



Nov. 5, 2006 (Vol. 6)

ANTI, LIBERAL or SIMPLY A CHRISTIAN? (2)

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Last week we introduced the fact that labels have a legitimate use as descriptions of attitudes & conduct. We also discussed how people often use labels to mischaracterize, misrepresent & even to malign people rather than have to respond to & address what they really believe. The first use of labels is legitimate, the second is not. Let us now look at some of the issues which divide brethren and which have produced some improper use of labels.

In the Bible we do not read of one single verse that grants us permission from God to use instrumental music in worship. Yet, people use them. Some appeal to the Old Law as justification, but these fail to recognize that we cannot use the Old Law in order to prove a practice acceptable today under Christ (Col. 2:13-17). Some try to squeeze instruments of music into the word "psalms" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Yet the very texts they cite say to "speak" and "sing" psalms, not "play" them. Some hunt for authority by appealing to the word "melody" (Eph. 5:19). This word [psallo] literally means "to twitch or twang". But again, context makes it decisively clear what is to be "twitched or twanged" - "singing and making **melody in your heart** to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). The heart is the instrument that pleases God, not the harp, banjo, guitar, piano, etc.

Some, realizing their attempts to appeal to scripture fail under examination, turn to casting aspersions & labels, such as: "You just don't like music", "You are stingy with money, that's why you don't buy pianos", "You are just legalists", etc. But in the final examination, the Truth is that people who fear & love God will do what God says without adding to or taking away from His sacred word. Such can call us what they will and dismiss us as foolish, but we are happy to be fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 4:10).

The same routine has been followed with the missionary societies. Brethren of old saw that they needed Bible support for their "bigger is better" practices, so they attempted to find it. Alexander Campbell, for example, effectively said that since God had not specifically organized the universal church, then we are left at liberty to form societies that expedite world evangelism. He made an appeal to general authority and to expediency. But, Campbell's failure was in claiming authority for something that God never authorized. God has specifically revealed local organization (1 Pet. 5:1-2) and qualifications for that local organization (1 Tim. 3,

Titus 1). Yet there is only silence regarding any organization of the universal church beyond Jesus Christ as King. Silence is not permission (Heb. 7:14). So, even while we agree that the great commission tells us to evangelize the world, that in no way necessitates the conclusion that we may have an organization of churches or activate the universal church.

After the warfare caused by missionary societies, brethren invented the sponsoring church arrangement. Many recognized that they should not evangelize the world through man made societies, so they decided they could accomplish world evangelism through a sponsoring church. Sycamore church of Christ in Cookeville, Tn. illustrates this mindset. They conceived of the idea of mail outs to all the world. Of course, they were not content to do work according to their own ability, they felt they needed to do something "bigger & better". So, they solicit funds from other congregations. In doing this they create an unBiblical arrangement, they become a central clearing house for their "evangelistic" effort. But is this what God wants? Shall we ignore God's revealed will concerning local, non-centralized organization in order to accomplish world evangelism?

Of course, brethren understand we must have Bible authority for all things, so those who use this sponsoring church arrangement attempt to use the Bible to justify their practices. Some appeal to the fact that we are all one family in Christ and all have the same mission (1 Tim. 3:15; Mark. 16:15), both of which are true in themselves. Regrettably, brethren then leap to the **unnecessary** conclusion that this grants permission for centralized cooperation. These brethren have failed to consistently apply the principle that the highest earthly organization of the church is **local** elders (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). Yes the world is to be evangelized, but God did it in the 1st century through local congregations (Col. 1:23).

Also, the church is to raise funds by free will offerings on the 1st day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-3). This rules out car washes, bake sales, business ventures, **as well as soliciting funds from other congregations** in order to evangelize the world. God has not authorized any earthly centralized organization of local churches.

Some appeal to what men say, like Guy N. Woods. He is reported as noting 6 kinds of cooperation. This list includes references to 1 Cor. 16:1-2, Acts 11:27-30, and Acts 15:1-32. Some see this as justifying their centralization of various evangelistic & benevolent projects through a "sponsoring" church. But what do these passages actually say?

Consider 1 Cor. 16:1-2. Here churches sent to those needy saints in Jerusalem. They did so by choosing their own messengers. These messengers were not other churches or other organizations, but trustworthy individuals used as messengers. Sometimes several churches chose the same individual, but that did not constitute an organization of local churches. Does the fact that you use the US postal service and I use the US postal service mean we are an organization? No.

Also in Acts 11:27-30, it is often assumed that the collected funds were sent to Jerusalem as the "sponsoring church" and then distributed to the Judean churches in need. Such is not in the text. It is an **unnecessary** conclusion. Immediate context says it was "UNTO the brethren that dwelt in Judea" and "TO the elders" (11:29). How does this

harmonize with "THROUGH the church as Jerusalem"? Ad to this Acts 14:23 (that every church had its own elders) and the **assumption** that "to the elders" meant the elders at Jerusalem is shown to be a completely **unnecessary** conclusion. The only proper conclusion is that they delivered aid to the elders of **each** church they encountered in **Judea**. This fits the immediate text and other passages without assuming anything beyond what God's word plainly says. It is one thing to connect the dots; it is another to draw in dots where we feel they need to be.

Of course, where Biblical authority is lacking, aspersions must be cast in order to make the opposition look weak. If you oppose the organizational schemes & practices of these brethren, you are "against cooperation" and you are a dreaded "Anti". Such biased comments shut the ears and minds of brethren against honest Bible study.

We who are called "anti" are **for cooperation in the way God said to cooperate**. God authorized concurrent action, not centralized action. This means that each local congregation does what it is able to do (Acts 11:29a; 2 Cor. 8:12). God does not hold me accountable for curing all the world's ailments. But he does hold me accountable for doing what I can and should do. That is, as an individual and through the local organization God has revealed, I am to support Truth financially and with my own hands. And through the local church we are authorized to send directly to those who preach (Phil. 4:15ff) and directly to the needy saints (Acts 11:29, 14:23; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; etc.). God gave us **local churches, not** the centralized sponsoring church arrangement.

Beloved, as we stand for Truth, some will see us as narrow, unloving, ungracious, aggressive and militant. But which is more loving & gracious: Allowing brethren to continue in sin, or risking criticism, unpopularity and unjust labeling in order to save souls? Paul was very militant & aggressive as well as tender, gentle and mild. Being one does not rule out the other, anymore than the fierce wrath of God rules out His grace, gentleness and love. The same God that created Heaven also created Hell! We need to accept the whole Truth, not just the parts that are easy & popular.

Not all have faith (2 Thess. 2:3). Gentle reader, this may shock our sophisticated and politically correct senses, but it should not shock us at all. As Paul warned: "Many desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal. 6:12). Some make a show of being godly, while they actually go along with false doctrine. They wish to avoid the "unpleasant" problem of being persecuted for following Christ, so they give in to error. Such a man-pleasing approach does **not** please God (Gal. 1:10). If we think people demonstrate true love for God **WHILE they continue to walk in disobedience** - then **we** are blind.

Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14) This means that if we do NOT do what He says, we are NOT His friends! This may appear to be a harsh, but it is still a fact! And we do no one any favors by pretending at unity while tolerating & harboring those who persist in error. Gentleness has a place, but it does not mean we become spineless noodles that allow error into the church. Be not deceived! Gentleness, meekness & love do **not** mean we tolerate sin! Nor does faith, courage & boldness in Christ mean we lack of love, grace & gentleness.

Those in error have always complained about & "labeled" us as "unloving", "unkind", "uncompassionate" as "anti" **because we expose their lawless deeds**. Just as when Cain was told of his punishment for murdering his

brother, they cry out "Not fair" (Gen. 4:13; John 3:19-21). When Paul rebuked erring brethren, he was called "rude of speech" (2 Cor. 11:6) and "unloving" (2 Cor. 11:11) and seen as an enemy for telling them the Truth (Gal. 4:16). I pray that Satan will not deceive you with this vile tactic. The wolf may **honestly** intend to feed his cubs, but he does so **at the expense of the flock!**

Now consider this "paradox": How could Paul say, "**If any man loves not the Lord, let him be accursed**" and also say in the same place "**My love be with you all in Christ Jesus**" (1 Cor. 16:22-24)? If Paul really had "love" in his heart, how could Paul be so **mean, ungracious, rude & militant** as to say, "Let them be accursed" who do not love the Lord? When you figure this out, you will understand what it means to love **as God defines it**.



The "Evil" Of Disfellowship

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Men's & Ladies Classes** - Every 2nd Sun. @ 5pm.
- **Home Bible Study** – Sat., Nov. 11 & 25.
- **Business Meeting** – Sun. Nov. 26 @ 5pm.
- **GM in Knoxville** - Doug Hill, Nov. 17-19, 2006.
- **GM** - Jeff Smith, April 15-20, 2007.
- **GM** - R. McPherson, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - TBA April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

PRAY FOR

Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Rose Taylor, Dorris Williams, Robert England, Johanna Fletcher, Ed Williams, Joe Smith (cancer), Lydia Poe, Mike Tenpenny (back). Also, **Sierra Frasier (arm), Reba Jones (Dorris Williams' niece), Jackie Tindle (cancer, relative of the Sims), Holly Jernigan (Joyce Gardner's niece), John Ross Key (Mary Cox's son), Marci Miller (Alisa Fletcher's mother), Ocia Bell Jones (Doris William's mother), Ruth Williams (Betty England's niece), Pauline Hickey, Nanny Witaker, Dylan Roberts (grandson of Marilyn's friend).**