek and Rick Warren of the Saddleback church have both created nationwide programs to recruit and involve the leaders of any congregation (regardless of affiliation) in their Church Growth Movement...for a small sum. A reader has directed my attention to a website called "Christian Unplugged" which can be accessed at www.christianunplugged.com/church_growth_intro.htm that provides excellent, insightful articles regarding the teaching and methods of the CGM and its theoreticians. As you read it you will discover that our promoters of change have swallowed the package, hook, line and sinker.

Just this week I received a copy of an article written by Bro. Oscar Alvarez Aleman of Cuba. This brother finds some of the same doctrines and practices of the change agents at work among a few of his preaching brothers in that struggling mission field. Among the problems he sees, is the willingness to fellowship with denominational churches and the belief that it is somehow wrong to reprove those who embrace error.

We regret to report that the Shannon Oaks church in Sulphur Springs, Texas has abandoned the Biblical standard and warmly embraced the errors of the change movement. Lest you think we are gossiping, you are encouraged to go to the website of their preacher, Jeff Jenkins and read as he tells you about the changes they have made. Access him at www.jeffjenkins.blogspot.com. Open the different pages and read for yourself.

Long ago, a poet wrote that "God works in mysterious ways his will to perform." While

few Christians have shown a willingness to invest in this effort on behalf of the church, a lady who is not a member of the body, has been sending regular contributions to help us. Because of her support we will soon be able to add a significant number of additional Tennessee Churches to our mailings.

We are happy to report that the Pineview congregation in Lewis County Tennessee recently had Bro. Alan Highers to give a series of lessons addressing the challenges of the change movement. The meeting was advertised throughout Lewis and surrounding counties and will surely help to solidify the faith of those who heard him.

Unfortunately we have lost two major supporters in the last few months. Both faced circumstances and demands on their funds that made it impossible for them to continue. Thus far we have been able to maintain all that we were doing. This however is rapidly depleting our reserves. Unless we find some additional helpers in the near future we will have to drop significant numbers from our mailing list. If you can do more to help, please do so. Perhaps you could recruit others to help us. Remember that for each \$1.00 we receive each month, we are able to print and mail two copies of the paper to the preachers and elders of two congregations. We need to be mailing every church in the brotherhood...another 5,000. With your help we can do it. Checks should be made to the Church of Christ and mail to my address below. Your gifts are tax deductible. Please don't let a day pass without praying for the welfare of Christ's church and for our efforts on her behalf.

Yours in Christ,
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