

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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WHO SHOULD DO THE CHANGING?

by Marvin Rickett

Should man adapt God's religion to man? Or must man adapt his religion to God's ways? In the interest of establishing new congregations, some religious leaders have come up with the idea of taking a survey in a community and finding out just what its people want in the way of a church. Then they get busy crafting a community church that satisfies the desires of the community's people. Their claim is that they are adapting the church to fit the needs of the "baby-boomer generation" or "generation X." Their product is a church which is "user-friendly."

If it is discovered that the contemporary generation wants more entertainment, more casual wear, shorter services, feel-good sermons without a lot of Bible quoting and full of good stories, women leaders, contemporary gospel music with occasional instrumental accompaniment, emotional displays such as handclapping or throwing up of the hands, then they will change the order of the church to accommodate it. Better to attract many people with these novel ideas than to attract the few, they say.

There is some validity to the idea that evangelism must adapt somewhat in beginning "where the people are" to bring them to Christ. Paul became "all things to all men" that he might gain some (I Corinthians 9:20-22). Foreign missionaries have learned that they can more effectively communicate the gospel if they put it in terms of the customs of the native peoples. However, there are some serious objections to the theory

behind the community church efforts of changing God's pattern to fit contemporary man's wants.

The age-old question that the pioneer preachers dealt with extensively, "Is the gospel as it is, adapted to man as he is?", needs to be preached again and the answer learned anew. Their unanimous reply was a resounding "yes." However, many contemporary preachers would probably answer "no" and conclude that we have to further adapt the gospel to the needs of each succeeding generation.

The contemporary generation is being deluded by the same problem that afflicted Jeremiah's generation, and many generations since: That man is able to direct his own steps. Jeremiah said, "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). Man's wants and man's needs are not the same thing, though they are often confused. Man may know what he wants, but that may not be what he needs. With a sin-darkened mind, he may not be aware of what he really needs. He may not even want what he needs. God knows what man needs. He has told him what he needs and has provided for those needs in the gospel. Those surveyors for the community church are merely finding out men's wants. They should consult God's word to find out men's needs.

God's way is absolute and right. Man has left God. God is still where He ever was. Man is the one who has changed and moved away. Thus man is the one who must do the changing,

the adapting, to come back to God. In the Bible, God made demands on people that required them to do the changing and adapting to "come into line" with God's way. When the apostles and evangelists confronted men who were estranged from God, they did not adapt the gospel to fit their wants. They commanded them to repent—adapt their ways to fit God's righteousness: "*Repent, and be baptized*" (Acts 2:38); "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted*" (Acts 3:19); "*Repent therefore of this they wickedness, and pray God*" (Acts 8:22); He "*commandeth all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30). Jesus required that all men be converted. Convert means change. "*Except ye be converted*" (Matthew 18:3); "*Repent ye therefore and be converted*" (Acts 3:19). What advantage is it for preachers to make people feel good about themselves where they are if they are not in God's way? Why not rather call on them to change to God's way first?

The prophet and the apostle alike called on men to first "come out from among them and be ye separate" (Isaiah 52:11; II Corinthians 6:17). Rather than accommodate the people where they were, which invariably was in sin, they called on them to move ("come out") and change ("touch not"). They were to forsake their way and return to the Lord (Isaiah 55:7).

The gospel carries its own appeal. It will draw some, some will refuse. The community church idea may draw in more numbers, but to what? Those drawn in by the preaching of the gospel will be walking in God's way.

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AN ARGUMENT WITHOUT VALIDITY

by Eddy Gilpin

The doctrine of "Once Saved, Always Saved" is not taught in the Scriptures. Like all false doctrines it is the invention of man. Many arguments have been put forth in attempts to substantiate the doctrine. However, all fail miserably when compared with the Bible. One of these arguments is the subject of this brief article.

The Bible gives the account of Simon the sorcerer as an example of one who so sinned after becoming a Christian that he was in a lost state. We read of this account in Acts 8. In verse 13, the Scripture states: *"Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."* Later, Simon is said by Peter (an inspired man) to be *"in the gall of bitterness, and in the*

bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23) having a heart *"not right in the sight of God"* (Acts 8:21). He was instructed by Peter to *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"* (Acts 8:22).

The argument often made by those who support the "Saved Once, Saved Forever" position is that Simon was never saved. They claim that his "belief" was not really "belief." He did not really believe (they claim), or else he would have been saved and, therefore, could not have been in a lost state again. However, let us examine this thought a little more closely.

In Mark 16:16, Jesus stated: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."* Jesus used the word "believeth" (pisteusas in Greek) and the word "baptized" (baptistheis in Greek) in this passage. Those who so do, according to the words of Jesus, are "saved." In Acts 8:13, the Bible states that Simon "believed" (episteusen in Greek) and "was baptized" (baptistheis in Greek). Notice, please, that except for the difference in the tense of the verb "believe," the words used in these two passages are identical. What is the significance? The Holy Spirit (the author of Acts), used the exact words which Jesus used in Mark 16:16 for both belief and baptism. Did the Holy Spirit know the heart of Simon? Absolutely! Did the Holy Spirit say that Simon "pretended to believe?" Absolutely not! The Holy Spirit (knowing the heart of Simon) stated that Simon "believed" and that he was "baptized" - the same words used by Jesus to instruct men what to do to be saved (Mark 16:16). The Holy Spirit had words at His disposal to state that Simon merely feigned belief in God; but, He did not use those words. He stated emphatically that Simon episteusen ("believed").

Simon was also baptized. Having done such he was "saved" according to the promise of Jesus. After having done this he was then found in a lost condition, as related by Peter (one whom the Holy Spirit had likewise inspired).

Does the Bible teach that a person can be lost after having been saved? It certainly does; and Simon is a prime example of one who was. The doctrine of "Once Saved, Always Saved" is false. It is contradictory to what the Bible teaches. And, these two little words alone prove it be such.

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BOOK BLURBS



One of the features that I have not published as regularly as I intended is recommending good books for additional reading. We do not sell books and only have in mind placing information about books written by sound brethren that will build faith in the hands of those interested.

Biographies of faithful men in the brotherhood are not numerous. For one thing, people in the Lord's church today do not appreciate the burdens and labors put upon sound scholarly men as we once did. Consequently, there is a vastly limited market for such books, even though they are thrilling and encouraging in many ways. One such book that deserves a wide reading is entitled, *Over the Vast Horizon: Authorized Biography of Guy N. Woods*, written by Harrell Davidson of Obion, Tennessee. Guy N. Woods was a first rate Bible scholar; some believe the best the church produced in the 20th century. I personally heard him dozens of times deliver sermons, lectures and debate. Though I have been fortunate to hear and read from many great Bible

scholars in the years I have been a Christian, I do not believe Guy N. Woods had an equal who was talented in all of his varied ways.

Brother Davidson covers brother Woods' *Early Life and Influences; Association With Freed-Hardeman College; The Master of the Forum; Local Work as an Evangelist: Bro. Woods' Many Debates: The Consummate Writer; Obtaining His Law Degree: Bro. Woods' Gospel Meeting Work: Full Text of Five of Brother Woods' Favorite Sermons, and Bro. Woods as a Ham Radio Operator.*

Perhaps it is because I appreciated so much of the work Guy N. Woods accomplished in his life, but once I started reading the book I could not put it down. Brother Davidson's admiration and love for brother Woods is evident throughout the book, but he does not elevate him beyond measure. Some may not agree with the inclusion of information about brother Woods' broken marriage, but the presentation of the facts should put to rest the slanderous rumors that have circulated regarding this sad part of his life. There are other interesting details about brothers Woods' long association with *The Gospel Advocate* as well as his "Open Forum" confrontation at FHC with Thomas Warren over the work of the Holy Spirit in 1967.

Harrell Davidson is selling the book for \$17.50, which includes shipping. This is a hardback book of 298 pages, well worth the modest price. He asks that you not send money in advance, but pay from the invoice included with the book. You may order from the author at P.O. Box 358, Obion, TN 38240. His phone number is (731) 536-4851; or e-mail him at harrelld@charter.net. Order one for yourself, your preacher and the church library. - Ted J. Clarke

ADORNING THE DOCTRINE

by James D. Burns

Titus was to exhort servants to adorn the doctrine of God (Titus 2:9-10). They were to do this by living faithful lives. There was nothing they could do, nor is there anything we can do, to improve on the doctrine of God, but there are things that can draw more favorable attention to it.

We can adorn the doctrine of God by knowing the doctrine. Peter tells us to "always be ready to give a defense" for our hope (I Peter 3:15). Knowing what we believe and why we believe it can help leave a favorable impression on an inquirer.

We can adorn the doctrine by good works. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

We can adorn the doctrine by contented lives. When one can face the crises of life with faith and hope, others will want to know the source of such power. Paul said he had learned how to be content under varying circumstances of life (Philippians 4:11-13). Certainly, Paul's life adorned the doctrine of God.

We can adorn the doctrine by letting people see that the church is important to us. People know when we attend its services and support its works.

We can adorn the doctrine of God by "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Jesus prayed that those who believe on him might be one, that the world might believe on him (John 17:20-21). He also said that by our loving one another, others can see that we are his disciples (John 13:35). The Jerusalem church was "of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32).

Let us in these ways and in all other ways "adorn the doctrine of God".

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THINK IT OVER

When you are told by the attending physician that you have only a little while left to live, you will not regret one moment you have spent in the study of your Bible. After all other books are laid aside, this Word will still face you in God's judgment! We plead with you to carefully use this sacred volume in this life! It is God's personal message to you. Don't ignore nor neglect it. (Acts 20:32)

BIBLE INSTITUTE OF MISSOURI

Editor of FCGN Resigns for New Work

After nearly thirteen years of working as the local evangelist at the Third & Bethel congregation in Mammoth Spring, AR and editor of the **Fulton County Gospel News**, I have resigned to accept a new and exciting work teaching in the **Bible Institute of Missouri (BIM)**. The change will occur June 30, 2004. **BIM** is a preacher training school that began last August, overseen by the elders of the Kansas Expressway Church of Christ at 2540 N. Kansas Expressway in Springfield, MO 65803. The **BIM** is directed by Brother Jerry Sullins, an experienced evangelist and missionary who has organized and directed two foreign schools of preaching in Botswana and Zambia, Africa. He and the church at Kansas Expressway have gotten the school off to a great start.

Teaching full time in the school will fulfill a longtime desire I have had to be involved in such a work. I am honored to have been offered the position and excited about working with the Kansas Expressway congregation, brother Sullins and the staff of the school, to teach and help further the work at **BIM**. Since the school is in its infancy, they have no funds to support instructors. Accordingly, I am in the process of raising my own support and have faith the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:14; Phil. 4:19).

If there are congregations or individuals who would be interested in helping to support me in this good work of training preachers, I would like to send you a packet of information about the school and myself so that you can make an informed decision. Of course, I

would not want you who are supporting the paper to decrease your support to **FCGN** or your local congregations. However, if you are looking to help correct the shortage of sound gospel preachers in the Lord's church, I suggest that this is one way you can have a direct impact. Studies cited in a recent letter from one of the oldest schools of preaching show that we are losing about 600 preachers a year and that present schools of preaching are producing only about 300 men each year to replace those leaving. We already have a crisis over the lack of sound dedicated men to evangelize and minister to local congregations. This is a shortage that needs to be dealt with **now!**

If you are interested in helping you can contact me at the address in the box on page two of this publication or at my permanent address: Ted J. Clarke, P.O. Box 855, Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0855. My present daytime phone is (870) 625-3217; home phone (870) 625-7585. I will continue to edit **FCGN** through June, but I need to line up my support as soon as possible. There are few endeavors in my 35 years of preaching that could rival the pure joy and satisfaction I have experienced in editing this paper. I shall miss this labor of love and contact with you all. Perhaps the new editor will encourage me to write an occasional article. I'll have some closing remarks in the June issue of **FCGN**.

(Ted J. Clarke, editor)

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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