

THE GREAT THINGS OF GOD'S LAW WERE (AND ARE) COUNTED AS A STRANGE THING

The prophet Hosea made this statement about Israel in the Old Testament in a time of their unfaithfulness to God -- "*I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing*" (Hosea 8:12). Peter said in the New Testament that some of God's people would speak evil of the way of truth in a time of unfaithfulness to God -- "*And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*" (I Pet. 2:2). Sometimes we are shocked and disappointed when we hear some of the evil things that are said by God's children about the "way of truth", but we ought not to be, knowing by revelation that these days will come.

Congregational independence is a strange sounding doctrine to many of God's people today. They have no true conception at all of what God's word teaches about the independence and sufficiency of a local congregation. In the New Testament the only organization that God has given His people is the local church. This organization is local (I Cor. 1:2), independent (I Pet. 5: 2), and self-governing (Acts 14:23). The congregations of New Testament times were all equal -- no "mother church" (II Cor. 8: 14). In Dr. John Lawrence Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History (Vol. 1, page 30) he says, "The churches, in those early times, were entirely independent: none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws". He goes on to say on page 31, "Nothing, on the contrary, is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there even appear in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin. It was only the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces. (Note: Dr. Mosheim was born in 1695 and published this work in 1755. I have these books in my personal library.) So, the doctrine of congregational independence is Bible doctrine, and men who have written the history of the church in the first century say this is the way it was. But, many members of the church today think it is a strange thing!

This Bible doctrine of congregational independence and the sufficiency of the local congregation makes it wrong for the local church to contribute to human organizations that they (the human organizations) might in turn do the work God gave the church to do. Today brethren have benevolent, missionary and educational institutions (schools and colleges) infringing on the divine principle of the independence of the church from all human institutions. Many count this Bible doctrine a strange thing, and even speak evil of it when someone tries to teach them that the church must not work through human organizations. To form other organizations through which to do the work of the church is to become engulfed in what we teach others to flee -- denominationalism.

Brethren, THINK !!

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