

History Repeats...

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A century and a half ago, a few brethren who were determined to have what pleased them in religion were willing to sacrifice respect for both the statement and the silence of Scripture in order to have their idols (primarily musical instruments and unauthorized evangelistic organizations). By the beginning of the last century that element had captured most of the congregations and schools then existing. Those "loving liberals" forced out brethren who were determined to observe the limits imposed by the law of Christ. In very many cases, the Truth-loving remnant (15% of the once united brotherhood) were driven from the congregations (and buildings) they had helped build. These had to begin all over again by meeting in homes and rented or borrowed facilities.

The Lord designed His church with no human head or board over it. Therefore, universal, simultaneous apostasy and division did not (and cannot) occur in the church of Christ. Thus the digression-driven division gradually occurred over the last half of the nineteenth century, church by church. The 1906 US census recognized the church-wide division. Those who drove this wedge of division were initially progressive brethren, but within a generation they had morphed into two distinct denominations (the Independent Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ). Brethren today who refer to these sects as "brethren" err greatly. These denominations are not digressive or apostate "brethren"; they long ago became "plants" that God did not "plant," and we ought to "let them alone" (Mat. 15:13-14).

A century after the foregoing digression was beginning (i.e. the 1960s), the cancer of liberalism again began eating at the vitals of the Lord's body. Only those abysmally ignorant or blindly unrealistic will deny it. Liberals (many of them disgustingly elitist, impudent, and irreverent) have come out of their "closets" in droves in recent decades. Their aim has been/is so to blend the Lord's church with the denominations so as to make them and us indistinguishable. They have brazenly announced their intent to stay among us and adulterate as many as possible with their heresies. They have been effective in large part because of the prevalent Biblical illiteracy in most congregations.

Apostates have for some time controlled almost all of the universities and graduate schools begun by brethren. Those that have not completely departed from their founding charters have made major compromises and will only go further. They have been the major

fountainhead in the latter digression. Hundreds of churches have been captured (all of the larger ones in metropolitan areas). Leopards will more likely become spotted than that apostate schools or churches will repent. As in apostolic times, so now: "Evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Cowardly and/or doctrinally weak elderships have forfeited their oversight, forcing faithful brethren either to compromise or to abandon such congregations.

In yet many other cases, the "yeast" of liberalism has gradually, but surely, had its leavening effect. Schools of preaching began springing up a few decades ago because of obvious digression in the colleges. Now the preacher training schools have trended in the same direction. Compromises with error and its proponents are rife. Brethren, who a decade ago were stalwart in maintaining Scriptural fellowship boundaries demanded by Ephesians 5:11, 2 John 10-11, and like passages, are now drawing their "circles" ever larger.

"Formal" division such as that of 1906 has not yet come from this Satanic rape of the bride of Christ, but it already exists in fact. The Lord's church will be better off when this deviation has run its full course and the division/apostasy is so complete that any deniers will appear dense or dishonest. Those who stand for the Truth are decidedly in the vast minority again, but it has been thus all the way back to Noah. It will be a relief to be fully detached from the detractors and the turmoil they have caused for so long. In the meantime, our duty is clear:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, April 12, 2015, of which I was editor.]

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