

The Influence Of Denominationalism Within The Lord's Church Is Increasing Rapidly — Even To The Point Of Outright Fellowship

Is the all-sufficiency of the distinctive, blood-bought New Testament church being denied? Can the Lord's church be supplanted by the man-made churches of today, with God's approval? In what way must concerned and faithful brethren respond to these most crucial questions?

A number of times in *Banner of Truth* attention has been given to the dangerous influence of denominationalism within the Lord's church, and to the spiritual threat it poses. Apparently many within the church are unaware of the danger we now face. Without doubt, this influence is the greatest danger to the church during our lives up to now. This is true because the acceptance of denominationalism is to repudiate or reject the one true church which Christ purchased with his own blood. The well-being of the cause of Christ is hanging in the balance. This is a dead serious matter, yet, apparently, many within the church are unaware of what is happening, or even worse, simply don't care!

Due to the rapidity with which numerous members of the church are being captivated by the appeal of the man-made churches, especially in recent times, we are with a deep sense of urgency again trying to warn people of this soul-destroying danger. There are few of my waking hours that this matter doesn't cross my mind. To just imagine what will happen to the precious body of Christ within the next decade or so if the present trend continues is indeed enough to frighten the spiritual-minded, God-fearing soul.

It is because of our concern as stated above that we are devoting a major portion of this issue of *Banner of Truth* to the subject of denominationalism. If only a few people are awakened to the reality of the danger the church now faces, and are spurred to action, our effort will have been well repaid. This matter deserves a place of highest priority in our minds.

As to why the current appeal of denominationalism has become so strong to an increasing number of our brethren, we don't claim to have a complete answer. However, having been a member of the Lord's church for nearly fifty years, and being fairly well informed, I have made some observations which relate to the problem to one degree or another. I've seen the changes which have taken place relative to the acceptance of denominationalism.

In the 1950s virtually all our preaching brethren were strongly opposed to the denominations. But how things have changed since then! In recent years a growing number of brethren have yielded to the appeal of error as found in these religious groups. We've seen different ones gravitate from a rather friendly association with those people to the point of outright fellowship with them. Sadly, a great many members, including elders, have gone along with these unsound preachers. It should be noted that some of these preaching brethren are quite adept at a supposed justification of their failure to abide "*in the doctrine of Christ*" (2 Jno. 9). A lack of study on the part of many members has made them more susceptible to the popular errors of today.

LOOKING BACK OVER THE PAST

In the last half of the 1800s a problem arose within the church which affected its unity. The problem began over authority for practices of the church. Some brethren decided they wanted to use mechanical instruments of music in worship and organize a Missionary Society to take care of mission work. These innovations did involve the rejection of scriptural authority, which is also a foundation of the man-made churches.

This rejection of authority did in time result in the acceptance of denominationalism by some, but this was not so for quite a period of time. It was not until the 20th Century that part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) had drifted so far that they declared themselves a full-fledged denomination. In the 1950s the fellowshiping of denominations was virtually no problem. It has only been since the 1950s that this problem has taken on such major proportions. In fact, it has been since 1980 that the problem has become so acute, and more specially in the 1990s. In very recent years more and more congregations, and most especially the larger ones, have begun to have association with denominations, and in many cases fellowship them. The current speed at which this is happening across our brotherhood is hard to explain. Even congregations which were sound just a few years ago may now be on the bandwagon of association with the denominational people and their errors. As to why things are happening as they are, and some related matters, we shall consider a few factors.

THE APPEAL OF SOFTNESS

Our society has become one of softness in many areas. There is softness in upholding civil law against crime; softness in upholding decency in the area of sexual morality; in demanding truth and honesty, and others. The appeal of softness in society has invaded the church in a forceful way. There was a time when brethren generally demanded a "thus saith the Lord with respect to authority for beliefs and practices. With the denominational people, rather than demanding a "thus saith the Lord" it is a matter of "what we like and want."

Just as regard for truth has taken a beating in present day society and in denominational religion, God's truth has taken a beating by many of those who claim to be the children of God, Christians.

The preacher and the congregation which appeal to many brethren today are characterized by their love for "soft preaching," where negatives are not likely to be heard on scarcely any subject. The preacher makes sure that he doesn't ruffle any feathers. And, people "*love to have it so*" (Jer. 5:31). Some times it gets to the point that, like in Isaiah's day, they "*call good evil, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...*" (Isa. 5:20). Some people actually seem to want to be told that which is false, not true. It is like it was in Isaiah's day when the people said, "*Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits*" (Isa. 30:10).

This condition is commonly found in the denominations, and it is becoming more attractive to more and more brethren. More often we are seeing in the church what we used to see only in the denominations. There is so much in common that many are joining hands. Indications are that we are going to see more and more of this. Those who have the courage to speak up in behalf of truth and in opposition to error are often put down by those of our brethren who claim to be "loving" brethren.

The very nature of the liberalism which has swept over so many congregations, is to be dishonest with God by a failure to take Him at His word. This helps to account for the great many unscriptural activities which are now in vogue in so many places. These have been borrowed from the denominations, which assume the liberty to do what pleases the people, be it pleasing to God or not. Our brethren who have been under the influence of these liberal-minded preachers, teachers and elders have been made ripe for joining hands with the denominational people in fellowship. When people like "softness" with regard to God's word, which allows people to do pretty much as they please, why not join hands with others who have the same likes? This is quite easy to understand, though it is error.

AN ATTITUDE OF INDIFFERENCE

A pronounced lack of concern is being demonstrated regularly by a growing number of preachers, elders and members in general. For example, if Rubel Shelly and the Woodmont Hills people, along with a half dozen other congregations, had supported a Billy Graham Crusade in Nashville thirty years ago there would have been great outrage among brethren. If John Dale, along with elders and members from Glendale Road, had fellowshipped the Catholic Church in a "Revival" thirty years ago, just about every

congregation in the county, and others, would have risen up in disagreement and rebuke.

Sadly, a spirit of indifference has been evidenced in both Nashville and Calloway County. Comparatively little mention has been made of the selling out of the cause of Christ in Nashville or Calloway County, by fellowshipping denominations. I've never seen a time when so many of our brethren had so little concern as they have now. With this attitude of indifference, it is understandable that the church is besieged with the problem of its members wanting to "*be like the nations* [denoms]" *which are around us* (I Sam. 8:20).

If preachers had been interested in proclaiming "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) rather than tickling the ears of those they wanted to please; if elders had stood up boldly in behalf of God's truth, and refused to give false teachers any opportunity to lead members astray, the present outlook wouldn't be the gloomy one that it is. But that didn't happen, and the "devices" and "wiles" of the devil have wreaked havoc upon the church. How sad!

THE EXTENT OF DENOMINATIONAL FELLOWSHIP WITHIN THE CHURCH

It is hard to imagine that the widespread practice of fellowshipping denominations is not more widely known than it apparently is. If it is the case that it is more widely known than it appears to be, and yet no more show of concern than is evident, it spells even greater trouble.

We simply don't have the space to go into great detail with reference to the many examples of fellowship with denominations by our brethren. We shall note only a few of the many that could be given, but these should suffice to provoke great alarm on the part of those who really care about the Lord and His church. To show the extent of this fellowship we shall note individuals, congregations, and other things which are matters of record.

Lynn Anderson. Going back to 1979, we call attention to a noted start in fellowshipping denominations. The following is from an Abilene, Texas newspaper, March 10, 1979:

"Lynn Anderson, minister of Highland Church of Christ, will lead a 'Church Growth Seminar'... 10 P.M. Wednesday at Elmwood West United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Pioneer. Pastors, church leaders and Council of Ministries, members from Brookhollow Christian Church, Grace Lutheran Church, St. James Methodist Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church and Elmwood West Methodist Church will participate in the Seminar...."

Though Lynn Anderson was not the first to advocate denominational fellowship, due to his considerable influence, he did sort of open up the road.

William Banowski. This former President of Pepperdine University spoke at the

First United Methodist church at Fort Worth, Texas in Jan. 1986 in a non-critical way, but rather approvingly. Brother Dave Miller made the following observation concerning Banowski's speech:

"The entire affair was a model demonstration of the trend among churches of Christ to embrace denominationalism as manifested by a prominent and highly visible representative." (*Politing The Strait*, Dave Miller. p. 314).

Rick Atchley. This preacher for the Richland Hills church of Christ in Fort Worth, TX, delivered a sermon on Oct. 14, 1990, entitled, "Don't Bother Your Brother." The sermon dealt with Mark 9:38-41. That his objective was to uphold denominations is evidenced by his statement, "Second, let's not limit the kingdom of God to the size of our brotherhood..." He said further, "But if grace will cover moral error, why are we so afraid to let it cover doctrinal error?" Where is it said that God's grace will cover the breaking of God's law on fellowship?

Jeff Walling. At the Tulsa Soul Winning Workshop, March 1990, Jeff Walling spoke on the subject, "That They All May Be One." He said:

"Jesus doesn't say the obedient might be one...that the 'Church of Christ's' might be one....He prays for those who will believe in me...put their faith and trust in me...The text says 'believers'... we can't get into this lesson without appreciating the fact that Jesus asked that we throw a caltrops around all those who just believe in Him, and pray and work for the unity of all believers." (*Behold the Pattern*, Goebel Music, p. 200).

To "just believe" is what is heard from denominational people. The only way that people can "Be One" in a God-approved way is to abide "*in the doctrine of Christ*" (2 John 9).

Randy Mayeux. This apostate brother has already arrived in denominationalism; he has started his own church. Bro. Lynn Parker writes, quoting from an article in the *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 12, 1992:

Randy Mayeux went on from his heretical teachings in 1989 to leave the Preston Road church of Christ. His "main aim was to start a new church, and his model would be the 'Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., which is considered a model for the mega-churches.' It uses the megachurch approach to worship with a band and contemporary music. Mayeux lauds, 'this is a church that wants to have fun – it's substantive, but fun.'"

Mayeux is not alone in following the denominational concept of the Willow Creek Church.

J. Wayne Kilpatrick. This preacher and the Homewood congregation in Birmingham, AL have been known for their liberalism for a great many years. In a letter dated Feb. 20, 1992, addressed to: "Dear Fellow Preachers," Kilpatrick shows his affinity for denominational religion. He said in part:

"Gary Bradley, Sr. and I recently attended a Leadership Seminar in a northern state that excited and challenged us as ministers of the Gospel. We came back more committed than ever to reaching lost people for Jesus... It was so valuable and I thank God we were able to attend..."

The above church for which there was such praise was the Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago, a conglomeration of denominations. Just last year the Homewood congregation scheduled a "Ladies Conference at Homewood," at which four of the five speakers were from denominations. It has been reported that there was some opposition to this event but that the majority of the elders approved it.

Mike Cope. This *Jubilee* speaker has said that "Churches of Christ are desperately in need of more boundary." In a sermon preached at the Highland congregation in Abilene, TX on Apr. 21, 1996 Cope made clear what he meant by "more boundary."

"But what are we going to do with the many wonderful, Spirit-filled, Jesus-like, prayerful believers who don't go to church where we go, who weren't baptized the same way we were baptized, and whose doctrine doesn't line up exactly like ours?...."

After praising a number of denominational men in the above sermon, Mike Cope says, "Then one day it hit me. I needed to come clean of this. Because I believe these are God's people, even though they are not a part of my little bunch." God's word would teach us to try to convert such people to the truth, not to fellowship them in their error.

Max Lucado. This prolific writer made an infamous plea on a radio station in Lubbock, TX, in Dec. 1996. One could hardly be more denominational in what he said in that radio message:

"...The Holy Spirit is informing you of something that you have never really heard before, and that is, God is ready to be your Father...And all you have to do is call Him Father. Just turn your heart to Him even right now as I am speak-ing. Call Him your Father. And your Father will respond. Why don't you do that? [Max then prays] Father I give my heart to you. I give my sins. I give you my tears, I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of Your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you Father to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen."

The above is exactly what is heard in most of the denominational churches. Such is not from God's word, and our heart goes out to those who have been fooled by such false teaching. It is heart breaking that such would come from one who claims to be our brother in Christ.

Mark Henderson. The following quote by this man as spoken on the 1997 ACU Lectures speaks so very plainly as to his denominational thinking:

"Brethren and sisters, we do not have to live in estrangement and isolation from those who honestly differ with us inside or outside our fellowship. We don't have to agree

with them on every point nor do we have to convince them to agree with us on every issue. All we have to do is to look to our left, to those who have felt the sting of rejection, and everywhere we see one who has committed his or her heart and life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we may rejoice that we have found a brother or a sister...."

"Our fellowship," if it is to have God's approval must be based upon the doing of God's will. The above is a recipe for denominational fellowship.

F. Lagard Smith. Now a teacher at David Lipscomb University, this man has been a teacher of error through the printed page. In his book, *Baptism: The Believer's Ceremony*, some disturbing questions are asked and some statements are made: "Do faithful believers who were baptized only as infants stand in eternal jeopardy?" (p. 200). "Are unbaptized believers destined to hell? Are those who have received only infant baptism in eternal jeopardy?" Smith says further, "Nevertheless, I would hope that God might apply the 'common law marriage' approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of baptism" (p. 206). Smith's conviction relative to his belief in the necessity of gospel obedience is clearly shown:

"None of us can presume to know about the eternal destiny of anyone on the basis of any question of doctrine – be it predestination, charismatic gifts, the washing of feet or even baptism...." (p. 201).

That LaGard Smith is a teacher at DLU should tell people something as to what is upheld by the school relative to the acceptance of denominationalism. What can be expected of those young people who are being schooled there? How can brethren who claim to care support such an institution?

Joe Vandyke. This preacher for the Magnolia church of Christ in Florence, AL, made news among faithful brethren when he and the congregation had a joint worship service with the Methodist Church. Instrumental music was also used.

Rubel Shelly. Here is an example of one who at one time stood solidly for the truth but has now landed in the midst of denominationalism. For a number of years he has been fellowshiping various denominations. The extent to which he has now come in this was clearly demonstrated this past summer. Rubel, along with the elders of the Woodmont Hills group, encouraged Billy Graham to come to Nashville for a Crusade. The event took place in early June with the support of Woodmont Hills. At least half a dozen other congregations took part in this activity of denominational error.

"Promise Keepers." This organization is a conglomeration of denominational people, wherein a number of rank errors are taught. Howard Norton, then editor of the *Christian Chronicle*, went all out to support the organization in spite of its errors. Quite a number of our brethren engaged in fellowship with this group.

The Community Church Movement. This movement began several years ago,

but in more recent times a number of our brethren have bought into this denominational concept, which claims to be "non-denominational." The Cordova Community Church has been out front in this movement in the Memphis area, where several congregations have shown their acceptance of this new thing by announcing or participating in a "Day of Praise."

Brother Gary McDade has done an intense study of the movement, and has written at length as to his findings. In the July and in the August issues of *Banner of Truth* we have carried an article by him. In the Oct. issue of *Seek The Old Paths* the entire article is available. It is available in a tract, and may be ordered by calling the Getwell church in Memphis. That number is: (901) 743-0464.

The Community Church movement among our brethren is just another example of picking up something from the denominations. Remember when some of our brethren were touting what we could "learn from the denominations?" We have!!!

Rochester College. This school (formerly Michigan Christian College) announced: "Rochester College will host the 2nd Annual Sermon Seminar, May 17-20...." Tom Long was to present the keynote address. It is reported that this man is not a member of the church. "Other presenters include Greg Sterling, professor of New Testament at Notre Dame." Dean Smith and Tim Kelly are also listed as "presenters." Their religion is not stated.

When non-members of the church are used to teach members of the church in spiritual matters, something has gone wrong! Bad wrong!

Promotion of Denominationalism. A number of gatherings by denominational-minded brethren such as: Tulsa's Soul Winning Workshop, The Nashville *Jubilee*, Heartland and others of lesser note, serve to encourage the acceptance of denominations. The error taught, which is so common in those gatherings, adds to that encouragement.

The Changing of Terms of Designation. The term "church of Christ" is now being rejected by some congregations. I came in contact with a congregation in the Philippines which had rejected the term, contending that it would be offensive to some. In some instances it appears there is a desire to be more like the religions round about.

THE TRAGEDY OF DENOMINATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship, in the sense which forbids joint participation with the Catholics or other denominations, is the Greek word *SUNKOINONCE*. *Thayer* defines the word: "**to become a partaker together with others, or to have fellowship with a thing.**" This is the word "fellowship" as used in Ephesians 5:11: "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*"

Who can deny, on the basis of valid evidence, that man-made churches, including the Catholic Church, are "*works of darkness*," rather than works of light? Jesus didn't

build them. He did not shed his blood to purchase them. Christ is not *the head* of them, neither will He save them. The hopes given by these churches are false to the core. There is, therefore, no basis for being a part of them, or for adopting their practices for which they have no semblance of scriptural authority. In spite of this, some will be "partakers with them" in religious activities and at the same time deny that they were engaging in *fellowship!* This is a denial of facts, but then some assume the privilege of doing just that..

Just think of the implications when denominations are accepted as religious bodies in which one can have God's blessings, even salvation. This implies that those religious groups are just as valuable as the one and only true church which Christ purchased with His blood. If this were true (it sure isn't), then it would stand that Christ need not have died to purchase His church. Yet, brethren are joining hands with these man-made religions all across our country. How can brethren who claim they love God's truth break His law on fellowship?

Denominational Fellowship in Our Area

To hear of our brethren joining hands with denominations in other parts of the country is sad, but sadder still is when it happens in your own area. About thirty years ago most congregations in this area were considered "sound." It's far different now!

The church at Benton engages in what is called "Family Week Prayer Breakfast." This involves the coming together of denominational people in fellowship. This is made clear by the following: "Mike Donald of Pathway Baptist Church and Gene Gilland of the Benton church of Christ led the morning prayer." Benton provides entertainment for people.

The Broadway congregation in Paducah recently built a Family Life Center with an estimated cost of more than three million dollars, to accommodate their "Recreation Ministry." Their preacher, Dan R. Owen has shown his appreciation for his "Religious Neighbors" by stating what he has learned from: Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Methodist and Episcopal neighbors. What he learned shows.

JOHN DALE AND GLENDALE ROAD

I've lived near Murray, KY about 14 years out of the past 30. I've known John Dale and the Glendale congregation (formerly 7th and Poplar) for 30 years. The congregation was sound when I first knew it. Though the preacher and congregation have been known for liberalism for several years, it was still a shock to see a quarter-page ad in the *Murray Ledger & Times*, Sept. 21, 2000, announcing "**Jubilee 2000 Revival!**," at the St. Leo Catholic Church in Murray. The real shock was that John Dale was listed as a speaker in the "**Revival**" for Tuesday, Sept. 26. He was pictured along with the other four speakers, as shown on the following page.

To anyone looking at that quarter-page ad it would surely have appeared that John Dale was a participant in the "**Revival**" at the Catholic Church, along with a Catholic

woman, a Baptist, and a Presbyterian man and a Presbyterian woman. Not only did it "appear" that way, that is exactly what happened! A fellow gospel preacher, Richard Guill, and I were present when John Dale spoke, from the time the Catholic priest opened the service until the Catholic priest brought it to a close. Elders from Glendale and a number of members were also present for the service, and some of them participated in the service. I can remember when very few of the denominations would have fellowshipped the Catholic Church. That a gospel preacher would do so is a sad matter of fact, at one time unbelievable.

The word "Revival" when used in a religious sense carries the idea of awakening interest in religion, often involving evangelistic efforts. It should also be noted that this "Revival" included the topic – "An Ecumenical Perspective." "Ecumenical" is used to describe unity among denominations.

Was John Dale at the Catholic Church to convert people to true Christianity. I don't know his motive, but I did hear what he had to say. I, along with others, agree that what he said would not have converted anyone. In fact, I don't know of anything he said that would have made a Catholic even feel a need to leave the false religion of Catholicism. If John in any sense of the term "*reproved*," or "*rebuked*" their religious error, I didn't hear it. To the contrary, he seemed to me to be well pleased in what he was doing, even telling several "funnies" which got good laughs.

If John Dale's speaking at the Catholic Church as a participant in their "Revival," and saying what he did, does not constitute *Fellowship*, it raises a serious question of what would constitute fellowship. To some, John's saying, "It was not fellowship" will be sufficient for them. God's word makes it clear what fellowship is, and what men say will not change it in any way.

Editor's Note. After hearing John at the Catholic Church I wrote him the following "open letter," dated Sept. 30, 2000. A copy was sent to ten of the eleven Glendale elders.

Dear John,

It is with a spirit of sincere love for you, your followers, and the cause of Christ that I'm writing to express my most serious concern relative to your spiritual stance and influence. I will be sending a copy of this letter to the elders at Glendale, since they apparently stand with you relative to your convictions and activities. They are therefore, not without guilt in this matter.

John, when I came to know you some thirty years ago I was favorably impressed by your congeniality. As far as I knew, your love for God's truth was genuine. What a great asset to the cause of Christ this personable young man would be – I thought.

As discussed with you before, the passing of time has evidenced changes in your spiritual convictions as I understood them to be when I first knew you. A similar tendency has been observed in others. Rather than a maturing in the faith, a weakening of spiritual convictions has transpired.

Passing over the years until more recent times, as I have discussed with you, there has been the use of and/or fellowship with false teachers such as Walt Leaver and Randy Harris by the Glendale Road congregation where you preach. If you have not concurred with this action you have not indicated the same to me, or to anyone that I know.

In the *Glendale News & Notes*, Oct. 21, 1998, you set forth some caustic and unjustified criticisms of the Lord's church, which you also confirmed in your correspondence to me that these criticisms were justified, and not only what other people said. This criticism was for public consumption, yet you gave no valid evidence to substantiate your accusations. This criticism was very much like that which was exhibited by our apostate brother, Rubel Shelly, as he began his departure from the faith and a repudiation of the one and only true and distinctive New Testament church, purchased by God's only begotten Son on the cross of Calvary. Rubel, as you well know, is bidding "God speed" to denominations, having supported the Billy Graham Crusade in Nashville, in June.

Another indicator of your change in spiritual convictions was your public approval of the false teacher, F. LaGard Smith, and your encouraging of people to hear him and other false teachers, as advertised in a brochure from David Lipscomb University. This activity on your part belies the declaration of those who claim to have a high regard and love for God's truth.

I have called attention to a number of things above in order to bring us up to the very recent past; Tuesday evening, September 26th, to be exact. Your active participation in this spiritually shameful event represents, up to this point, a culmination of a trend which has been in progress for a number of years. That event involved your outright and public fellowship with the Catholic Church here in Murray. Also involved in this event were a number of people from the Glendale Road congregation, including the song leader who led the songs at the activity.

As I sat in the church building of the St. Leo Catholic Church, where you spoke, I was deeply grieved. It was almost necessary to laugh to keep from crying. Though departures from the faith are clearly predicted in the New Testament, it is still heart rending to see those inspired predictions fulfilled by one who is known, and one with whom at one time there were a number of meaningful things in common in the spiritual realm.

John, as you stood before that packed house in the Catholic Church, you seemed to be in your glory. Your adulation was quite evident. Your mention of the "warm welcome" you had received and your enjoyment at being present for the first two services of the **"Jubilee 2000 Revival"** tends to confirm this. In the midst of the levity, which brought forth more than half a dozen outpourings of laughter you gave evidence that you were truly glad to be where you were, doing what you were doing. In addition, one of your final statements, as I recall it was, "This jubilation is a celebration." I have yet to find in God's word where it is proper to celebrate that which is not in harmony with God's word, a case in point would be the violating of God's law on fellowship in which

you engaged. In no sense of the term did it appear that you might be where you were in order to take issue with the spiritually shameful and soul-destroying errors upon which the Catholic Church was built and still stands today.

A question which keeps recurring in my mind, I can't seem to shake it, is, "Did John even think about breaking God's law on fellowship by himself and others from Glendale, including the song leader who led the singing?" If the participating in the outright public fellowshiping of the Catholic Church is not a transgression of God's law on fellowship, how could there be such?

John, according to what you said, you had liberty to speak as you wished. You could have spoken of Christ as head of the church and His having all authority, as well as many other things which would conflict with the teaching of the Catholic Church. You quoted Acts 2:38 in a passing manner without comment, but otherwise what did you say that would have found disapproval by the Catholic Church? As you spoke of Christ, with reference to Isaiah 53, did it ever occur to you that on this very occasion you were violating the will of the crucified Savior, as set forth in Colossians 3:17 and other places? Do you think the "warm welcome" you received from the Catholic Church would have been shared by our Lord, who gave Himself to purchase His church, not the Catholic Church?

The quarter-page advertisement in the Murray Ledger & Times, of "*Jubilee 2000 Revival*" was to the great detriment of the Lord's church. Your picture and subject of discussion, along with the same of the Catholic woman, the Baptist preacher, and the "Reverends Ann Marie and David Montgomery," "co-pastors with the First Presbyterian Church" clearly projected you as in fellowship with these people for the event. Who would have gotten the impression that you did not have a lot in common with the soul-condemning error taught and practiced by these people?

John, I think you will still have your followers in spite of your participation in the above activity . But you and I know that having followers, even elders' approval, does not mean that one has God's approval. I believe some who claim to be sound in the faith will still fellowship you and the Glendale congregation regardless of what course may be pursued, but again, that doesn't mean God's approval.

In closing, let me say that it is my sincere prayer that you will stop and think about what you are doing to yourself, but more importantly what you are doing to our Lord's church. It is also my prayer that the elders at Glendale Road will take stock of themselves and resolve to do God's bidding as overseers of the flock. Furthermore, I pray that you, the Glendale elders, and the Glendale members who participated in the fellowshiping of the ungodly Catholic Church will repent of this evil. If I had no love for you and others mentioned, I would not take the time to say anything to you. But my love for you and my concern for you and the Lord's church are sincere. If you have a mutual concern for me and my spiritual well-being, please point out to me wherein I'm in error in what I have said, if such you believe to be the case.

For the cause of Christ,

Signed, Walter W. Pigg

Editor's Note. In the following pages you will find John Dale's response to the above letter. The elders did not respond to me. I will add a number in [] brackets to each paragraph of John's letter. This will make it easier to follow my response to his letter. John's letter will be shown in its entirety.

The large amount of space being given to the subject under consideration is not that I have anything personally against John Dale. John is one of the most friendly people that I have known. But what John Dale and Glendale stand for is a matter of great concern. This is especially so because a pattern is seen here which is being seen in many places across our brotherhood. John's efforts to uphold error are quite typical of a great many others. The well-being of the cause of Christ is at stake, and if we truly love the Lord and His cause we will "*stand fast in the faith*" (I Cor. 16:13). This means that we will "*contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). The danger of denominationalism is very real and great. I cannot keep quiet and not speak out for the Truth.

Editor's Note. The following letter of response from John Dale to me was dated October 5, 2000.

Dear Walter,

[1] Your "Open Letter" to me which I received in yesterday's mail, copies of which several others have received, and no doubt your entire mailing list for "Banner of Truth" will receive, is pretty much as I anticipated. Since you asked that I "point out to me wherein I'm in error in what I have said, if such you believe to be the case," I will offer these explanations. If your handling of these comments is similar to your handling of my correspondence from November, 1998, it will do no good. Again, you do not have my permission to quote from this letter, unless in its entirety. Context is vital. It always has been, and always will be.

[2] When I decided to accept the invitation to go to St. Leo's and conduct the service, I had no hope of your being pleased, and, again, my object in life is not to please you. My object in life is to please the Lord, in keeping with the teaching of His word, not only in the letter, but in the spirit, and I fully believe that the activities of Tuesday evening, September 26, 2000, did exactly that. God was praised in song, in the reading of His word, in fervent prayers, and in the proclamation of the gospel. What you call a "spiritually shameful event," was done with prayer for wisdom, and with the purest of motives, regardless of who judges it to be otherwise. The threefold lesson of "Jubilee:" from Leviticus 25, (debts forgiven, slaves freed, and beginning anew) were explained in a New Testament setting, with some emphasis to Murray and Calloway County. Your charge of my reference to Acts 2:38 "in a passing manner" was from Peter's own wording to some people who were in debt because of their torture and murder of Jesus, who were slaves to sin, and who needed to begin anew. My reference to Isaiah 53 was to show two

things: (1) all accountable people are in sin, "all we like sheep have gone astray...", and (2) the Messiah prophesied in this passage has come in the person of Jesus Christ, the virgin-born, sinless, crucified, and risen Son of God, the One who paid the debt, frees the slaves, and allows us to begin anew. If that isn't gospel, what is it?

[3] Your censure, "...you seemed to be in your glory" before the packed house, and your charge of my "adulation" are totally wrong. You've judged incorrectly, Walter. You do not know my heart; you cannot know my heart. I suggest you read and study Matthew 7:1-5. My presence and participation in the program at St. Leo's was intended as the seizing of an opportunity to communicate with some of my religious neighbors with whom I do not share fellowship, but with whom I sincerely seek more and better discussion. By the way, that has resulted, and I'm thankful. The picture and advertisement in the newspaper, at my request, did not use any title in reference to me. I asked to be called John, and I called everyone else by his or her first name. That's scriptural and consistent, isn't it?

[4] Walter, you refer to my "followers." I have no "followers" and I want none. My commitment is to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and then, as Paul instructed in I Corinthians 11:1, follow me, only as I follow Christ.

[5] You can rest assured that the Glendale elders and I are sincerely and prayerfully seeking to please God and glorify His Son through His spiritual body, the church. Our desire is to have fellowship with anyone and everyone who is in the fellowship of God, and to oppose error and wrong wherever it is found. At the same time, we seek communication with those with whom we may differ, and with a ready mind search the Scriptures daily for better and better understanding of God's will. May God bless us all to that end.

Signed, John Dale

Editor's Note. On the following page we begin our response to John Dale's letter as seen above. We will number our paragraphs to correspond with the paragraphs in John's letter. Please let it be noted that I make no claim to know what John Dale's motive was in having a part in the *Revival* of the Catholic Church. But that he clearly did have a part in it no one can deny. John even said: "my part in the series is Murray and Calloway County." I was present when John spoke at the Catholic Church, and I have gone over the tape very carefully.

Open Letter to John Dale, Nov. 15, 2000

Dear John,

[1] It is understandable that my letter was "pretty much" as you anticipated. You thought I would oppose the fellowshipping of the Catholic Church, and I did, and I still do. Your "explanation" of what you suggest is my error says that my handling of your correspondence "will do no good." Is that supposed to be my error? Your statement is just a matter of judgment. Context is important, but it will never make right what you did in

fellowshipping the Catholic Church. As you know, Ephesians 5:11 clearly says to "have no fellowship with the unfruitfull works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The Catholic Church is certainly a "work of darkness" and you surely didn't "reprove them."

[2] John, where did you get the idea that I was wanting you to please me? I do wish that you were more interested in pleasing the Lord. Though you say your "object in life is to please the Lord," your actions are saying that is not true. Your statement about "keeping with the teaching of His word, not only in the letter, but in the spirit" is puzzling to me. Do you understand the New Testament usage of "the letter" and "the spirit"? You seem not to.

John, your statement that you believe you pleased the Lord by engaging in the activities (**Revival**) at the Catholic Church on September 26th just floors me! How in the world can you believe you pleased the Lord by violating His will? Do you no longer believe that it is necessary to abide "*in the doctrine of Christ*" to please the Lord? Judging by what you are saying, you surely don't.

You say that God was praised in song, reading of His word, fervent prayers, and what you call the proclamation of the gospel. This just affirms that you were participating with those who aren't Christians. Your joint participation with them was indeed fellowship, regardless of what you say. Would you say that what you preached at the Catholic Church was sufficient to convert those of the Catholic Church? You must, since you say you believed what you did pleased the Lord.

[3] You quote from my letter a statement I made: "You seemed to be in your glory..." Then you say that I am "totally wrong. You've judged incorrectly, Walter." John, would you please note exactly what I said? I said, "you seemed to be in your glory." To use your very own words — "You do not know my heart, you cannot know my heart." Are you actually saying that when I said, "you seemed to be in your glory" that I was not telling the truth? I know what it seemed to me, you don't. May I suggest that you "read and study" Matthew 7:1-5, since you have falsely accused me. You are doing exactly what you falsely accused me of doing!

I don't get your point in that you were just called "John." What does that have to do with it? If they had called you by a number, it still would have been John Dale engaging in "joint participation with" the Catholic Church. That is what was wrong, not the use of your name. It is baffling to me that you would try to use this to justify an action which you must undoubtedly know was in violation of God's law. This makes about as much sense as what one of your converted followers said. He said, in defense of your unscriptural action, "They didn't have music." I tried to explain to him that music was not the point. The Greek Orthodox Church does not use music, yet they are wrong on dozens of points. John, you violated God's law as set forth in Ephesians 5:11 and other passages on fellowship.

[4] How can you say, "I have no 'followers' and want none?" Don't tell me that you have no followers, when I've lived in Calloway County more than a dozen years. I know a number of people who follow you. How can you not know that? Let me ask you a

question — Who did the people from Glendale, including elders, follow to the Catholic Church when you participated in their *Revival*? They surely did not follow our Lord there! They must have followed John Dale. If those brethren had followed you only as you "follow Christ," they sure wouldn't have wound up at St. Leo's Catholic Church, a religion which has not God's approval.

[5] If, as you say, the Glendale elders and you are "sincerely and prayerfully seeking to please God and glorify Him through His spiritual body, the church....and oppose error and wrong wherever it is found," how in the world can you justify some of your actions which are contrary to God's law?

Let us consider just a few of those things, which need to be explained, and justified by scriptural authority. (1) The recent fellowship which took place when there was "joint participation" with the Catholic Church in their "*Jubilee 2000 Revival!*" (2) The use of a false teacher, Walt Leaver. This man has fellowshipped the Presbyterian Church. He has promoted and participated in the Nashville *Jubilee*. He has failed to take a stand on various doctrinal matters which are of great importance. (3) The supporting of Randy Harris at a meeting at the University congregation by turning out the Sunday evening services at Glendale. Randy Harris and Rubel Shelly wrote a book, *The Second Incarnation* which is highly critical of the Lord's church. (4) The bidding of "God speed" to the false teacher, F. LaGard Smith, when John encouraged people to go and hear him, along with other false teachers at David Lipscomb. This was done through a brochure sent out by DLU, with John's statement. (5) The meeting with Jay Lockhart, Nov. 5-8, 2000, advertised by a quarter-page ad. He teaches error on marriage, divorce and remarriage, denying that Matt. 19:9 is the only reason for divorce and remarriage. He says that 1 Cor. 7:15 gives another reason. Other error he teaches is well documented.

If, as you say, you and the elders desire "to oppose error and wrong wherever it is found," how can you do those things above? There seems to be only two answers: 1) You believe those things are not error or wrong, or 2) you don't actually mean it when they say you desire to oppose error and wrong. In either case, this is most serious.

I've written with reference to your participation in the "Revival" of the Catholic Church. I've acted on the basis of what I believe is taught in Gal. 6:1; Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17, and other New Testament passages. It is my prayer that you will examine your actions and that you will repent of your wrongs. Much good could be done by standing boldly for God's truth as we are commanded to do by such passages as: Jude 3; I Cor. 16:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2.

As before, you are invited to point out wherein I'm in error if such you believe to be the case.

Sincerely,

Walter W. Pigg

SOME CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

We have tried to point out the rapid pace at which the church is being influenced by denominational religion. The strength of this threat is increasing virtually day by day. On a continuing basis we hear of one time sound congregations succumbing to the influence of denominations. Never in my life has there been such a dangerous situation faced. The examples we have given are only a few of what could be given, but when the influence of the ones given is considered, it tells us something important.

The All Sufficiency Of The Church. To even hint that salvation may be found in the man-made churches is to call the Lord's church in question. If salvation can be found outside the one true church, then it is not **All Sufficient**. This would throw things into a turmoil such as we've never seen.

Can The Lord's Church Be Supplanted? No, not in the true sense at all. It is all on the part of men that churches of men are taking the place of the Lord's church. This never happens with God's approval. It is so sadly ironic that men worked so hard in the 1800s to bring men out of denominational confusion, to the true way, only to see men now trying (and all too successful) to take men back into that sad condition where there is no true hope.

What Can Faithful brethren Do? There is much that can be done if we are willing. Elders can stand up to their duties of feeding and protecting their flocks. False teaching can be "nipped in the bud" when men have knowledge and the courage to stand up for Truth without any compromise. The members of the church have a great part to play. A truly faithful Christian will *stand fast in the faith* when others will not. Such brethren will speak up in defense of the faith and in opposition to all error. One of the most effective things to be done at this point is to respect God's law on fellowship. As long as brethren who claim to be sound continue to fellowship those in error, the Lord's church is going to suffer from the inroads of liberal thoughts and practices. Brethren need to start studying God's word again. Lack of knowledge is having a telling effect. Let us work and pray as never before!

- - Walter W. Pigg

TOLERABLE IGNORANCE?

Alan Adams

We've done this sort of thing before: that is, discuss passages that are commonly cited as saying one thing when they in fact say another. Some times the results are benign, other times quite serious. Either way, one needs to get into the practice of understanding and applying Scriptures just as they are used in the New Testament. In fact, it's good to be downright picky in this matter. Yet another such "put upon passage is Acts 17:30-31:

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given

assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

We are suggesting that this passage is "put upon" whenever it is (as it so often is) cited to prove that God was, in the past, tolerant of man's ignorance of at-that-time-REVEALED Divine Will; but, now, He is intolerant of the same. When given a bit of careful attention, it should be seen that such an interpretation falls right in there with such things as the "three wise men."

Several things about this passage are clear:

- (1) A contrast between the Christian Age—"now"—and the "times" prior.
- (2) An "ignorance" on the part of man during those prior "times," which ignorance God "overlooked."
- (3) A present universal demand that men "repent," which demand flows out of the fact that what once constituted "ignorance" is no longer true.

It is assumed that most agree Paul's reference to "now" takes in the present (and last) age of God's dealing with man (Heb. 1:1-2). We also assume that most agree that those prior "times" of God's dealing with man take in what we generally call the Patriarchal Age and the Mosaic Age. Thus we conclude that the "ignorance...overlooked" by God was "ignorance" uniquely related to those prior Ages, or Dispensations. If we can be clear as to: (1) Of what people in those ages were "ignorant," and (2) Why they were "ignorant" of the same, the whole idea of God's having "overlooked" such will fall into place.

There can be no doubt that from Adam till Jesus, there was for the people we know generally as Gentiles a divinely given law and system of religion. They had priests, sacrifices, and moral obligations. Now, relative to that which God had revealed to them: how much "ignorance" of the same did God tolerate? 20%, 50%, 100%? Did He excuse the pagan world's ignorance of the one true God? No. Read Romans 1:18-25. At the end of that great catalogue of immorality which characterized the pre-Christ Gentile world, Paul says, "who knowing the ordinance of God that they that practice such things are worthy of death" (v. 32).

Then again, from Sinai to Jesus, the Jews lived under a different divinely given law (Rom. 3:19). How much ignorance of that law did God tolerate on the part of the Jews? Hosea said they were "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). God did not "overlook" a Jew's ignorance of the Law of Moses.

The point is: Gentiles were obligated to KNOW and live in harmony with what God had revealed to them; and, likewise the Jews. What then is this "ignorance...overlooked" by God? It is simply their ignorance of God's complete revelation, and that because it was YET to come. During those times, God's plan to save sinners—Jew and Gentile—through Jesus was a "mystery" (Eph. 3:1-3, 9-10). Then, it was "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5). Then, neither prophets nor angels could know fully what God had in mind (10-12). Of such things, they were

IGNORANT; but "now these things have been announced" (v. 12).

Ignorance of Divine revelation has NEVER been tolerated or "overlooked," then or now. Please bear this in mind when you read and apply that classic passage in Acts 17:30-31.

103 South Willow Street

Cowan, TN 37318

BANNER OF TRUTH LECTURES

May 7 - 10, 2001

Theme: Christ and His Church in the 21st Century

Place: Murray, Kentucky

Gwen Shamblin Update

During the past month or so a flood of information, from a number of sources, has been released concerning the Gwen Shamblin operation.

A Catholic publication, *Our Sunday Visitor*, Oct. 8, 2000, carries an article, "Smackdown On Weigh Down." The article points out that the Shamblin program was held at a "startling number" of Catholic Churches. It also mentions the dropping of Shamblin's latest book, by her publisher, Thomas Nelson. Amy Welborn, writer of the article, concludes that Shamblin is right, relative to her belief about the "Trinity," since, she says, "The word 'Trinity' doesn't occur in Scripture.

A lengthy article appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 30, 2000. The headline: "*Parish the Thought: How Bible-Based Diet Angered True Believers.*" The "continued" portion of the article had the headline: "Church Lady of Diet Weighs In on Trinity And Her Flock Flees." The article describes what has the Shamblin followers cross:

"e-mail to 40,000 people on Aug. 10, in which Mrs. Shamblin disavowed the Trinity, the Christian belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united in one Godhead. She also invited people to the Remnant Fellowship, an 80-member nondenominational church she and her accountant husband had formed."

It is also pointed out that Shamblin acknowledged that 25 of her 90 workers departed recently. The Willow Creek Community Church, with "17,000 parishioners" reported that it would cancel the Weigh Down Workshop.

Other sources have reported a Religious Discrimination Lawsuit filed against Shamblin. Some are alleging that they were pressured to attend Shamblin's church and/or uphold her doctrines.

In February 1999 and January 2000, I carried articles in BOT on the Gwen Shamblin operation. At that time I pointed out some of the error that was being taught. I received more negative response from those articles than anything I've written. Most of the response was from denominational people but some who claimed to be members of the church were included. Some felt sorry for me because I was pointing out Shamblin's errors, a number of people said they would pray for me. Now, since so many things have been brought to light, including the "Remnant Fellowship" church formed by Shamblin and her husband, I just wonder if any of those people who were so critical of me will send me an apology. I think they really should, though I'm not about to hold my breath until they do.

It is downright amazing, and so dangerous, that people will buy into things which do not respect God's word as Truth, even when they claim to believe the Bible to be the word of God. A major problem is that people act on the basis of subjectivism rather than God's objective word. If people like something, or if they feel good about it, God's word seldom stands in the way of their engaging in it.

- - - Walter W. Pigg

READERS' RESPONSE

"I have already made 100 copies of the September issue... Great material, needs to be said and spread far and wide, thanks for doing it - **Freddie Clayton.**" - TN.

"Would you please remove my name as indicated below from the BOT mailing list....- **Don Hall.**" - WA.

"Please put me on your mailing list for "Banner of Truth." I have read a few copies and have enjoyed them. They are enlightning. Please keep up the good work for the Lord - **Ann Holeman.**" - MS. *(Thanks for your encouragement. Tell others about BOT. - Editor).*

"Please accept the enclosed contribution for your Banner of Truth publication. We pray you have much success in your efforts to uphold the Gospel of our Lord - **Sandra Daugherty.**" - GA. *(Thanks for having a part in our work in behalf of the Lord's cause. People like you make our work possible, and we're thankful - Editor).*

"I just read Banner of Truth, January 2000. I just can't believe that any woman of Christ's church can be doing what Gwen Shamblin is doing!....I would like to receive this [BOT] at my home...- **Carlene Smallman.**" - TN. *(A flood of news has come out recently concerning Gwen Shamblin's operation. Many of Shamblin's followers are defecting. Much of her error, including the forming of her own church, the Remanent Fellowship, is coming to light. The sad thing is that some will follow her regardless of what she stands for. - Editor).*

"I'm moving... Have appreciated the B.O.T. very, very much. Hope you will continue sending it to me. Pray God will continue to bless you with good health and a

long life to preach the gospel - **Wanda Thompson.**" - **MO.** (*We'll be happy to continue sending BOT. Thank you for sending us your change of address - Editor.*)

Editor's e-mail: <wpiggbot@apex.net>

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