

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

June 5

2011

Editor's Note: The following article was written by brother Patton many years ago but it could have been written last week as the thinking of men has not changed and the word of God certainly has not changed. (JH)



The Modern Religious Trend

In the days gone by, most people's religious activity was the result of conviction. Today, conviction has little to do with one's religion. This, of course, is a great departure from New Testament Christianity.

The apostles and other early members of the church had convictions. They were moved by conviction and were even willing to die for their convictions. In fact, many of them died horrible deaths rather than renounce their convictions.

Today, if a man has convictions—believes with all his heart that a thing is right or wrong religiously and stands firm for his convictions, he is branded as fanatical and narrow-minded. With most people in this age, it is “out of place” to consider anyone wrong in their religious activities. One who does so is said to be “narrow,” “egotistical” and “fanatical.” Thus, the modern trend is to consider every system of religion as pleasing and acceptable to God—regardless of what its doctrines and practices might be. The following are illustrations of this modern thinking in religion.

Some time ago, the dean of the University of Alabama told a large gathering that, “The churches cannot preach the same gospel to its children now that they did 40 years ago and expect the same kind of

children.”

From this statement, it seems the Dean thinks the old gospel has become ineffective. Since the New Testament reveals only one gospel, if another is taught today it would have to originate with man. But, in the minds of many people, it's perfectly fine for them to try to direct their own steps religiously even though the Bible says this is impossible (Jeremiah 10:23). This is the modern trend. But one must remember that the New Testament says, “*If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.*” (Galatians 1:8-9).

Again, The Birmingham News (Dec. 1, 1944) carried an article by William T. Ellis entitled, “Churches of World Developing Non-Denominational Viewpoint” in which the following statement was made: “The universal church turns many aspects to the variety of **human needs and tastes** (Emph. HP). Some of the new and growing emotional sects, for instance, make an appeal to the common people that is entirely lacking in more formalized churches. So long as both groups greet each other as brothers in Christ, we may be content.”

The writer goes on to say, “At a Sunday School convention a man said to me, ‘It's sort of funny, but although I was brought up a United Presbyterian, and was well indoctrinated with my church's distinctive teachings, when I moved to a new suburb which had only a Lutheran Church, which I joined, I found no real difference in it and I am as good a Lutheran as I was a United Presbyterian!’ That man learned that Christ is in all churches.”

These statements certainly picture the modern trend of religious thought—any and all systems of religion are pleasing to God—Christ is in them all. In other words, according to modern religious thinking, it makes no difference with God what we are or what we do religiously.

In the December, 1944 issue of The Way of Life, A. E. Emmons, Jr. wrote a timely article concerning a statement made by a newspaper editor who said, “When a great preacher preaches, few hearers can tell even what church he belongs to—religion is just as simple as that—it belongs to no one, yet it is the property of all for the asking.” This editor had the same idea of religion that we have noted in this article—anything will do.

But this modern trend of religious thinking contradicts every passage of scripture in the Bible that warns of false teachers and doctrine. In Matthew 15:9, Jesus said, *“In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* In verse 13 of the same chapter, he said, *“Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”* The modern trend teaches that there is no such thing as vain worship and none will be rooted up because Christ is in all churches and those of all different faiths are brothers in Christ.

But the apostle John says in 1 John 4:1, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* Peter says, *“But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways.”* (2 Peter 2:1-2).

Again, the apostle John says, *“Whosoever transgresseth 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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* (2 John 9-11).

If all churches were abiding in the doctrine of Christ, there would not be such religious division as now characterizes the religious world, for His doctrine does not cause division. Where division exists, someone is not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. Yet the modern trend says Christ is in all churches. But the apostle says, *“Whosoever...abideth not in...doctrine of Christ...hath not God.”* What shall we accept—the modern trend of thought or what an inspired apostle said?

In the above passage from John, special reference is made to those who deny *“that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”* (2 John 7). Jews today deny that Christ has come in the flesh. As a result, John says they *“have not God,”* but Mr. Ellis says in his article that he has worshipped in Jewish synagogues and his conclusion is that *“Christ is in all churches.”*

It is impossible for one to believe these verses of scripture and at

the same time hold to the modern trend of religious thought. As much as we would like to consider all churches as constituting one big brotherhood in Christ, we cannot do it and still be guided by the scriptures.

The scriptures teach that Christ came to this world where he made the supreme sacrifice, shedding his own blood for remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). He then commanded his apostles to *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16).

In Acts 2, when those believing people repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins, they were added to the church by Christ (Acts 2:38-47). Christ established only one church (Matthew 16:18) and it is only by baptism into Christ that one enters that church. (Romans 6:3-5; Ephesians 1:22-23).

When one is baptized into Christ, he enters the only church Jesus built and when one obeys from the heart (Romans 6:16-18) he is a brother in Christ to all who have done the same.

No matter what the religion, if one has not done these things, he is not a brother in Christ—regardless of the modern trend of religious thinking. My prayer is that people will be more interested in being led by the scriptures rather than the popular notion of the day.

✍️ Herschel E. Patton

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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study.	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship.	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship.	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study.	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

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