

THEY HAVE LIVED TO VIEW THEIR WORK WITH GRIEF

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All great movements, good or bad, have started from very small things. The beginning of the Kingdom of Christ was compared by Christ to "a grain of mustard seed" (Matt. 13:31). Small trends away from God's order brought about a departure resulting in the formation of the Roman Catholic Church: one elder in a congregation became known as the "presiding" elder; he was called the "bishop" and the other elders were called "presbyters". Later the "presiding" elder of a city church was considered more important than the elders of country churches; the city "bishops" soon had control of country elders, and this grew until the Roman Catholic Church was fully formed with its first "pope" in 606 A.D.

The Christian church was the result of small trends away from the New Testament pattern. "Cooperation meetings" were held (with only a few churches sending "messengers" at first) to make plans to send preachers to destitute places; then in 1849 came the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society. In 1859 came the introduction of instrumental music in worship, and by 1869 it was really making headway in the churches. Then came great doctrinal departures with some even denying the inspiration of the word of God and that baptism is essential to salvation from one's past sins! By this time many who had, in the beginning, nurtured these "innocent" trends were filled with great grief as they saw the end-result of their work. The younger generation had taken over; they wanted the church to become a full-fledged denomination, and they would not stop until it did! At this point in the apostasy many became sick of the "things" they had helped to create and began to look back longingly at the people from whom they had separated years before -- the people they had called "non-progressive" and "anti", the churches of Christ. Preachers like brother Hall L. Calhoun left the digressive movement and spent the rest of his days preaching for churches of Christ.

Many "seeds of apostasy" were being sown in churches of Christ in the 1930's and 1940's, and by the 1950's there were many definite trends away from the truth. These "trends of error" were not considered to be "error" by the majority in the church, they were looked upon as "signs of progress". In fact, any man who would raise his voice against them was to be branded as a trouble-maker, called "anti", barred from the pulpit and treated as a heretic! Many of us who loved the truth and the souls of men more than popularity and money did raise our voices, and God, who gives the increase, saved a remnant of the church from complete apostasy.

Those who, thirty-five years ago, thought the "trends of error" (the sponsoring church arrangement and human institutions set up to do the work of the church) were "marks of progress" have now lived to view their work with grief. The "fruit" of these "trends of error" has not caused undenominational Christianity to flourish in the earth; it has borne the bitter fruit of modernism, denominationalism, the "social gospel", church-sponsored social and recreational activities, every conceivable human organization to do the work of the church and acceptance of the denominational theory of the "direct-operation" of the Holy Spirit. Many who have nurtured these "trends of error" are now, with great grief, having to fight day and night against "the unity-in-diversity" error; women preachers; the "no-pattern" doctrine; the "new hermeneutic"; instrumental music along with choirs and solos in worship; Calvinism; the "we cannot understand the Bible alike" doctrine;

those who ridicule the idea of "restoring the New Testament church"; those who chide what they call "the old paths mentality"; those who say the New Testament is not "law" but "love letters", and those who say we should "preach the man, not the plan".

What these men need to realize is that they are reaping the harvest of their own sowing! There is a period of time between the "planting" of the seeds of apostasy and harvest of the full-grown crop. The first "seed of apostasy" that was sown was that the church is not all-sufficient to do its work (Acts 14:23; 20:28); here they rejected Bible authority and "cracked the door" for all the rest to come in! Many of us warned in years gone by what the end-result would be, but they would not hear. Now they have lived to view their own work with grief! Brethren, please give up your "sponsoring churches" and church support of human institutions, etc.; come back in repentance to Bible authority in all things, and save your souls before it is too late !

Let us all learn a lesson from this -- apostasy comes with very small trends away from God's order; the seed is sown, and in time it will bring forth a full harvest! There are "seeds of error" being sown among us today, and an "attitudinal apostasy" is at work (2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:7). If these trends and attitudes are not changed we will, in time, suffer the same problems of those who are now having to fight against the errors mentioned before. Brethren, let us get back to Bible authority in all things so that we can change these wrong attitudes and stop the trends that we might save our own and the souls of those who hear us.

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