



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Reflections on a Quote

“The Church of Christ is a big sick denomination”

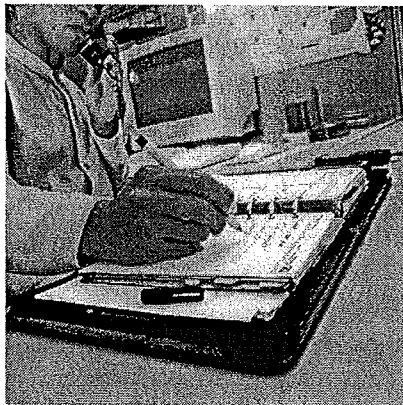
By

Jackie M. Stearsman

The statement was made more than twenty years in the past, but it was revealing then and in time has been shown to have some merit from the perspective of the original speaker. The statement of any person should be evaluated from the historical setting in which the person resides. We should be familiar with this approach from our study of the Bible or an ancient writing.

Understanding the Critics

Let us apply this to the above “criticism” by the brother of more than two decades back. When we look at the history since the statement was made, it certainly is the case that the associates with which he was identified in philosophy were a “big sick denomination.” However, because a person identifies himself and his immediate associates as a big sick denomination it should not be considered as an accurate characterization of all who seek to serve the Lord in sincerity and truth.



In the mind of some, the church of Christ is cheapened to a denomination that has its origin in the USA. Some take great pride in identifying themselves as the “Stone-Campbell Movement” or the “Stone-Campbell Fellowship.” Some seem to be proud of labeling themselves as “a Church of Christ.” No doubt but this is designed to indicate their denominational status. In such cases, we should not expect them to feel comfort in being identified with the churches of Christ we read about in the New Testament (Matt. 16:13-19; Rom. 16:16). When individuals become

dedicated to what they conceive to be the “Stone-Campbell Movement/Fellowship,” are they not indeed a sick denomination?

I became a Christian many years before I ever studied the history of Stone or Campbell. Never in my mind did I have the idea that I was becoming a member of a movement started by men in the USA.

Attitudes Are Important

When in college I did study about the work of Campbell and Stone. However, never in my studies, then or since that time, have I read anything that would lead me to believe that Campbell or Stone wanted to start a religious movement that would wear their name. In the study of their efforts, you become impressed with the attitude that they were attempting to leave denominational trappings, never to establish a new one that would be labeled by their names.

False Advertising

We understand that it is possible to attach a philosophy (position) to dead persons that

never was the idea of the departed souls. Today, some falsely attach the religious idea of "faith only" or "grace only" as a means of salvation to the Apostle Paul. Some would have Paul assert "no works" are a part of the faith which he gave his life promoting. However, Ephesians, written by Paul, affirms that we are created for good works (Eph. 2:10).

Questions

Some questions need to be asked and answered by the persons so dedicated to promoting the "Stone-Campbell (Movement) Fellowship."

1.

Was Campbell and Stone Crucified for you?

2.

Were you baptized into the name of Campbell and Stone?

3.

Since Jesus purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Eph.5:23, 25), who purchased the "Stone-Campbell (Movement) Fellowship"?

4.

Is it possible to take the Bible to Africa (as some of our students did this past year and teach the Bible, and only the Bible) and have people there to become a child of God without ever hearing of the "Stone-Campbell (Movement) Fellowship"?

5.

Is it true that in order to become a part of the "Stone - Campbell (Movement) Fellowship" you must understand what the promoters of the "Stone-Campbell (Movement)

Fellowship" stand for or do not stand for?

6.

Do you think that those in the "Stone - Campbell (Movement) Fellowship" will accept and embrace those who deny that they are dedicated to and a part of the "Stone-Campbell (Movement) Fellowship"?

7.

Since the Lord adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47), what must I do to be added to the "Stone-Campbell (Movement) Fellowship"?

Healing

A Sick Denomination

The Lord affirms that sick persons need healing, and that He alone was and is the answer to spiritual health and well being. *When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance* (Mark 2:17). His inspired Apostles provided remedies for spiritual sickness for the sick Corinthian church.

1. Authority Must Be Properly Applied

If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant (1 Cor. 14:37-38, emphasis added in these verses, JMS).

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that

there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

2. The Gospel Is to Be Universally Applied

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours (1 Cor. 1:1-2).

For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor. 4:17).

3. Carnal Minded Babes Must Cultivate True Spirituality

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,

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but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

4. Sick Denominations

Must Correct Sexual Deviates

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Sexual activity must be regulated by the teachings of the Bible. Any action and/or attitude not in harmony with the teaching of the Bible must be corrected to avoid promoting denominational ethics (1 Cor. 5:5; 7:1-40).

5. Sick Denominations

Must Return to True Worship

For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep (1 Cor. 11:30). Sick denominations are guilty of perverting the worship of God (1 Cor. 11:17-34; 14:20-25). One of the many signs of a sick denomination of people is to deviate from the directions given by God that regulate worshipping in spirit and in truth (John 4:22-

24). If the inspired Apostle of the Lord could not condone perverted worship, neither can the faithful who are determined to be directed by the Lord (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

6. True Love for the Lord Will Heal Sick Denominations

If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. (1 Cor. 16:22). If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments (John 14:15). Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

True love does not excuse duty and obligation. Biblical love contains directives that are explicitly taught by the sacred text of the Bible.

True love obeys the directives given and in so doing perfects love for God. *And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him (1 John 2:3-5).*

7. The Sick Corinthian Church Was Healed

For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter (2 Cor. 7:11). I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you (2

Cor. 7:16).

We must not leave the impression that the church at Corinth remained a sick church. In six months (time between the writing of First and Second Corinthians), the church is diagnosed by Paul as spiritually healthy. Big sick denominations do not have the approval of God, and they should not have the acceptance of those who claim to be followers of the Christ!

Conclusion

If we should identify ourselves as a "big sick denomination," what should others make of it?

If I know that I am a part of a "big sick denomination," should I make a concerted effort to correct my diseased spiritual state?

If I do not make a diligent effort to correct my sickness, the Lord says that continuing in sin (spiritual sickness that is acknowledged) forfeits His grace (2 Cor. 6:1; Rom. 6:1-2).

He that covereth his transgression shall not prosper: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy (Prov. 28:13).

Do you think that you are a part of a big sick denomination? If you are, will you permit the Lord to heal you, or, are you satisfied being a part of a big sick denomination?

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Will You Help?

By

Gene Burgett

In the last issue of my monthly Harvester offering I made the following statement. It

is almost impossible to know what the exact size of our full-time student body will be until classes actually begin....However, if our preliminary count is even close to what we will actually have in our classes, we expect to have a full house. There will not be a lot of room to spare in our classrooms.

As you read these words the fall semester has just begun and those words have been proven true. The podium from which I teach has been pushed closer to the white board to accommodate the increase in student population. I can ill afford to gain any weight in such close quarters.

As I surveyed a class it occurred to me that though we

are called the Florida School of Preaching, it would be a mistake to assume that all of our students are from Florida. In my classes are students from Texas, Arkansas, Indiana, South America, Mexico and Jamaica. In other words, approximately half of our full-time students are not from Florida.

We appreciate those individuals and congregations outside the state of Florida who support our efforts to train men to preach. Furthermore, we want all to know that in supporting the Florida School of Preaching you are supporting a work that impacts and benefits the kingdom of God in an area much greater than the state of Florida. In addition to where our students come from, upon graduation they

move to various places across the globe working among God's people.

We are always encouraged with an increase in our student population, but with the increase comes additional expenses. Though all of our students are expected to raise support before attending school, some still need additional assistance when they arrive. Any churches or individuals interested in supporting a worthy work (training preachers), that has a proven track record of stability (we've been doing this since 1969), please contact me and I will be happy to meet with you and fill in any needed details.

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