

leads away from the clear teaching of the Bible. **Editorial, *Gospel Advocate*, February 2007, 1006 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210.**

SUMMER CELEBRATION 2007

This refers to the summer lectures at David Lipscomb University - July 4-7. This year one of the featured speakers is Lynn Anderson. Brother Anderson is the preacher that announced in Abilene in 1973, *“the church of Christ is a big sick denomination; I mean a big sick denomination.”* Of this slander against the bride of Christ he has neither repented nor hung his head in shame, but through the years has continued to propagate the same.

Another featured speaker is Randy Harris of Abilene, TX, who co-authored with Rubel Shelly *THE SECOND INCARNATION (TSI)*. Brother Curtis Cates, wrote a review of this book entitled, *THE SECOND INCARNATION, A PATTERN FOR APOSTASY* (Cates Publications, 5512 Cottonwood Road, Memphis, TN 38115, 1992) in which he concluded, *“Regretfully and sadly, the liberal, modernistic human philosophies of the second incarnation and of the pilgrim church are now being espoused and propagated throughout the United States, indeed the world, by Rubel Shelly and...Randy Harris. Published by Alton Howard, their book is titled The Second Incarnation. Readily transparent, as the objective reader examines these theories, will be the fact that they are in direct contradiction to and constitute an outright rejection of the pure Gospel of Christ, the faith for which we are to contend. The philosophies are not new; what is new is that such modernism is being tolerated by so many (Cates, p.19).*

In the late '90s while brother Harris taught at DLU I wrote him three times asking him to renounce the philosophy in TSI and asked, if not, then for him to defend such in a public forum, but he had no interest in doing either. I do not know nor would I charge that *all* the other speakers agree with these errors, but their names are of public record so you may check out the list at (<http://lipscomb.edu/summercelebration>). (JW)

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BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS

Alan E. Highers
Editor, The Spiritual Sword

False teachers must be a particular concern of God because there are so many warnings in His word against these predators. Even in the Old Testament, there are multiple admonitions in regard to false teachers. *“Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting”* (Jer. 23:32). *“When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him”* (Deut. 18:22).

In the New Testament, these warnings are renewed and re-emphasized. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (I John 4:1). *“But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers”* (II Pet.2:1).

THE MANNER OF FALSE PROPHETS

Not only are there warnings in God's word against false teachers, but there also are admonitions regarding the manner in which these individuals do their work. Most students of the Bible probably are more aware of the warnings than they are of the methods that are described. Let us give attention to **how** these false teachers accomplish their purposes. Jude 4 says *“there are certain men crept in privily,”* literally, *by the side door*. They creep in stealthily, not to be noticed. We should all recognize that false teachers do not enter a congregation with a sign around their neck or a warning painted across their forehead. No one says, *“I am a false teacher, and I am here to destroy the peace and unity of the church.”* Instead, they fashion themselves as *“ministers of righteousness”* (II Cor. 11:14).

False teachers prefer to work behind the scenes until they have garnered sufficient support to make their move. Often they know that their beliefs, aims, and purposes are not in harmony with the congregation, but they work quietly and steadily to gain converts. They learn to keep quiet about their views until they have established themselves and won a following. Only then, as a rule, do they openly advocate their positions and mold the congregation in their own image. The apostle Paul warned that *“after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the*

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flock” (Acts 20:29).

No one spoke with clearer vision about the methodology of false teachers than the Lord himself. Jesus said, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves”* (Matt. 7:15). The wolves prey upon the sheep, but they do not *appear* to do so because they wear sheep’s clothing. What seems to be a sheep really is a ravening wolf, greedy for power. *“Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, that they may get dishonest gain”* (Ezek. 22:27). The motivation for the false teacher is not always financial gain; it might be power, glory, attention, recognition, or the praises of men. Ultimately, however, the fruit of false teaching is not the enrichment of the believer. The false teacher merely *uses* the sheep to satiate his own desires.

WARNINGS FOR TODAY

Every Christian, every preacher, and every elder should be watchful in our own day. It seems a congregation is never more at risk than the time that it selects new elders or chooses a new preacher. Elders should not be chosen solely because they are good at business, successful in the world, or respected in the community. All of these qualities are admirable, but it is truly important for an elder also to be a student of the word, able to convict the gainsayers, and capable of recognizing a departure from the faith. We live in a day of widespread apostasy. The duty of elders to tend the flock of God is crucial for the time in which we live.

EVOLUTION OF A DEPARTURE

When the Richland Hills church in Fort Worth, Texas, filed its Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of the State of Texas on November 2, 1967, there was no doubt where the church stood. It was “formed for the purpose of the promotion and support of religious, divine and Christian worship as taught by the New Testament...it being understood that the basic fundamental principles of this Corporation and the religious worship and education to be conducted in connection therewith, shall, in all respects, conform to the teaching and examples contained in that part of the Holy Scriptures known as the New Testament, *without any additions to or subtractions from...*” (emphasis supplied). Under Article 4(e), it is stated, “That *no mechanical instrument of any kind whatsoever* shall ever be used in connection with the song service or worship or work to be carried on or conducted by said congregation or religious body” (emphasis supplied). In Article 5, it is further provided: *“In the event any Elder of the corporation at any time shall fail to subscribe to the teachings of the New Testament, as set forth in ARTICLE FOUR hereof, then upon such a determination by a majority of the Elders of the Corporation, he shall automatically become disqualified and dropped as an Elder of the corporation.”* From all of the above language, it is readily apparent that the Richland Hills church took a strong stand in opposition to the use of instrumental music in the worship, even to the point of disqualifying an elder who failed to observe this provision.

Another document was filed with the Secretary of State on February 1, 1994, entitled *“Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation.”* It was declared that this document superseded the original Articles of Incorporation.

Under Article 4, it was stated: “The purpose for which the Corporation is organized is for the purpose of engaging in religious worship and promoting the spiritual development and well-being of individuals.” In Article 5, Section 6, the definition of the church speaks of “members of which group or body have been immersed in water into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins...to assemble on the first day of every week to honor God and spiritually edify each other by observing the Lord’s supper; by studying the Bible, by contributing, by praying to God, and by **singing songs of praise and edification without the use of mechanical instruments**” (emphasis supplied). So, for approximately 27 years, from 1967 to 1994, the Richland Hills church operated with a clear policy that no mechanical instrument of music would be used in the worship. Upon amending and restating its Articles of incorporation in 1994, the church once again declared without equivocation that “singing songs of praise” would be “without the use of mechanical instruments.” This further affirmation of conviction remained in effect until November 16, 2006, at which time *another* amendment was filed.

The new amendment deleted Article 5, Section 6, in its entirety and substituted a *new* Section 6, which provided in pertinent part for “members...which...have been immersed in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins...who assemble every week to honor God and spiritually edify each other by observing the Lord’s supper, studying the Bible, contributing, praying to God and singing songs of praise and edification.” For the first time in nearly forty years, the Articles of incorporation *deleted* the provision which declared that worship would be “without the use of mechanical instruments.” It did not take long to act. Within *three days of filing this change*, it was announced to the congregation that there would be an instrumental service and communion on Saturday nights. Did the elders break faith with those who established, built, and sacrificed for the congregation for the first forty years of its corporate existence?

These events are recounted so that every member of the body of Christ may have a clear picture of the path to apostasy. *Spiritual Sword*, April, 2007, 1511 Getwell Rd, Memphis, TN 38111

Editor’s Note: The above introduces the second quarter edition of the Spiritual Sword for 2007 (April). It deals candidly with the dangers facing the body of Christ from change agents who fervently desire to corrupt the worship of the church. Let me urge you to order a dozen or more (at the address above) to give to your children and your friends. Read it with them and discuss it. This is a fight for the souls of our loved ones.

Changes abound

Neil Anderson, Editor *Gospel Advocate*

What’s going on in the church today? The operative word continues to be “change.” Last year was marked by numerous unity events across the country promoted by an organized group of well known leaders within churches of Christ and independent Christian Churches. These events created a public forum for an agenda that includes changes in worship, fellowship, and church government. Additional followers were enlisted with whitewashed, man-made compromises, but without achieving a biblical based unity. This

year, quietly but methodically, their agenda continues to widen into a more aggressive stage.

Reports are being circulated of alarming changes taking place throughout the brotherhood — once a closely knit body of believers. The Richland Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, announced December 3, 2006, they would “add an instrumental worship assembly with communion on Saturday nights” (*Christian Chronicle*, January 2007). This in itself is sad because some, both those within and outside the church of Christ, will laud this departure from the faith as a progressive, monumental achievement because it occurred within what was the largest a cappella congregation in the United States.

This most recent action taken by Richland Hills came as no surprise because they have been flirting with the use of instrumental music for years. Several other churches of Christ have already incorporated instruments into at least one worship service each week as well as in youth activities and special events. Some of these churches have openly stated their desire to distance themselves from their religious heritage.

I find also alarming the statement of Rick Atchley, senior minister for Richland Hills, who indicated that inclusion of instrumental music into worship would “inspire many other Churches of Christ to be courageous in their kingdom efforts, and it could help stem the tide of gifted young leaders who are leaving.” He added, “I know this: If our fellowship stays on the course we’re on, our future looks bleak. Someone has got to be a leader” (*Christian Chronicle*, January 2007).

To encourage others to “follow the leader,” several people have told me that Atchley and Dudley Rutherford, senior pastor of the Shepherd of the Hills Church in Porter Ranch, California, send letters accompanied with a DVD to many a cappella churches of Christ. They were asked to view a sermon featuring Jeff Walling, in which he advocates unity between non-instrumental churches of Christ and instrumental Christian Churches.

The issues raised in the past year affect us all. Each member of every congregation is called to answer the challenge. Either we will follow the Lord’s teaching or we will follow a religion of man’s own creation.

Christians must fortify their faith. Study the Bible. Know God’s will regarding worship. Any human initiative that contradicts God’s message must be rejected. We must remain true to the Word of God.

To introduce instrumental music into churches that believe a cappella singing is God’s way is unacceptable, especially if the aim is to appease the desires of everyone. You cannot have it both ways. It is either/or, not both/and as is accepted by the Richland Hills church. No congregation is immune to this travesty. Apostasy is infecting churches of all sizes through cunning words and perversion of the Scriptures. In some instances brethren have been told, “If you don’t like it, leave.” Those whose faith and resources have built and sustained the church are being forced to relinquish their convictions if they stay.

Think what happens when instrumental music is brought into the worship of a church whose nature is to sing without an instrument. There is no longer unity in the body but only division. You now have a church that worships in vain. Adding instrumental music in worship is just one more way to foster apostasy.

As much as unity is desired, we cannot accept unity at the expense of abandoning truth. Believing that the Lord has provided a clear and sufficient pattern in Scripture, we must reject every compromise which