

Self-Assertiveness

Dub McClish

The world seems to have gone mad over self-assertiveness. A few generations ago, the cry was "know thyself." Then it became, "assert thyself." It appears that this is one of the fruits of the rising tide of godless humanistic philosophy that is increasingly penetrating the minds of men. It exalts the human being as the apex of all things. IF man is supreme, then he should indeed assert himself for his rights and pleasures in every way. This same spirit was seen in the emphasis upon the individual demonstrated by labeling the 1980s as the "me generation." Indeed the "what's in it for me" philosophy seems to dominate the thinking of the masses. We should not be too surprised to find numerous books in any bookstore which purport to tell people how to get what they want by means of self-assertiveness. Likewise, if one reads the newspapers very much, he will find advertisements of seminars designed to teach people how to assert themselves.

This philosophy, as all human philosophies which gain much momentum in society seem to do, has affected the Lord's church. In general, its principal symptom is the rejection of and rebellion against authority. It is seen in those who are determined to live their lives the way that brings them the most pleasure, comfort, and convenience, regardless of what the Bible says. Not only do such people go their own unholy ways despite the clearest teaching of scripture, but they also assert their "right" to do so. Therefore, we have some in the church now who are so bold as to assert their right to engage in social drinking, dancing, wearing immodest apparel and other such works of the flesh which God's Word so plainly condemns. Such wicked folk are a great handicap to the bride of Christ.

This self-assertive spirit is also seen in the refusal of some to submit to and obey godly elders who are charged with leading the church in effective, scriptural work in the local church. It is this devil-inspired attitude that wants to second guess, raise questions about, murmur against and refuse to cooperate in the good work elders are seeking to lead the church to do. It is just such a spirit that Paul forbids:

Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer.

When we give ourselves to foolish and ignorant questionings that cause strife, thereby failing to be gentle and meek, we have been taken captive by the devil's will (2 Tim. 2:23-26). The self-assertive craze has destroyed many a saint and divided many a

church. It is utterly opposite to the command "...not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men." (Tit. 3:2).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, January 19, 1984, of which I was editor.]

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