

**Overcoming the Present Apostasy (4)**  
**How do we view the Local Church?**

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**Introduction:** There is a revolution going on in the denominational world.

- A. There is a movement that is centered in “vineyard churches” that claim to break the “traditions” of the past and make “worship” the focus of the assemblies.
  - 1. When this movement speaks of “worship” they mean specialized teams of singers and performers. Choirs, bands and plays make up most of what is done in these groups. Surveys are taken to find out what men desire.
  - 2. I was listening to a denominational broadcast this week where an older preacher talked about the beginning of this movement and how it become the norm.
    - a. He saw that the songs shifted from an emphasis of the nature of God and approaching Him to an expression of how the “worshipper” felt!
    - b. He maintained that most of the songs were very shallow at best.
    - c. The “preaching” was limited to a very short talk of little Bible depth.
  - 3. Today most churches now have separate services for “traditional” and “contemporary” worship. The house church movement imbibes this spirit also.
- B. There have been several “house churches” in recent years begin from faithful churches through the influence of LaGard Smith’s writings. It has a similar focus.
  - 1. The “rigid-rules” of our “traditional” assemblies are discarded for a more casual interpersonal exchange and dialogue.
  - 2. In Bowling Green Kentucky several FC students have been pulled into the movement. Recently a friend’s daughter had to change roommates because her previous roommate was pulled into this movement. Her new roommate had the same experience as well.
  - 3. These groups observe the Lord’s Supper in a more personal context like you would a meal.
  - 4. You will see few of these students ever coming back to faithful churches. These house churches are “half-way houses” to denominationalism.

***1. Worship is to be given to God!***

- A. Worship must be God centered, not man centered.
  - 1. We need to be asking the question: “What does God really want?” The answer is: “Our Hearts!” (**Micah 6:6-8**)
  - 2. We become like what we worship. (**Psa 115:4-8; Psa 135:15-18**)
  - 3. Sadly men are encouraged to “shop” for churches like you would for clothes or a restaurant. Our only goal is to seek God. (**Heb 11:6**)
- B. God has designed worship as the primary means of keeping our hearts right!
  - 1. Could we come to services and the end result be worse for us? (**1 Cor 11:17**)
  - 2. What does God see and think about our worship? (**1 Cor 11:27-31**)
  - 3. Occasionally I hear of a brother who had great Bible knowledge who fell into a web of sin. How did that happen? First look to his worship.
- C. We must have a worship that looks upon God and exposes our hearts! (**Heb 4:12-13**)
  - 1. What do you think of when approaching God in prayer? The Lord's Supper?

Singing? Bible Study? (Mt 15:8-9)

2. Proper worship tests the heart! (1 Cor 14:24-25)

3. Many people try to stay busy and avoid their consciences. These do not like to be alone with God! A neglect of worship will lead to an indifferent hardness.

## II. Are the "non-traditional" worship services in harmony with God's will?

A. Does the Bible approve of singing groups or "worship teams?"

1. The singing of the Bible is for a specific purpose. (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)

a. We "speak", "teach" and "exhort" one another. This involves the teaching of God for each of us. (Eph 5:18, Col 3:15)

b. When we are with other Christians we are to sing to each other! When you see "one another" passages in the Bible you are seeing a "reciprocal pronoun" which indicates participation of everyone.

2. We are to sing our hearts. We must mean the words we sing! (Eph 5:19)

3. When you take all God has said on this subject this is all God has authorized. How will we glorify God? (Col 3:17; Eph 5:20)

4. Every Christian present should have an opportunity to sing.

5. Why have special groups? One church in Montgomery used hidden microphones to amplify the voices of their "best" singers.

6. Singing groups are being used in many churches to prepare Christians to accept false teaching.

a. This alone would not make singing groups wrong.

b. Some groups use their voices to make instrumental sounds. This is an attempt to prepare brethren to accept instrumental music in worship.

c. Singing groups are used to promote an "inter-denominational fellowship."

B. Does the Bible approve of plays and drama performances?

1. What is the purpose of a play?

a. In our society plays are dependant upon good writing and good acting.

b. A class may use role playing as a teaching tool. Here the ones participating gain the benefit.

2. We need to think these things over very carefully.

C. Does the Bible approve of applauding as a sign of approval?

1. The Bible teaches that there is a proper way to express approval in worship.

2. There is a place for amen! (1 Cor 14:16-17)

3. There was a setting in the Old Testament where God specifically instructed his people to say amen. (Deut 27:11-17)

4. Why say amen? It should be a true expression from the heart as a result of understanding and conviction. Should someone say: "Let's hear an amen?"

5. All that we do must seek the edification of the hearers and not just for a carnal excitement. (1 Cor 14:5,26,40)

6. What does clapping indicate?

a. There is no uniform meaning in any culture! How then can it edify?

b. When used during songs it often indicates an excitement over the music in a carnal way.

c. If we can clap with our hands could we not also use drums?

“In such churches the ordained worship practiced for so many years now becomes a source of embarrassment and efforts begin to "jazz-up" their worship by incorporating things seen in denominations. Out goes the old traditional songs and in comes new "contemporary music," even with instrumental music many times. Preaching and teaching is dull, so we bring in "drama." All of this is very pleasing to the carnal mind and entertaining. Before long each act is being applauded and often singing is accompanied with rhythmic hand-clapping. The "change agents" who are initiating such changes are not satisfied with the church as it has been through the ages.”

(THE CONFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST?, Richard Guill, Seek the Old Paths)

D. Pentecostalism and emotionalism has made great inroads in some churches.

1. I heard Harold Comer talk about the “youth rallies” at a college in Florence.

2. Now some are claiming to have “spiritual gifts!”

“Sitting under the tent at the Red River, New Mexico, Family Encampment June 22-26, 1996, ..... The raucous, hand clapping, joking, laughing, casually-dressed crowds and speakers bore no resemblance to New Testament Christians in demeanor nor doctrine. My reaction was one of profound sadness and righteous anger for what heretics are doing to the body of Christ....”

“... Three predictable patterns emerged in all of the speeches.

1) The speakers believe in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

2) They believe and preach a subjective/experiential religion.”

“.... Full of himself, Shipp made joke after joke while relating a string of personal experiences and saying the Holy Spirit delayed a man's flight in Oklahoma City so Shipp could talk with him. The climax of his clown-act in this three-ring liberal circus was the evening he had the audience "give God a standing ovation." Like sheep plunging into a canyon after a blind leader, the audience arose and clapped for God -- all except those of us from Arapaho, Oklahoma.” - (Baling Up The Liberals, Jerry C. Brewer - Seek the Old Paths)

3. Emotions by themselves are not reliable. (**Prov 14:12; Jer 10:23; Acts 26:9**)

4. Emotions should be a by-product of faith.

a. Where does faith come from? (**Rom 10:17**)

b. When you stir emotions without faith, where is the foundation upon which to live even when you do not “feel like it?”

E. Brethren are encouraged to attend denominational conferences that are dynamic and emotional. This is a first step to planting seeds of discontent.

1. Do you approve of women preachers?

2. Do you approve of instrumental music?

3. Do you stand for the one baptism of Ephesians 4?

F. Consider the “Gulf Coast Getaway” attended by students at Auburn and other campuses.

1. One man posted a picture of a Christian group singing with guitars with the crowd standing with their arms in the air and made the following comments:

“If I were to give titles to my pictures I would probably call this one "Can You Believe

This is a CoC Conference?" During the regular (A Capella) singing, I never saw so many hands lifted up. My husband and I have been going to a CoC for about 5 years now and I was amazed to see how radical the students, staff and guests were. I come from a VERY free style of worship (vineyard) and it has been very hard for me to conform to the style of CoC....but this weekend gave me hope. I saw passion, conviction and an outpouring of humility that I never thought i would see at a CoC event. I also sought out some things this weekend that will forever change my life and my mindset on how I live my life. This weekend was incredible and I can't wait till next year!!!"

**Conclusion:** Who are we trying to please?

A. If it is the applause of men, then it will be the only reward we will receive.

1. Jesus noted that this attitude was common! (**Matt 6:2, 5, 16, 18**)

2. Why are you here? (Illus. A young girl's piano recital)

B. Brethren let us humbly bow ourselves before God so that we may clearly see.