

CHRISTIANITY: THEN AND NOW

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SAVING FAITH

Faith is the bed rock of a Christian's relationship with God and his Son, Jesus. "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God; for he cometh unto God must believe that he is..." (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, "except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins..." (John 8:24).

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1 NIV). The faith that is essential for salvation "comes from hearing the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Apart from the truth revealed in the New Testament one cannot have saving faith. Thus Jesus said, "Go... preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth..." (Mark 16:15-16).

Contrary to popular opinion, saving faith is not just an acceptance of the fact that God and Christ exist and a warm feeling of trust in them. God's word speaks of the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5). The eleventh chapter of Hebrews presents a collage of biographical sketches that illustrate the meaning faith. Able offered his sacrifice; Enoch walked with God; Noah built his ark; Abraham offered his son; Moses chose to suffer with God's people rather than remain in Egypt. James devotes the second chapter of his epistle to clarifying the meaning of faith. "What doth it profit my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him?" (2:1). The answer is no. Again he says, "show me thy faith apart from thy works and I by my works will show thee my faith" (2:18). "Faith without works is barren" (2:20). "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (2:24). "As the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." (2:26). In every example of conversion mentioned in the Acts of Apostles, those who believed obeyed Christ by being baptized (Compare Acts 2:41; 8:12; 18:8; 22:16). If you really believe on the Lord and want to enjoy his wonderful salvation you will do just as those disciples did. That's

why Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). **JHW *****

THE DAY YOU WERE BAPTIZED

* That was the day you confessed your faith in Christ as your Lord and Savior (Mark 16:15; Rom. 10:9-10).

* It was the day when you resolved to turn away from sin and follow Jesus. God calls that repentance (Acts 2:38).

* It was the day when a man of God gently immersed your body in a watery grave in the likeness of Jesus' burial (Rom. 6:3-4).

* In that experience the redeeming blood of Christ washed away your sins (Acts 22:16).

* Coming forth from the water was like a new birth for you (John 3:3-5). It marked the first day of your new life in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). You were then part of his spiritual body, the church (Gal. 3:27).

* On that day God gave you a special gift, his Holy Spirit, as an earnest of your home in heaven (Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:13-14).

* It was the day when God translated you out of the power of darkness (Satan's domain) and translated you into the kingdom or church of his dear Son (Col. 1:13; Acts 2:47; I Cor. 12:13).

* That was the day you took up your cross to follow Christ wherever he might lead you (Matt. 16:24).

Nothing could be more important than that blessed day; that life-changing day. We should always remember it, cherish it and be loyal to the commitment we made. If you were baptized as an infant and cannot remember that day, you need to consider the fact that Christ expects baptism only of those old enough to make their own choice and decision. That infants cannot do. Acceptable baptism is a decision only the recipient can make.

JHW

TENNESSEE: A STATE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE

Having studied and taught our brotherhood history for over 40 years, I predict that the current conflict with the agents of change will rage for 20-50 years before it is finally resolved. It will result in division that will leave us two separate people. The only question is, will the change agents succeed in sweeping the field or will we be able to hold our losses to a minimum. If we can rally sufficient people and act quickly to educate and inoculate our brethren we can isolate those promoting this error. We can create an environment where they cannot gain a foothold. In that situation they will likely gravitate to the Christian Churches with whom they already have much in common. If we continue at the present rate of inaction, those of us who love the church as we have known her and who are committed to restoring New Testament Christianity will likely see catastrophic losses. The damage will be such as our fathers saw a century ago when the Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches left us taking 85 per cent of the brotherhood with them.

Tennessee is a pivotal state in this spiritual conflict. It is a crucial for three reasons. There are 1160 congregations in the Volunteer State (second to Texas). For 150 years churches, schools and preachers in Tennessee have provided stable leadership that has benefitted the brotherhood at home and abroad.

With David Lipscomb University in Nashville already securely in the change camp, most of the young preachers they send forth will be exposed to the change virus. If we can get **Christianity: Then and Now** into the hands of the preachers and elders of churches in Tennessee we can inoculate them and help them resist the call to join the change movement. If we fail, in time we will lose many of these congregations.

Hopefully you who read these lines will want to work with us in this undertaking....and hopefully, you can influence others who see the need to join hands with us. We still need to find the means to mail the rest of the congregations in Tennessee. Currently we are mailing 753 of our Tennessee churches. That leaves us 435 yet to be added. The cost to provide the leaders of these remaining congregations with CTN will be \$218 per month. Your contribution will help bring this to pass.

Be assured this is no money-making scheme. No one receives pay from this effort. We put a sizeable

amount of our own money into it. Nor is it a passing fad. We are committed to investing our lives and resources in this project until the victory is won or God calls us home. If the church of Christ is precious to you, let us hear what you can do to help. **JHW *****

BE INFORMED

Bound Volumes of Christianity: Then and Now, Vols. I, II, III **\$6.50 each (All for \$17.00).**

Surviving the Storms of Change, \$17.95

Books About the Change Movement, \$14.95

Liberalism: Deadly Enemy of the Church \$8.00

(All three for \$33.00). Send check with order. ***

A PORTRAIT OF A CHANGE AGENT

A hundred and 35 years ago our brethren were locked in a desperate struggle with promoters of change who were determined to remake the church so she would be more attractive to the culture and society of their day.

The Apostolic Times was one of the gospel papers that bravely opposed that change movement. Such giants in the faith as J. W. McGarvey, Moses Lard and F. G. Allen used their powerful pens to respond to the fallacious arguments of the progressive brethren. On Aug. 31, 1871, Bro. J. B. Briney wrote a brilliant piece entitled, "What We Need." The following excerpt is remarkably applicable to our day and situation.

"There are some among us who seem to have imbibed quite an antipathy to first principles. They love to talk about the 'higher spirituality,' a 'deeper piety,' a 'broader love,' etc. Were it not that these men make such lofty pretensions to a 'higher spirituality,' you would be led to think that this is the very article they most need..."

"The man that is tired of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ is tired of the only thing that can convert men to God, and lift their souls in holy aspirations toward heaven. But when a man says he is tired of first principles, what does he mean? Does he mean he is tired of faith? No. He has much to say about faith. It is his theme on all occasions. Does he mean that he is tired of repentance? Certainly not. He is for repentance, theoretically, at least. What, then, is the substance of all this opposition to first principles and to the men who are devoted to them? Simply this: 'I am tired of baptism for the remission of sins.' This is what you get when you simmer all this talk about a

‘higher spirituality,’ etc. down” (p. 161).

When you hear our champions of change calling on their followers to move beyond the ‘traditional teaching’ of *(Continued on p. 4).*

AMONG THE SCHOLARS (A Review)

In this book, David Hester relates his experiences as a participant in a session of **The Christian Scholars Conference**. He augments that report with his observations on various doctrines and practices of those preachers and educators among us who are promoting the agenda of the change movement. The author is well-read and familiar with the literature and activities of the promoters of change. He clearly understands the problems this movement creates and lays them out for his readers to see. He demonstrates how the change agents have used the Christian Scholar’s Conference to promote their agenda (p. 43 ff).

Hester sees the similarity between the apostasy of the late 19th century and that occurring today (p. 23). “The teachings being promoted are not new; they are the same ruminations of error which have plagued the Lord’s church for generations” (p. 88). To illustrate the mistaken thinking that prevails in many of our younger brethren, he cites historian Paul Johnson who observed, “It (is) assumed that humanity, led by the enlightened minority, would always progress in a desirable direction. It (does) not occur to (them) that this minority...might lead (them) into the abyss”(p. 20).

This book provides helpful information about the ‘new hermeneutic’ by which the promoters of change are able to dismiss any Bible verse that might stand in their way. Also it has an excellent discussion on II John 9-11 which warns against just such teachers. He replies to and refutes their claims that it speaks only of the nature of Christ. He also provides good discussions on the issues of instrumental music in worship and special singing groups for worship.

The author sketches a helpful picture of those who are demanding change for the church. He prefers to describe them as “the new left” rather than liberal. He does so because they deflect the latter label by insisting they don’t question the miracles, virgin birth, creation and inspiration of the Bible. He observes that most of those in the forefront of the change movement are little known men, with limited exposure. In the past, most who became liberal were immediately recognized and isolated because of their outspoken advocacy of their views and their public record in the church. Change agents have followed the strategy of being careful,

quiet and coy about their views until they have solidified their position and are safely and fully in control. Only then do they openly declare themselves (p. 87-88).

“Almost to a man, these men say they came out of backgrounds that were narrow-minded, legalistic and restrictive...that the majority of sermons (they heard) were angry polemics which were used to beat up people” (p. 32). This seems to be their justification for their embracing the new faith. “This points up the radical nature of the left. Coming out of extremist backgrounds, the leaders (and followers) of the movement (often jhw) resort to their radical past when pressured” (p. 96). “Change agents devote (much time), both in print and from the podium, in speaking against legalism. They decry the arguing, bickering, hatred, and division which they say, have been brought about by those who are willing to contend for the faith” (p. 90).

Hester discerns similarities between the youthful rebels of the 1960s and modern change agents. Our change agents “are the lost boys and girls who never grew up. They... want to break free from their past, from their parents, from their former beliefs, from what they see as legalism. Like selfish children they emulate, they will demand things be done their way or they will leave” (p. 122). Comparing the two he sees: * “Rebellion against authority.” * “Rebellion against rulers.” * “Rebellion against rules.” * “Overflowing selfishness” (p. 32). * And “intellectual snobbery” (p. 33).

* Another ‘characteristic of the (religious) left...is a denial of reality’ (p. 99). They have a hard time acknowledging the success of our brethren in the 20th century. They are too busy trying to discredit their efforts as unworthy. The refuse to admit that they are abandoning the faith long held by our people.

* “One can detect an overwhelming sense of anger directed against the church and hatred toward anything which they perceive as restrictive of their ‘freedom’” (p. 32).

* “Those who are leading the new left will invariably call for openness and dialog between opposing sides of doctrinal disputes. They demand a hearing for their views, but do they sanction airing the views of those who oppose them? This is where their openness disappears” (p.96).

* He cites Benjamin Brooks who describes the psychology that seems to drive change agents, “Persons who have embraced sentiments which afterwards appear to them to be erroneous, often think they can never remove too far from them; and the more remote

they go from their former opinions, the nearer they come to the truth, they think” (p. 55).

Of our Christian Schools he says, “These institutions provide ‘safe haven’ for subversive faculty members, they produce books attacking the church...these universities are abandoning the very charter which began them” (p. 14). “There is a group of academicians who (*Continued on p. 4*).

AMONG THE SCHOLARS (*From p. 3*)

have succeeded in their ‘long march through the institutions.’ Biding their time until they were in positions of tenure and with a sympathetic board of trustees behind them, these activist professors and teachers began to push their false doctrines with impunity, becoming more arrogant as time passed. Realizing they would not be dismissed, they began to influence preachers and elders in large metroplex congregations who were already sympathetic. Whenever opposition surfaced, the response was either silence or hiding behind academic freedom” (p. 113). “The radicals are getting bolder every day and are targeting established metropolitan congregations for the purpose of renewal” (p.147). “The leaders of the current movement are... clamoring for a revolution within our congregations, and they will not countenance any opposition” (p. 158).

Those who read Bro. Hester’s book will be well rewarded for their effort. It is a useful weapon for those who must do battle with the forces of the change movement. (The book may be ordered from **The Gospel Advocate Co. 1006 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210**). JHW

PORTRAIT OF A CHANGE AGENT (*From p. 2*)

the church, remember Bro. Briney’s analysis. The situations are identical. Isn’t it remarkable that so many people who claim to follow Christ and aspire to go to heaven refuse to accept what the Master himself accorded to baptism: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

Tragically before the battle was over, Bro. Briney defected to the camp of the enemy and devoted his last year to tearing down what he has once built up. This is another significant lesson for those who are standing in the ranks to fight the change movement of our day. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). JHW

* This quote was found in David Hester’s **Among the**

Scholars, p. 95

PARABLE OF BILLY THE BULLY

Billy was the school yard bully. One of his favorite ploys was to walk up to some unsuspecting kid and hit, kick or trip him. When his victim tried to defend himself, Billy would bellow out so the teacher would hear, saying, “He started it.” “He hit me first!” Sometimes he actually fooled a new teacher or a substitute. The victim of his aggression was sternly corrected and sometimes punished. Thus the poor kid was twice victimized; once by Billy’s fist, then by his lies.

A band of Christians are living in peace, doing God’s work, prospering in their undertaking. A new preacher or campus worker is hired, or perhaps a new family moves in and begins to promote the change agenda. Seeds of unhappiness are sown among young people. Elders are pressured to allow unscriptural changes in the faith, worship and practice of the congregation. When they or other members protest and demand that the interlopers cease and desist, the change agents accuse them of disrupting the church, or being contentious. They try to turn other, gullible members against them. They are often given the ultimatum to get in line or leave. Thus the insult and injury are twofold. First they see their beloved congregation invaded, and violated by agents of change and then they find themselves blamed as trouble-makers for trying to protect that to which they have devoted their lives and support. Such was Paul’s sad experience in Corinth (II Cor. 11:1ff). He that ears to hear, let him hear and beware. JHW

HELP US DO THIS JOB

With the help of concerned Christians we are able to send CTN to the leaders of all the congregations in 38 states. There is still much to be done. We urge you to consider helping with one of the following:

* Arkansas has 448 churches. We are mailing 90 of them. For \$190 per month we can cover the rest.

* Mississippi has 300 churches. We are mailing 64 of them. For \$ 118 per month we can finish the task.

* Illinois has 220 churches. We are mailing 43 of them. For \$136 per month we can reach all the rest. JHW