

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

"You Can't Legislate Morality"

Of course, if we are talking about making people change and adopt godly values merely by acts of legislation, it is true that morality cannot be legislated. Legislation doesn't necessarily or automatically change a person's basic values and attitudes. Yet, our civil laws should reflect correct principles of morality! Two fundamental functions of civil government (as ordained by God) are: {1} The punishment of evil doers, and {2} The praise of those who do good. {See 1Pet. 2:13,14}. How can government identify, apprehend and try "evil doers," without laws against evil doing? How can government praise and protect "those who do good," without legislating against evil and in favor of good? We can and must write, promote and enforce laws based on what is morally right. And, we must penalize immorality, so far as possible. God calls for "the punishment of evildoers" and "the praise of those who do good."

- by Warren E. Berkley

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16)

When churches try to lure people to their services by means of gimmicks and big promotions, they make a big mistake. Bingo parties, musical entertainment, films, dinners and such like, only cheapen the gospel in the minds of thinking people. A bigger attendance may be the short term effect, but less respect for God is the long term effect. If you gain souls by carnal means, then carnal means will be needed to hold them. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of GOD unto salvation, and though fewer may respond to it, salvation is only therein.

- by Whit Sasser

Pardon My Intrusion

Please pardon my intrusion into your life. I cannot honestly regard it as an intrusion at all, but that you so consider it is painfully obvious. My object is not to waste your time, or rob your pleasures, or thwart your plans, or interrupt your schedule or interfere with your life - as you think

- **BUT TO SAVE YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL.** And you do have a soul - an inward man, a spirit made in God's image, never ending, destined to spend eternity in hell or heaven.

Your life tells me that you have time for other matters - your job, your family, your body, your pleasures - but none for your soul. Your schedule tells me that you are interested in other realms - business, family, education, civic, social - but not in the spiritual. Then when I try to visit with you and to talk with you about God, Christ, the Bible, and your salvation, when I try to get you interested in your own soul, you seek to make me feel like I am imposing. Your conduct and your attitude speak clearly: "Leave me alone. Stop bothering me. I wish you wouldn't come to my house. Get out of my life and get off my back." But I can't do that until I have exhausted all efforts and am convinced that it's hopeless. If your soul isn't on your conscience, it is on mine. God wants me to care - and try.

- by **Bill Crews**

Making Plans

A financial planner observed that most folks spend more time planning their summer vacation than they devote to planning their most important lifetime goals. That is, without doubt, a sad but true fact. How can we hope to succeed in life without planning and goal-setting? If you want to be a successful student, businessman, politician, etc. - it takes planning!

Surely this same point can be made in regards to our spiritual service to God. In fact, it may be even truer in this particular realm. We might even say that some folks appear to spend more time planning what they will do after supper on a given night than they have ever spent charting their plans for serving God. It's a sad situation, to be sure.

The problem is that we have gotten our priorities out of order. Notice what Jesus said:

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where withall shall we be clothed? . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:32,33)

Do you see it? Jesus said that we ought not to worry about the things that we most often do worry about. And, He said that we should give careful consideration to our spiritual work - putting it first in our lives.

Christian, are you making your plans to be faithful to God and to be active in His service? Have you spent any time lately planning about the things that are really most important?

- by **Greg Gwin**