

Neither Protestant nor Catholic

It's pretty easy to see that this congregation or church is not Catholic. There is no Roman priest in charge of the parish or nuns to serve, no Vatican connection or leader status for the Pope, and no incense or infant baptisms in our worship and work. Since it is obvious we are not Catholics most will say we must be Protestants.

The assumption made is that Christians are either Catholic or Protestant. If you are not one you must be the other. But we are not Protestants either. We are not of the Protestant Reformation that protested the excesses of the Catholic Church and sought to reform it. Beyond Catholic tradition and Protestant theology we are, simply, Christians.

We understand that this sounds strange in a religious world complicated with so many denominations. If you ask a man today what he is religiously he doesn't say "I am a Christian." He says he is a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or a Pentecostal. In the New Testament followers of Jesus were content to be, simply, Christians (Acts 11:26).

Christ's people were described by God in several ways in the Scripture, long before Catholics and Protestants existed. To God they were His children (1 John 1:1-3). To Christ they were His disciples (John 8: 31-32). To each other they were brothers (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). And to the world they were, simply, Christians (1 Peter 4:16).

We are not claiming to be the first denomination, the best denomination, the most conservative denomination, the non-denominational denomination, or a denomination at all! We simply follow the New Testament to be Christians, in the unity Christ called for (John 17:21) as an invitation to the world, there for all to see.

- by Robert Hines

Visual Aids

Bible class teachers are increasing their use of visual aids, especially in children's classes. This is good, in its place. If I did not think so, I would protest. When Christ wrote in the sand, He approved writing on a chalk board, a piece of acetate, etc. The spoken word is only one of the many ways of teaching.

God made visual aids vital in His plan. What are His visual aids? Us! "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Our light shines brighter and makes much stronger impressions on the minds of children and adults than any overhead projector, or film strip.

The trouble with most of the things we consider visual *aids* is, you can't take them downtown, or out to the Mall. Folks have to come to the building to see them . . . and, they won't, as a rule. That is why their use is very limited. But, as God's visual aids, you and I aren't limited to a six foot extension cord. We're in the Mall, and in the homes of unconverted friends. Most folks we meet have heard the basic truths of God, but . . . they haven't seen them. "We are His workmanship . . ." (Eph. 2:10). We work hard to make our poster boards and cut-outs attractive. Do we work equally hard to make our lives even more attractive? We are His living epistles, bringing Him glory or shame, wherever we go. Can we shun that constant duty? No! "Show yourselves in all respects a model of good deeds . . ." (Tit. 2:7). Now, that's a kind of "show-and-tell" that is both approved of God and highly effective. It is how the gospel was spread in the first century, and it is still God's chosen visual aid.

- by Dwain Laws

Something's Not Right

When teachers of error are praised and teachers of truth are condemned, something's not right. When compromisers of truth are commended for their "wonderful attitude" and defenders of truth are charged with self-righteousness, something's not right. When false doctrine goes uncontested and truth proclaimed is called "traditionalism," something's not right.

Yes, all of these things are going on and something's not right. Men can verbally declare their soundness all they want, but when they show more support for those who teach false doctrine and compromise the truth than they show for men who courageously proclaim and

defend the truth something's not right.

- by James Hahn

Preventive Maintenance

Technical people, engineers, and others in the industrial field speak of "PM" – meaning preventive maintenance. They may think that they were the inventors of the whole idea, but Grandma knew and faithfully practiced the old adage "a stitch in time saves nine". And it's still true, whether it be a sock with a hole that needs mending or an expensive factory machine that must be maintained. But it also applies to our eternal souls.

That's right, men's souls need "PM", too! Like other things, if the soul is left unattended it will soon be in a sad state of disrepair. Look around, and see a world full of folks whose lives suffer from careless neglect of the most important possession they have. Closer to home, it is possible to see some in the church who show signs of this same disregard.

The Bible serves as the divinely inspired 'service manual' for the souls of men. Following its guidance we learn of a way which is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Failure to know and obey these laws leads to "everlasting destruction" (2 Thess. 1:8,9).

The old sock finally wears out - nothing can be done - throw it away. The factory machine is now only a rusted hunk of metal - scrap it. Man's soul is mired in sin - can it be saved? YES! "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). Through faith and obedience there is salvation for all, even those who have long neglected their eternal soul.

- by Greg Gwin