

## THE "WINDS OF CHANGE" IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Text: Romans 12:2 "*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.*" (N. T. in Modern English)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The church in the first century, like the church today, faced the danger of being "swallowed up" by its culture.

(1) JUDAISM was a great force at work to destroy the church.

1. The Judaizing teachers had to be dealt with at Antioch in Syria and in the churches of Galatia ( Acts 15: 1 - 2; Gal. 1: 6 - 9; 5:7).

(2) PAGANISM was a great force at work to destroy the church.

1. The church at Corinth had to deal with the influence of Paganism ( I Cor. 10: 14; I Cor. 1: 19 - 21; 6: 9 - 11).

(3) The GNOSTIC ERROR -- the Apostle John deals with it.

1. Some of the Gnostics denied the Lord's deity, others denied His humanity ( I John 2: 22 - 23; II John 7).

2. We live in a culture today that is "swallowing up" many of God's people.

### I. CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST DANGERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

1. Warnings in the scriptures: Rom. 12: 1; I John 2: 15 - 17.

2. Jesus said we are **in** the world, but not **of** the world (John 17:11 - 15).

3. The task grows more difficult with every generation **not to conform** to the world.

4. Television, and society in general, is having great influence on us.

5. It requires greater vigilance and effort in this day not to be conformed to this world but to be **transformed**.

### II. WE NOW LIVE IN A COUNTRY THAT IS FILLED WITH SECULARISM AND MODERNISTIC DENOMINATIONALISM.

1. **Secularism** says:

(1) There is **no moral truth; everything is "relative"**.

(2) Moral ethics are "**relative**" and "**situational**".

(3) The secularists believe in "**pluralism**".

1. Pluralism is the **universal acceptance of all beliefs**.
2. Pluralism is the **tolerance** of all kinds of acts.
3. It is **not concerned about what God thinks**; it concerned with **pleasing the most people**.
4. It **exalts tolerance, not truth**.

## 2. **Modernistic denominationalism:**

- (1) **Does not accept the authority of the word of God** (John 12:48).
- (2) They believe **man is guided from within** (subjective faith) (Jeremiah 10:23).
- (3) Many believe they are **receiving revelation today** (I Cor. 13: 8 - 10; Jude 3).
- (4) They **accept the doctrine of "unity-in-diversity"; doctrine does not matter**.
- (5) They are **ecumenical in belief and practice**.

## III. THE EFFECT OF SECULARISM AND MODERNISTIC DENOMINATIONALISM ON THE CHURCH.

### 1. The impact of the **Feminist Movement** on churches of Christ:

- (1) Some are now advocating **women elders**.
- (2) **Women deacons**.
- (3) **Women preachers**.
- (4) **Women waiting on the Lord's table**.
- (5) **Women making announcements**.
- (6) **Women in business meetings**.
- (7) **God's order for women:** I Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2: 11 -15; I Cor. 14:34 - 35

### 2. The **loose laws on Divorce** in our society (the "**no-fault**" divorce).

- (1) With this "**easy**" divorce, many in the church have conformed to the world in divorcing their companions.
- (2) Many have become **victims** of these loose laws, finding themselves being "**put away**".
- (3) This has given rise to many **loose positions** in order to **justify** people **who have no right**, but **want to marry again**.

1. Some teach that alien sinners are not under the law of Christ (Matt. 28: 18 - 20).
  2. The "mental divorce" doctrine.
- (4) There is **one reason for divorce and remarriage -- fornication** (Matt. 19:9).
3. The "**Pluralism**" in our society is having a great impact on the church.
- (1) "**Pluralism**" is about **sensitivity** and **tolerance; not about right and wrong from the standpoint of what God thinks!**
  - (2) "Pluralism" **wants to please the greatest number of people.**
  - (3) The church is being affected; many congregations deal **less and less with moral conduct:**
    1. Immodesty in dress (I Tim. 2:9).
    2. Divorce and Remarriage (Matt. 19:9).
    3. Dancing (Gal. 5:19).
    4. Social drinking (I Pet. 4:3).
    5. Petting
    6. Abortion
    7. Fornication ( I Thess. 4:3).
    8. Gambling
  - (4) Many preachers and churches are trying to **please the people** in their preaching instead of **pleasing God** (Gal. 1:10; Luke 6:26).
  - (5) The "**unity-in-diversity**" doctrine is a **doctrine to please everyone!**
4. The "**Ecumenical movement**" and its impact on the church:
- (1) The ecumenical movement is a movement that is **working toward the ultimate union of all protestant denominations into one "universal protestant church"**.
  - (2) The ecumenical movement proceeds on the **assumption** that there is **no God-given blueprint** for the church, and that **any structure devised will be acceptable.**
  - (3) This movement **rejects the word of God as a guide** (II Tim. 3: 16 - 17).
  - (4) It **rejects the restoration plea.**

(5) The movement has **one article of faith, "the Lordship of Christ"**.

(6) They teach that one's undivided allegiance belongs to Christ, **not to the Bible**.

1. **One cannot be loyal to Christ without being loyal to His word** (Mark 8: 38; John 12: 48).

(7) The ecumenical movement is seeking harmony and peace **at the expense of truth** (John 8:32).

(8) **Churches of Christ and ecumenicalism:**

1. Some today hold the position that **truth is not absolute** (certain) and **attainable**; many liberal preachers hold this position.

2. **Jesus destroys this position** in John 8:32 and Matt. 7:21.

3. The **New Testament teaches:**

(1) **Truth can be known** (John 8:32).

(2) **Truth can be identified** (John 17: 17).

(3) **Truth can be understood** (Eph. 5:17).

(4) **Truth can be obeyed** (I Pet. 1:22).

5. The "**unity-in-diversity**" movement among churches of Christ is a movement **seeking harmony and peace at the expense of revealed truth**.

(1) The advocates of this view teach that the New Testament contains "**two separate and distinct messages**" which differ as to **subject, content and aim**.

1. They teach that the first message is termed "**gospel**", and **is necessary** for men **to become Christians and to come into fellowship with God**.

2. They teach that the second message is termed "**doctrine**", and is **not necessary to becoming or being a Christian or being in fellowship with God**.

(2) The **Bible makes no distinction between "gospel" and "doctrine"**.

1. We are to "**preach the gospel**" (Mark 16:15).

2. The "**word**" ( II Tim. 4:2).

3. The "**doctrine of the Lord**" ( Acts 13: 12).

4. "**The faith**" ( Gal. 1:23).

5. We are to **obey the gospel** ( II Thess. 1:8), the **doctrine** (Rom. 6:17); the **truth** ( I Pet. 1:22); the **faith** ( Acts 6:7).

(3) Today some brethren are saying that **Romans 14** teaches "unity-in -diversity":

1. They say that it **doesn't make any difference about doctrinal and moral questions**; even though we differ on such questions, we **can still be in fellowship!**

(1) This kind of reasoning will defend fellowshiping those who use **instrumental music, human institutions** to do the work of the church, or **any other false teaching** or practice.

2. **Romans 14** is **not dealing with doctrinal matters.**

(1) These different practices **were both right** (Rom. 14: 3).

3. Romans 14 is a chapter preeminently dealing with **the treatment of a brother** over matters of **indifference.**

(1) By "indifference" I mean **things about which God does not care**, either way. ( I Cor. 8:8)

4. Romans 14 **should not be used to determine "right" or "wrong"** in matters of **faith.**

5. It was designed to **settle differences** between brethren over matters of total **indifference before God.**

6. It was designed to **stop brethren from "judging" or "condemning each other over matters of indifference"** to God --things about which God does not care (Rom. 14: 4, 10 - 13).

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