

first govern our worship, and *then* our emotions should be engaged. The apostle Paul is a perfect example of how our emotions should not be our guide in life. In Acts 23:1, Paul claimed that he had lived all his life in good conscience before God. Basically, Paul affirmed that he felt that everything he did in his life (including killing Christians) was right in God's sight. But Paul's *feelings* about the church and Christianity were not a proper guide. Jesus said that truth, not emotion, is what saves a person (Jn. 8:31-32).

Another cause for change in the church is *biblical ignorance*. In the past 20-30 years, a growing ignorance of the Bible has erupted among our children. This has led to biblically uneducated adults—who are now entering leadership roles in the church. In the past, Christians were known for their biblical knowledge. People used to think of members of the church as “walking Bibles.” But today, most Christians do not know the Bible well enough. God said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.” Many today are like the first-century Christians in Rome who had “a zeal for God—but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2-3). To counteract the biblical ignorance that is pervading the church, we must “study to show ourselves approved unto God, workers who do not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Solomon wrote: “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer” (Prov. 15:28). God has a pattern for worship, and He expects us to “hold fast the pattern of sounds words” (2 Tim. 1:13).

The words of the Proverbs writer are concise and pertinent: “Do not associate with those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly” (Prov. 24:21). Truly, those who are bringing in unauthorized change are walking down the broad path that leads to destruction (Mt. 7:13-14). May God help us not to yield to the current “push for change” within the church. “Whatever

you do in word of deed do all in the name of [by the authority of, Acts 4:7] our Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 3:17).

REFERENCES

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Liberalism:

Are We Drawing Closer to God?

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Emotionalism
Relaxing the
Scriptures
Human Pride

A serious wind of change (Eph. 4:14) is taking place in the church. This movement is so powerful that it is eroding many of the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16; Prov. 22:18) to which the Lord’s church has held so faithfully for so long. Those who advocate doctrinal change will say that this movement is the necessary result of: (a) a long-overdue acceptance of culture; and (b) a desire to have a deeper relationship with God. I suggest, however, that rebellion, emotionalism, and biblical ignorance are the causes of the change many are seeing take place all around us.

The liberal movement within the church has tried for many years to get us “in sync” with our culture. For example, as a direct result of the women’s liberation movement, change agents are advocating an expanded role for women. A person can now go into a congregation of the Lord’s people and find women serving the Lord’s Supper, leading the song service, praying, or even preaching. Additionally, we have tried to be “culturally oriented” by being more accepting of denominations. Change agents say that we need to be more relaxed in our views on who is, or is not, our brother in Christ. Today, some preachers in the churches of Christ are actually exchanging pulpits with Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans—as if their doctrinal views and ours were the same. One of the most significant ways in which the change agents have tried to “make the church cultural” is by additions to, and changes in, our worship of God. For instance, the church used to believe that a cappella music was the only scripturally acceptable way to worship God in song (Eph 5:19; Col. 3:16). Now, however, some are bringing instruments of music into worship as an acceptable alternative. We used to be convinced that singing to the Lord vocally “in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24) was proper, but now we are being told that hand clapping is just as acceptable to the Lord as vocal singing. Also, “cultural alterations” are being

made to the Lord’s Supper. For example, some churches of Christ are serving the Lord’s Supper only once a month or once a quarter. When we view these major changes within the church, we should ask, “Are we really drawing closer to God?” Or has the Lord removed some churches from their former place of exaltation because of the unauthorized changes they have wrongly instituted (Rev. 2:5)?

I am convinced that one of the major causes of change within the church is a *rebellious spirit*. Due to some major transformations and impacts by culture and society, a rebellious generation has arisen, and is leading the church away from the biblically sanctioned doctrines to which we have held for so long. Many factors in society are responsible for this rebellion against authority. For example, in the 1960s drugs, long hair, antiwar protests, and acceptance of eastern religions was representative of a rebellion against authority. Another factor that spurred on this rebellious generation was a lack of discipline. When Dr. Benjamin Spock published his ideas on discipline, many people began to rethink their methods of discipline—which led to children rebelling against authority. Instead of spanking their children, people began to ground them, give “time outs,” or simply ignore unacceptable behavior altogether so as not to “dampen their children’s spirits.” While these methods seemed like a good approach to some, the voice of experience shows us that they were *not* the right way (Prov. 13:24, 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15,17; Heb. 12:7). Children who are not disciplined at a young age grow up to be adults who reject the authority of the Bible. To God, “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam 15:23). God does not want people to rebel against His will; rather, He wants them to obey it (Lk 6:46; Mt 7:21). King Saul serves as the perfect example of how rebellion leads to change in worship. In 1 Samuel 15, God told Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekite nation, including every animal, man, woman, and child. For the most part, King Saul did utterly destroy the Amalekite nation, except for the reigning monarch and the best of the animals (animals that he planned to give as a sacrifice to God). However, the

Lord viewed Saul’s actions as a form of rebellion, and they made Him regret that He had appointed Saul as king over His people. Eventually, God tore the kingdom from Saul. Surely, none of us would doubt that Saul’s motives were good. He simply wanted to change God’s command “a little” so that he could make what he viewed as “a more pleasing sacrifice” to the Lord. But God did not want Saul changing what He had commanded—even if Saul thought his acts would improve the people’s worship. God said to Saul, “Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). In the eyes of God, *rebellion is sinful*—and results in spiritual death (Jas. 4:17; Lev 10:1).

Another major cause for the rampant epidemic of change that is plaguing the church today is *emotionalism*. We live in an age where our emotions frequently are allowed to overrule truth (Jn. 4:24). Change agents equate emotions and feelings with spirituality. Many worship assemblies have turned into an entertainment circus instead of a place where man and God can be brought together through reverent worship.

“For example, Lynn Anderson cites a Sunday morning assembly in which a ‘communion trio’ sang to the congregation and thereby ‘helped us express emotions for which the congregation knew no song. The congregation sat profoundly moved and with uplifted faces as tears flowed’ ” (Miller, p. 52).

Notice how Anderson equates an unauthorized act of worship (a communion trio), crying, and emotions with spirituality. The Bible clearly teaches that emotions should *not* guide our worship. Christians are commanded to “prove all things” (1 Thess 5:21). God says to man, “Come let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). The Bible commands us to combine reason, logic, truth, and emotions in our worship (Jn. 4:24). The truth of God’s Word must