

# Editorial

## FALSE STANDARDS

Ferrell Jenkins

The only standard of authority for the church of Christ is the words of Christ and the apostles as revealed in the New Testament. However, from time to time, we hear various "False Standards" advanced as authority for certain acts. Sectarians have been using these "standards" all along. It is not difficult to find brethren aping them. Acting on the basis of any one of these "standards" would be unlawful. Notice now a brief discussion of some false standards.

### DOES GOOD - MUST BE RIGHT

We often hear people say of some religious practice: "It does good, or it is good, therefore it must be right (lawful, scriptural)." This is the theory that the end justifies the means. We cannot do "evil" (unscriptural things) that good may result. (Rom. 3:3-8.) To be scriptural or lawful a thing must be good, but not all morally good things are right for the church to do. Mechanical music is fine for entertainment but not for worship. Roast lamb and sweet milk might be good on the dinner table, but not on the Lord's table. Too, some things may be right for an individual or a secular institution to do and not lawful for the church to perform. The PTA or some civic club might have an auction or a box supper, but it would not be right (scriptural) for the church to engage in such practices. One man argued with me that the Nazarene church must be right (lawful), because of the good it was doing and the growth it was making. He was using this false "standard." Because some human institution does a "good work" does not mean that it is right for the church to do this thing. Schools, PTA's, and other human institutions have human authority for their practices. We must have Divine authority for our practices in the church.

### GREAT WISE MEN FAVOR THIS

Denominational people often quote some "great" religious leader to prove their point. When, for example, shown from the Bible that baptism is immersion, they quote Barnes, Clarke, and Barclay, or some other scholar to "prove" that these great men taught differently and then they will say, "Do you think you are smarter than those men?" They are using a false standard. Our faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:5.) There has only been one who didn't make mistakes—Jesus Christ. Even Peter, an apostle, practiced error on at least one occasion. (Gal. 2:11f.) We should

never have so much confidence in one man or group of men, but that we can remain faithful to God even though they go astray. Brethren are often found using this "standard" by appealing to the practice of brethren.

### THE PRACTICE OF BRETHREN

When some activity is questioned, our brethren often respond that "Faithful brethren have practiced this for many years." The statements of the "pioneers" or even some congregation are often cited as authority. One can "prove" the Missionary Society "right" by such pioneers as Campbell, Lard, and McGarvey. Practices of churches today can be "proved" right and wrong by the writings of preachers now alive. Some practices can be "proved" right and wrong in the writings of the same man. Men change; our faith should not stand in them. Some things may be wrong, but if practiced consistently for a long period of time become traditions. The Book of God warns against this. (Matt. 15:1-14; Col. 2:8.)

Suppose a man or a congregation has practiced something for as many years as anyone can remember. Suppose they say that their practice is "historic" and "time-honored." Does that make the practice right? No--emphatically! The authority of God is the only thing that makes a religious practice right. Have you noticed that when brethren use this false "standard" they are begging the question? When one says that "faithful" brethren have practiced a certain thing, that is assuming the thing to be proved. Were the brethren "faithful" in practicing the particular thing? Again: our faith must not stand in the wisdom of men--not even our brethren.

### RATHER DO WRONG THAN NOTHING

When those of us who are content to do God's work in God's way speak out against some practice of our brethren, we often hear this false "standard": "I had rather do wrong than do nothing at all." Inactivity is not right, to be sure. One who makes this statement is guilty of fallacious reasoning. He is assuming that the only choices are wrong or nothing. This is not true. We have the choice of (1) doing nothing and being wrong, (2) doing wrong, or (3) doing right. Of course, we should do the latter. (continued on page 4)

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FALSE STANDARDS  
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THE DENOMINATIONS ARE DOING IT

Sometimes when contemplating the doing of something, brethren will say: "The denominations are doing this and we need to do it." or "We must make a good impression on the people in our community." God's people have always been warned about pride, and trying to please men rather than God. If in pleasing God, it pleases men - fine, but we are not to please men at the expense of displeasing God. (1 Thes. 2:4; Gal. 1:10.) The Old Testament was written for our learning. From the people of Israel we can learn the danger of wanting to be like the "nations about us." To have a building, radio program, orphanage, hospital, or an advertising program because the denominations have something similar (and usually much better, so far as the mechanics of the thing is concerned) is to act by FALSE authority.

Let those of us who have named the name of Christ be content to do God's will, not on the authority of any of these "standards." They, in and of themselves, are not sufficient reason for us to do anything. Let us do God's will because GOD WANTS IT THAT WAY. -- The Enlightener, via The Preston Reporter.

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