

FLOYD A. DECKER

(A Biographical Sketch)

Floyd. A. Decker, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Decker, was born December 26, 1898 at Geneva, Kentucky. In 1905 the Decker family moved to Ballard County in Western Kentucky. Later the family moved to Cario, Illinois where they were living at the time that Floyd A. Decker volunteered for Army duty April 15, 1918 in which service he served three years. When he was discharged from the service he returned to work as an automobile mechanic. He married Miss Elizabeth Hodges of Bandana, Kentucky, and moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Under the preaching of Billy Sunday he "hit the sawdust trail." Soon after, he was invited to hear a Christian Church preacher preach in nearby Sand Springs. The sermons he heard were along the line of "What Must I Do To Be Saved," and upon hearing the second sermon he went forward and made the confession and was baptized. By January he was preaching and continued to preach for the Christian Church for about seven years. His wife, Elizabeth, died in Paris, Texas, in 1933, leaving him with two young girls to rear. From November 1929 to July 1933 he preached for the Highland Avenue Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama. In June of 1935 he was married to Miss Barbara Couch, of Paris, whose father is still elder in that congregation. He has two sons by the later marriage.

Brother Decker has preached in many states and loves evangelistic work. He preached for the Gladewater, Texas, church for five years, and spent about two years in Louisiana supported by the Gladewater brethren. He now lives in Haynesville, Louisiana, and is serving the church there for the second time.

Why I Left The Christian Church

BY FLOYD A. DECKER

(Charles Herron, minister of the Arlington, Texas, church of Christ introduced Mr. Decker to the audience).

Thank you, Brother Herron, very much. I was not prepared for such an introduction; however, I appreciate it very much indeed.

I have never had an occasion to have any regrets for the change I made from the Christian Church to the church of Christ. I have learned as days and years have gone by to appreciate my present association with brethren in Christ. The more I learn of my brethren in the Lord the more I am convinced that they are sincerely endeavoring to serve the Lord Jesus from purity of purpose. I am happy, as I view the situation today, to see the progress which has been made. I am glad to be among those who are optimistic concerning the cause of our Lord. Brother Herron mentioned our association together back in Kentucky. To me those were great days— both before I learned the truth and after I took my stand for the plain New Testament position. I owe much for the discovery of the truth I hold tonight to the preacher, T. C. Wilcox, and Ms attitude, who followed up every lead and strengthened every tie of friendship that could be made. There are many things, purely personal, I would like to say concerning many men and brethren who are here tonight, but that is not the purpose of the meeting. I shall proceed with the lesson.

If I were going to take a text of any kind I think I should go to Ephesians 3:21, "To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." This shows us where we must glorify God—"in the church." It also shows us that it was not reserved for the first century church but—"throughout all ages." One other verse should be considered in this study or in any study of divine importance, 1 Thessalonians 5:21. This verse tells us: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." This is a principle essential to

the study of any important matter. Let us search for truth always rather than try to protect some pre-conceived idea. Let us go to the Bible to *find* our doctrine rather than to go there to try to prove it!

BECAME A MEMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

I became a member of the Christian Church on February 10, 1922. I began to try to preach in July of the same year. I gave up my job in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and began full time preaching January 1, 1923, less than a year after I was baptized. My enthusiasm over what I thought I had found, my earnestness in the things I believed, caused me to go out believing others could be converted to the same truths I was taught to believe. My first "pastorate" (that is what they were called) was Kellyville, Oklahoma. You may not believe it, but they allowed me, my ignorance and all, to stay there five months. I moved to Vienna, Illinois from Kellyville and spent enough time there to borrow some money from the brethren and go to school—Cincinnati Bible Institute, of which John W. Tyndale was president. During this time I preached at Hartsville, Burnsville and Browntown—all in Indiana.

MOVES TO PADUCAH, KENTUCKY

I think it was October of 1925 that I moved to Paducah, Kentucky, and became "pastor" of the Murrell Boulevard Christian Church. As I look back upon it now I think they must have been down to the bottom, with hope about all gone, or they never would have called me. They had an indebtedness of more than thirty thousand dollars. I did not know how much thirty thousand dollars was, so I did not know we could not pay it back. For some hitherto unknown reason things began to pick up and we began to pay off, and at the time I left them they owed about seventeen thousand dollars. We baptized a large number of people, many of whom are now in the church of Christ. I loved those people very much. I still love them. We were friends then, and we are friends now. I see no reason to lose the friendship of a man because you disagree with him. I confess to you that it was a great strain on me to have to leave those people.

On July 21st I left the Christian Church and took my stand with the church of Christ worshipping at 19th and Broadway. I went into the Christian Church because I thought I had found *the* church. I believed the Bible then as I do now. I believed as firmly then as I do tonight that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. I have learned many things since, but my convictions on these things are the same. I firmly believe that when we settle the question concerning the Sonship of Jesus Christ and really believe him to be the Son of God, that, then, everything else can be settled that needs to be settled.

HONESTY SEEKING THE WAY

After I went into the Christian Church I was seven years finding out that I had not found the real, true church. I then found out by stumbling onto the real thing. Though I did not recognize my discovery at first when I began to compare the two churches with each other and both with the word of God, I saw wherein I had missed the way. It was rather like a person having a cut glass, thinking that it is a diamond. After awhile he finds a real diamond, and begins to examine his own so-called stone in the light of the real thing. He sees at once the cheapness of his own ring. To me, my religious experience was rather like that. I trust that if anything is ever said concerning me by my good friends, I hope it will prove true that I am "an honest man." A very fine statement, attributed to George Washington, made a profound impression upon me about the time of my spiritual upheaval—here it is: "I hope that I shall always possess virtue and courage enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all human titles, the character of an honest man." When we can get the world to look with real honesty upon the things we teach and when we teach with a clarity with which we should teach, we will see a great change coming about as never before. My attitude when I was with the Christian Church was aggressive. It was sure. It was honest. It was earnest. To be an honest man I had to accept what I saw to be truth regardless of results to myself or others.

OPPOSES INNOVATIONS

After entering the Christian Church and beginning my work as an aggressive preacher, I soon saw we had some serious divisions among us. Never being a "yes man" on any occasion, though a firm believer in the word of God, I was naturally on the conservative side. Thus I was lined up with those who supported the view of the "Christian Standard", and the brethren who wrote for that publication. Liberals nauseated me then, as they do now, and nauseate is the right word for it—for the man who takes liberties with God's word breathes out spiritual halitosis any one who loves and studies the Bible can detect. Policy men in the church, my dear friends, are not God's men—and I am not talking about those of you who are selling insurance for a living. I am talking of those who stand for certain things if it is to their own immediate interests to do so—standing for one thing in one place and quite another in another community. So again, I say, policy men are not God's men. We must stand for what we earnestly believe to be the truth regardless of the suffering and heartache resulting from such a stand.

OPPOSES MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

This being my attitude I was soon in a fight against the U. C. M. S.—that is, The United Christian Missionary Society, or, as we used to say: "The United Christening Money-Getters Society", and I think this came nearer representing that organization. The scraps we had with the "Society" taught me much about the evils of the organization of men or any organization other than the church of the Lord in the realm of religion. I learned from the beginning, somehow, that the church and the church alone with its elders, deacons, and members was the only organization in the universe God had ever authorized for the salvation of the souls of men. I believed that then, and I believe it now. If I am wrong I wish some of you brethren would set me right before I leave Fort Worth. Anyway, that taught me much about evils arising from human organizations. It taught me how men would work subtilly, carefully, and undercover, until they thought the time was ripe to close in for the kill. No, brethren, Hitler did not invent the fifth column.

Efforts by the fifth columnist to sabotage the work of faithful gospel preachers is no new thing. Those who would set aside God's will assumed an air of piety and extreme religious fervor as they do now. They assumed the role of the sweet-spirited tolerant, educated persons who were patient with those of us less forward looking than themselves—they were just waiting for the proper time to completely denominationalize the church—and did what they started out to do. But God's organization is the church of the Lord and there is no other.

TO BECOME TRIBUTARY IS SOON TO BECOME SUBSIDIARY

Brethren, to become tributary to an organization is soon to become subsidiary to the same. You may think you can have an organization auxiliary to the church, but it will not be long until you will find that the church is auxiliary to the organization. The church and the church alone, functioning after God's own order is sufficient for the advancement of the cause of Christ on the earth. I saw what happened in the Christian Church when men take liberties with the word of God. I saw how they would creep into this community and that community and like a giant octopus, with all its tentacles running in every direction, grasping the throat of this preacher and that—this "church board" and another—choking into submission by any means possible and taking control. Of course there were exceptions, for there were "fanatics" like myself who refused to be controlled.

READY TO BE TAUGHT

As I look back to that time nearly twenty years ago, I can now see that I was ready for some one to teach me. I believe there are many other preachers in the Christian Church tonight who are ready for some one to teach them. You remember the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5). When Jesus asked him if he would be made whole, he responded, "Sir I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool....." Well, the waters were troubled for me, everything was just right, the proper time had arrived for me and there were some men to "put me in." You may think that

some certain persons can never be reached, but our job is to watch for the proper time—when the "waters are troubled" and then be there to help. Who would have thought that Saul of Tarsus could have been reached—but he was. I have already mentioned T. C. Wilcox, the local preacher at 19th and Broadway, who with patience continued to teach me and to associate with me—taking advantage of every opportunity. I do not know how much he was criticized by his brethren for even associating with me and being contaminated by me, nevertheless he did so and I shall be eternally grateful.

DEFENDS INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Another preacher of blessed memory to me and to whom I owe much was J. Petty Ezzell. He was my friend when I needed a friend. He made me sufficiently angry one night, when I heard him preach on the difference between the Christian Church and the church of Christ, to respond to him the next Sunday night from the pulpit at Murrell Boulevard. After I responded to his speech I followed it up later with some more preachments on instrumental music. Brother Wilcox could not be there to hear me but they sent Charles Houser Jr. to hear me. After listening courteously, Brother Houser asked me if I would repeat the same sermon at 19th and Broadway the next Thursday night. I responded, "I would be glad to." "Well," he said, "we want Brother Wilcox to answer it." I said, "I don't care who answers it; I'd be glad to make the speech." So we arranged two nights of public discussion. The discussion was held at 19th and Broadway. We discussed only the music issue as I was already solidly lined up against all unauthorized organizations. The first night of the discussion I took Brother Wilcox to the basement of the building and said, "Look here, T. C., you lay off me about this Ladies' Aid stuff. You lay off of this other stuff. We are just going to discuss instrumental music." He agreed. We had no moderators and we needed none.

The reason I stayed in the Christian church so long, after being convinced on the organizational question, may be explained by the fact that I believed instrumental music to be scriptural. The very week I was convinced that instrumental

music in worship was unauthorized by the Lord's holy word, I prepared to oppose it and left the Christian Church when my pleas were denied.

SEES SERIOUS INCONSISTENCY

As far as the debate was concerned, one thing was accomplished which caused me to finally see the light. Brother Joe Morris, one of our outstanding gospel preachers now, was then an elder in the Murrell Boulevard Christian Church. Brother Morris was unable to attend the discussion and later asked me how I thought I had come out. I said: "Oh, pretty good I guess. I did fairly well I suppose, but you know Joe, there is just one thing I am afraid of. I would not enter into the discussion unless they let me have the first hour's speech to introduce the subject. I had to have an hour to introduce my arguments before I would agree to the debate and defend our practice. If you ask me about the subject of baptism I can settle it in just a few words and give direct quotations from the New Testament. But ask me about instrumental music and I'll say, 'now let me have an hour to make my first speech and I'll discuss it with you*'. So that is what has me worried." I began to weaken from the day I lost confidence in my arguments. I was now looking for a real answer that would stand.

As I look upon my predicament, I was more or less like the story I heard concerning the first World War. During that war it is said there was a negro who was running down one of those trenches that they had then. I was over there too, but I wasn't that negro! Anyhow, this negro was running down a trench and ran "smack-dab" into a German as he turned a corner. The negro made a swipe at the German with his trusty razor. The German said, "Yeah, you thought you got me, didn't you?" The negro just looked back at him and said, "Yo' jes' shake yo' head—yo' jes' shake yo' head!" I was in that position, I suppose. I had my head cut off too, and did not realize it.

THE LAW OF EXCLUSION CONVINCES

It was through Brother N. B. Hardeman that I learned about the "law of exclusion." He sat down by my side and

drew out the illustration on some note paper, and I was shaken up considerably and could think of no reply. I went away wondering, trying to think of some adequate answer. Brother Hardeman pointed out that Noah's ark was made of gopher wood, as God had ordered, and that God did not have to give a long list of the available woods and say: "Do not make the ark of gum, maple, cedar, oak, pine, etc." So also with the pass-over animal—it was to be a lamb, a male of the first year, etc. And, with regard to music—there are two kinds of music in the world, instrumental and vocal; and the fact that God ordained the vocal—singing, and did not authorize the instrument, was sufficient to show the kind of music God wanted in His church. So I continued to wonder, to examine and re-examine my old arguments. Finally I wrote out all the arguments I had ever heard in favor of instrumental music and mailed copies to several outstanding preachers in the church of Christ. I am sorry to state that some of the brethren never replied, and some who did, their replies were of no help. Brother Hardeman replied with some penciled references on the margin of my manuscript. This was of considerable value to me, and showed beyond all doubt that I had nothing now to stand upon in my defence of the musical instrument's use in the worship of God. (See addenda at the end of this speech for fuller explanation of the "law of exclusion.")

LEAVES THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The very week I was converted that instrumental music in the worship was wrong, I wrote to the Gospel Advocate and Firm Foundation and set forth my reasons for the change I was making. They kindly printed what I wrote which involved instrumental music in the worship and organizations of men in the work of the church. I have learned much more since that time, but have not seen fit to change a single argument since.

Here is something that may be of interest to you. The week of July 7th, 1929, I made up my mind and wrote out the article referred to before. I decided to preach on organizations in the work of the church on the following Sunday morning, and on instrumental music in the worship the same Sunday night This was given to the daily papers with an urgent note

for all to attend. Well, all went well until about Thursday night. I took violently ill of ptomaine poisoning. I do not know just how sick a horse gets, but I've seen some pretty sick and I venture I had him beat all to pieces. The doctor came to see me four or five times a day and several times each night. On the Sunday that I was scheduled to make my "big" speeches I could hardly raise my head from the pillow. Before the next Sunday came around considerable talking had been done in the congregation about what was in the papers and what others had said. Some few asked me some questions and without evading the issue I told them about what I had in mind. This of course resulting in what happened the next Sunday morning, July 21, 1929.

I went to church about fifteen minutes before time to preach, still very sick. When I got there I was called into the choir room for a conference with the elders and deacons—Joe Morris and all. Our conference resulted in my being barred from preaching from that day on. I told them that all I wanted to do was to make some corrections of a number of mistakes I had made in the past with reference to my teaching. I had to leave. I left the building and started to 19th and Broadway to place my membership and to make a statement there, but before I arrived I was overtaken by some of the men of the church who said I was permitted to return and make a short statement. I went back and made a short talk. I knew that as full as I was at the time, and as highly emotional as the situation was, I could do no teaching. I simply arose and said, "Brethren, I have come to the conclusion that I have been wrong, and that I have taught you wrong. I wanted to teach you right. I am not going to force the issue with you. I do not want you to follow me; I want you to follow the Lord. I want you to study this thing all over again, and do what the Book of God teaches you to do." That, in virtually a five minute talk, is what I had to say. Then I picked up my Bible, and went out to 19th and Broadway, and at the singing of their second invitation hymn I walked down the aisle and took my stand with the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

APPRECIATES THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST

I have never regretted my taking a stand with brethren in the church of Christ. I know that some of my brethren may not be sprouting wings, but there are not very many that are sprouting horns either. I appreciate my brethren highly for their firm stand for the truth. I am enthusiastic about the cause of Christ. I am happy over the progress we have made and am confident we are going to win our battle for the truth in the estimation of all who love the truth of God. Surely there are troubles and difficulties within the church; there were difficulties in the church of the first Century—at Corinth and other places, and there will ever be. If the world stands until the thirtieth Century the people will still have their problems—but we will have loyal and faithful brethren who will stand for and defend the truth of God. May God grant that they predominate in number, and I am hopeful they will. (From the audience, "Amen".) I may be wrong about it, brethren, but that is my attitude. I do not believe we can afford to have any other attitude. Let us go forward enthusiastically in the cause which cost the life of Jesus Christ and the Cause which will mean our salvation if we are truly loyal.

CHOOSING TRUTH OVER GAIN

But why did I make the change? This is the question I came here to answer, and I have not fully done it yet. Brother Herron has told you a little about the congregation I was serving. It had grown to be a popular congregation in the city. I think 19th and Broadway church of Christ and Murrell Boulevard Christian Church were about evenly matched as to popularity and number of members. At least I was getting along pretty well, thank you, in 1925-29 as far as financial affairs were concerned. In fact, financial affairs were better with me then than they were a few years later. However, I made up my mind before I ever started preaching to never permit financial affairs to control in any way my decisions concerning things of the church. So as I talked to my wife about the change, the difference in popularity, financial ability and opportunities for advancement—between the Christian Church

and the church of Christ, I finally said, "If this is the truth, it is the truth, and I am willing to stand for it even if there were but a half dozen members of the church of Christ in the world and all of them were paupers! So since it is the truth we will just stand for the truth!" Brethren, I firmly believe that this kind of disposition must characterize us tonight. If it is the truth, stand for it. If it is not the truth, give it up. This is the only attitude God's people can afford to have toward the gospel of Christ.

A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

But, why did I do it? My friends, it is a question of authority. You hear a lot about the differences between the Christian Church and the church of Christ. You have heard that there are many differences. Well, now I am not speaking disparagingly of what Brother Coleman Overby has outlined concerning some fifty-two differences. If we were to itemize certain practices as differences I suppose he would be about right. But all these fifty-two differences and others may be summed under one heading—just *one* difference. What is that difference? Instrumental music? That is it, is it not? Oh, no! Instrumental music has been represented as the only difference. This is not so. The real issue and the only difference between the Christian Church and the church of Christ exists in the attitude each group has toward the authority of God's word—the Bible.

ZWINGLI'S DIFFERENCE WITH LUTHER

The difference between Martin Luther and Zwingli—the German and Swiss reformers, serves to illustrate the difference between the Christian Church and the church of Christ. Luther was in favor of anything in the work and worship of the church which the Bible did not specifically condemn, whereas the Swiss reformer would have only that which the Bible specifically authorized. If we have the attitude of Luther we could have anything under the sun, including the modern dance in the worship of the church. If we have the attitude of Zwingli we would wait until we find a "thus saith the Lord", and thus have only that which the New Testament authorizes.

That would include the dancing and the instrumental music along with many other things. The same difference that exists between the church of Christ and the Christian Church is the same that exists between the church of Christ and any denomination in the world. This real difference which exists between us and any denomination is shown in the difference in our attitude as to what constitutes authority in religion. That is the real issue. I saw this finally, and was ready to say, "It is time to get out of this thing and follow only the truth of God as revealed in the Bible."

THE SIN OF PRESUMPTION

Unscriptural worship, organizations and plans are but items stemming from that parent sin—the sin of presumption. Presumption is presuming to speak for God or act for God where God has not authorized us to act or speak. This is the difference and the only difference!

ITEMIZING SOME UNSCRIPTURAL DIFFERENCES

As for itemizing the differences in practice let me read you this list, and lump it all together, and then maybe we can do as the song leader over in Oklahoma said, "Rest our 'vocabules' a little bit." The local organizations are such as: the Ladies' Aid Society, Ladies' Missionary Society, Christian Endeavor Society with their national and international hook-up, organized Sunday Schools with their superintendents, assistant superintendent, secretaries, treasurers—operating as a separate order—not the church but operating for the church. Also under the heading of local organizations we would mention the choir, often facetiously called "The War Department," because so many wars and rumors of wars have started in their choir loft. Too, there are the men's clubs, boys' clubs, ladies' clubs and as we think about the many clubs we are forced to the conclusion that the church has had about all the spiritual life "clubbed" out of it. It was hard to get people together unless we would have a soup social or supper—a show or an entertainment of some sort. Paul Henry Packard, an outstanding evangelist in the Christian Church, said in a meeting at

Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, "The church is the most over-organized institution in the world." He was and is right on that.

JUNIOR CHURCHES

I am holding up before you an issue of the Christian Standard, dated September 17, 1932. They must have been very proud of the story as they gave it the front page prominence one would expect a highly recommended practice to have. This picture you see is a "Little Folks' New Testament Church." It is said to have its own elders, its little deacons, and a Mrs. Smith, the local preacher's wife is its pastor! You know from reading the Bible I somehow got the idea that elders of the "New Testament Church" should be old enough to shave! But this "Little Folks' New Testament Church"—a thing unknown to the Bible—met in the basement of the building at the same time the old folks met upstairs, observed the Lord's Supper and everything. They may not be doing it now as fads come and go, but they were then, in Ada, Oklahoma.

This reminds me of the story of the man and his cats. A man had a big cat and a little cat, and in order for them to go in and out of the house at will he cut a big hole in the door for the big cat. Beside the big hole he cut a little hole so the little cat could go in and out too. So, it seems with the Junior Church idea; it requires two churches—a big one for the old folks and a little one for the little folks—so that all might go to heaven. The young people will be no special problem unless we make one out of them. Teach them the soul saving gospel of Christ, and encourage them to believe it and obey it, and you will not have to have any church except that one redeemed by the blood of our Lord. The young people will be a part of it.

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

The national organizations were: The U. C. M. S., the Restoration Association, Pension Boards, Educational Boards, Conventions or their counterparts. Every one of these are innovations in the realm of the work of the church. The worship and work of the Christian Church require both more and

less than the New Testament requires. Instrumental music is an innovation in the realm of the worship of the church—God has not ordained it. Missionary Societies, and these other organisations already named, are innovations in the realm of the work of the church. Presumptuous innovators have, throughout the centuries, caused more heartaches and troubles and divisions in the church of the Lord than all other persecutions combined. There were (and still are) fifth columnists in the church from the modernist up or down—and so corruptions continued to increase. We, who are in the church of Christ, would do well to keep an eye on anything that might have a possible tendency to corrupt New Testament doctrine or practice.

OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Special days, women preachers, modernism, open-membership and human organizations were the main things which caused divisions, and they were the main issues over which we fought when I was in the Christian Church. Open membership means receiving and fellowshiping unbaptized—"sprinkled"—people and some who had received no so-called form of baptism at all—had not even been sprinkled. They practice this today more than ever in the Christian Churches and some Baptist Churches. It has not been long since the Christian Standard admitted that more than 200 of their churches were openly practicing open membership. When I went to Cincinnati in 1923, all we knew about were six congregations following such a practice. There is no doubt to my mind about there being more than 200 congregations of the Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches that now practice open membership. I will venture to say that there are many more than two hundred preachers among them that do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ or His resurrection from the grave.

The Christian Church observes special days, such as Easter, Lent, Christmas, and about all the other "special days" the Catholics and other sects observe. I remember when many Christian Church preachers would fight against special titles for preachers which would lift the preacher above the pew. But now the terms "Reverend", "Doctor", and "Pastor" are

accepted fully by almost all of them. These things have no place in the hearts of simple Christians.

Let me tell you of this experience to illustrate what I have said concerning the authority of God's word. After I left the Christian Church, I went back to Brookport, Illinois, where I had preached for the Christian Church several months before. I went to see one of the good ladies of the Christian Church, president of the "Aid" I think. We were sitting on her porch talking about why I had made the change. Among other things this conversation developed:

"Sister, I noticed when I was preaching over here that you folks sing in your worship to God. Why do you sing?"

She said, "The Bible says so."

I then asked, "Sister, I noticed that you gave of your means —money, and have the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. Why do you do these things?"

She said "The Bible says so."

I then replied, "Sister, I then noticed that you had instrumental music in the worship and the Aid Society in the work of the church. Why do you do these things?"

Her only answer was a red face and a quick catching of the breath. However, I will say to her credit, she gave as adequate and as reasonable an answer as any of her preachers could have done, or as good an answer as any of them can do tonight. I submit this in all kindness.

"NO PLACE TO STOP"

A great change has taken place in the Christian Church since that day I walked out nearly twenty years ago. I go back to Murrell Boulevard in the fall 1950 for a meeting, the Lord willing. I was there in a meeting in 1937 and assisted them in getting the church of the Lord Jesus Christ started off in that same building. At the close of about a month's meeting we took over the property in the name of the church of Christ, as the Christian Church had ceased to function there. It is a beautiful building. Alonzo Williams is preaching there now and has done a wonderful work the past several years. But, as I started to say, there have been many changes in the Christian Church since 1929; and many of you here tonight who

were members, and some of you who are members of the Christian Church, will know I am telling the truth. It grieves me to have to make such a speech. There is more modernism and spiritual corruption among you now than ever. There is more worldliness among you than ever before. It is growing worse and worse and will continue to grow worse. *When you give up the authority of God's word there is no place to stop.* I plead with you to give up the things you know are without authority of God's word and take your stand upon the foundation of the Book of God.

THE DOWNWARD ROAD OF APOSTACY

My friends, departures from God's word, in church organization, resulted in the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church. Would you argue with me about that? I think not. Departures in church organization resulted in putting the Pope upon the throne and the establishment of the Roman Church. Every departure from the truth, as far as I know, had its beginning in the organization of the church and then from there spread out into other fields. I say once more, when the authority of God's word is given up there is no place to stop.

Let us have a care. History does sometime repeat itself. Let us be careful in the field of education, in the field of benevolence and in the field of evangelism. Institutions, brethren, do not reform. I hoped twenty years ago that I would be able to save that congregation I was preaching for. I was unable to make an impression on them to that end. Many of them came along as months and years came and went, but they did so individually. There is no way to go out and convert people on a wholesale basis and turn whole denominational bodies over. There is no easy way to build up the church of the Lord in the world. There is no easy way to convert the world. Victory comes most of the time as Churchill said, "Through blood, sweat, and tears." Men and women must be of earnest anxious hearts, enthusiastic souls who refuse to quit when quitting would be easier. Institutions fail sometimes and break up, but reform them, never! It cannot be done.

THE WORD OF GOD SUFFICIENT

I am told the church did pretty well in the first century. What do you think about it? Oh, if we could, with all our modern machinery, do half as well! The first century church got along pretty well without instrumental music and seemed to prosper without human organizations of any kind—just the church with its elders, deacons and members. I have strong suspicion that the Lord knew what the church needed then, and gave it all it was ever to have in order to propagate itself in the world. Yes, the word of God is sufficient—read it from II Timothy 3:16-17.

Brother Hardeman made a statement at 19th and Broadway church of Christ while in a meeting there, that made a profound impression on me. Brother Hardeman stated in the conclusion of a sermon one night:

"Here we are, and here is the Bible. You come and watch us in our worship of God and in our work for Him, and if you find us doing anything in the work or worship of the church for which we can not give a 'Thus saith the Lord' we pledge you that we will quit it. On the other hand, if there is anything which you think we ought to be doing, if you read it to us from the word of the Lord, we will begin it."

"Well", I thought, "I can say that and do that."

So the next Lord's day at Murrell Boulevard Christian Church I proceeded to say the same that I had heard Brother Hardeman say, and ended up with the assertion that if that congregation would not so do that I would do so anyway—regardless of their action. That statement means more and is bigger than I had thought. It was loaded with dynamite, but I knew that if I could not harmonize myself with that principle that I might as well give up claiming to believe the Bible.

Brethren, what is your attitude tonight? Can you brethren here in Fort Worth make the statement just referred to? Is there anything we are doing for which we can not give a "Thus saith the Lord"? Is there anything we are leaving off for which scriptural authority can be given? What is our attitude toward God's Holy Book tonight? May God help us in promoting these principles throughout the whole world.

I have never for one moment regretted my stand, taken at the cost of the loss of many dear friends. I have wanted very much to teach those of my former connections the full truth, but have at no time longed to go back and practice with them that which the Bible does not authorize. I left the Christian Church because of its unscriptural teachings and practices and plead with them even now to give it up, too, for the very same reasons. Come out of it, my friends, and call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways. May God bless this present effort to that end.

Addenda On Instrumental Music

THE LAW OF EXCLUSION

1. J. M. Pendleton, D. D., in his "Church Manual, designed for the use of Baptists Churches," in discussing infant baptism, brings out the point I have in mind concerning the "Law of Exclusion." He says: "It may be laid down as a principle of common sense, which commends itself to every candid mind, that *a commission to do a thing authorizes only the doing of the thing specified*. The doing of all other things is virtually forbidden. There is a maxim of law, that *the expression of one thing is the exclusion of another*. It must necessarily be so; for otherwise there could be no definiteness in contracts, and no precision in legislative enactments or judicial decrees. This maxim may be illustrated in a thousand ways. Numerous scriptural illustrations are at hand. For example:

"God commanded Noah to make an ark of gopher-wood. He assigns no reason why gopher wood should be used. The command, however, is positive, and it forbids the use of every other kind of wood.

"Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac for a burnt-offering, he was virtually forbidden to offer any other member of the family. Aye, more, he could not offer an animal till the order was revoked by Him who gave it and a second order was given, requiring the sacrifice of a ram in the place of Isaac.

"The institution of the Passover furnishes an illustration, or rather a combination of illustrations.

"A lamb was to be killed—not a heifer.

"It was to be of the first year—not of the second or third.

"It was to be male—not a female.

"Without blemish—not with a blemish.

"On the fourteenth day of the month—not some other day.

"The blood was to be applied on the door-post and lintels —not elsewhere."

Pages 81, 82.

Dr. Pendleton gave other illustrations and examples from the Constitution of the United States, showing that "the expression of one thing is the exclusion of another." While his argument completely removes "infant baptism" from even a remote possibility of being acceptable to God, the same maxim as surely excludes instrumental music. Let us apply Pendleton's argument to mechanical music and note the results.

There are two kinds of music in the world. If God had not expressed Himself on one kind, no kind would have been excluded. But God did express Himself, and *SPECIFIED* the kind of music to be used in His worship. Singing (vocal music) and instrumental (mechanical) music are the only kinds of music in the world. The fact that God specified singing is enough to exclude any other kind. You ask: "Where did God say not to use mechanical music?" Well, where did God say: "Thou shalt not use hickory, ash or elm in making the ark, Noah?" Where did God say: "Do not offer a pig, cat or dog in the Passover, Moses?" When God specified gopher wood he excluded all other kinds of wood. When He designated the lamb for the Passover, He excluded all other animals. When God authorized *SINGING* for the New Testament Church, He excluded all other kinds of music. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "By him therefore let us offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." (Heb. 13:15; See also Col. 3:16, 17; Jas. 5:13; I Cor. 14:15; Heb. 2:12, etc.).

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE WORD OF GOD

1. "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or men?....." (Matt. 21:25). A correct answer to this question would have gone far in settling the issues between Jesus and the Jews. John the Baptist said: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3: 27). Where did the authority to use instruments of music in the worship of the New Testament Church come from? Heaven or men? It did not come from heaven; hence, we should not receive it.

2. In Acts 20:20, Paul the apostle said: ".....I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.....", and in verse 27 he continues: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In keeping back "nothing profitable" and in declaring "all the counsel"—advice of God, the apostle did not authorize—give them instrumental music for the worship of the church, hence, it is not in "the whole counsel of God" to the church is, therefore, unprofitable.

3. "Whosoever transgresseth (goeth onward—Revised Version), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). Does the "doctrine of Christ" teach the use of instrumental music in the church worship? It does not. Then, can we use it, and not go beyond or transgress the teaching of God's word? We must "*abide in the doctrine of Christ*" to have God. But we cannot "abide in the doctrine" and practice things not taught. Instrumental music is not taught; hence, he who practices things unauthorized in the "doctrine of Christ"—HATH NOT GOD."

4. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17). The scriptures furnish us "unto all good works," but do not furnish us the authority for instrumental music. Therefore, instrumental music is not among the "good works" furnished by scriptural authority.

THE ORIGIN OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHURCH WORSHIP

1. The American Cyclopaedia says: "Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches in western Europe about 670: but the earliest trustworthy account is that of the one sent as a present by the Greek emperor Constantine Copronymus to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 755." (Vol. 12, p. 688). So we can see that instrumental music did not originate with the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit, but by the Roman Church without the authority of God's word.

2. No argument was ever presented in favor of mechanical music until AFTER it was introduced and practiced. Hence, it could not have been put into the worship to please God, but man. It is kept there for the same reason. Gal. 1:10 says:

".....for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED

1. *Did not the Jews of the Old Testament use instrumental music in their worship?* Yes, it is true that mechanical music was used by them, as shown in many Old Testament passages. But we are living under the New Testament, and we are concerned only with what it teaches and authorizes. I would not know how to go back to the Old Testament for instruments of music and not also observe the many other things authorized in the same book, such as: burning of incense, the males going to Jerusalem three times a year to worship, animal sacrifice, polygamy and many other things tolerated and even commanded in the Old Testament. See Gal. 3:16-25; Col. 2:11-17; Heb. 1:1-3; 7:11; 8:1-13; 10:1-10. There are many other passages but these will show definitely that we are not under the Old Testament.

2. *Will there not be instruments of music in heaven?* If there are or are to be, we should wait until we get there to play them; then we can play them by God's authority. Here upon earth we cannot, for God has nowhere authorized such for New Testament church worship. If we go to the book of Revelation—a book of symbols, for literal, material harps—

instruments of music, why not accept also incense, the beast, horses, etc., as literal and use these things in church worship?

3. *If you have instruments of music in your home why do you not have them in church worship?* In this connection read I Corinthians 11:19-34. Here you find an apostle rebuking the church at Corinth for doing, "when ye come together in the church," what he told them to do "at home". "If any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation." There are many things we do at home which we are not privileged to do in worship. The home is governed by moral law; the church and its worship by direct religious law. This is so obvious I shall comment no further.

4. *Does the Bible say not to use mechanical music?* Please see section on "The Law of Exclusion." The Bible does not, in just so many words, say: "Thou shalt not dance, gamble, sprinkle babies, burn incense in the worship or pray to the 'Virgin Mary'." Are we to conclude, therefore, that these things are permissible? I fear even though the Bible did say, "Thou shalt not use instruments of music," that many would disregard it and use it anyway. Such are they who say, "We want it and we are going to have it." And they do, for the word of God and its authority is not important to them. What surprises me is that such a person would claim to love God and respect His will. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

" 5. *Would not a proper translation of Rom. 15:9; I Cor. 14:15; Eph, 5:19, and James 5:13, furnish authority for instrumental music?* I have used in this addenda, the Authorized (King James) Version and have referred to the Revised Version. The King James Version was translated by forty-seven of the world's ripest scholars. The Revised Version was translated by one hundred and one of the greatest scholars of their day. To reject their work, one hundred and forty-eight of the world's greatest scholars—the cream of the world's scholarship, could be nothing short of a repudiation—a setting aside of our English Bible. If they did not give us a correct translation of the verses under consideration, how could we trust

them in giving us a true translation of the "Sermon on the Mount"?

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP MUST BE BY FAITH

Acceptable worship must be of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). All we do in the work and worship of the church must be directed by faith. How do we obtain faith? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If there is any other way to get faith I have never heard of it. Since it is true that faith comes by hearing God's word, in the absence of God's word there can be no faith in things Christian. That is, if God's word does not teach it we cannot believe it. In II Cor. 5:7 we read, "For we walk by faith and not by sight." Of course we must have faith before we can "walk by faith." But since faith comes by hearing God's word, and God's word does not teach instrumental music in the worship of the church, we cannot walk by faith and use it any more than we could, by faith, burn incense, pray to the "Virgin Mary" or anything else not taught in the New Testament. Note the following with reference to these three verses:

(1) In the absence of God's word there can be no faith;

(2) In the absence of faith we cannot walk by faith;

(3) Walking without faith we cannot please God. These things being true and the word of God giving no authority for the use of instrumental music, we cannot use it and please God.

The writer would be pleased to discuss any other question on this subject of interest to the reader in person or by mail.

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