

CHANGES CAN CORRUPT

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Consider the stirring words of Amos 5:21-27:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.

The changes that had occurred in Israel's worship were corrupting changes that contributed to the demise of the kingdom. Observe, number one, they were worshiping God; number two, their worship was formalized with observance of "feast days" and "solemn assemblies;" number three, previous worship to God was offered over a lengthy period of time, i.e., "forty years;" number four, current corrupt changes caused God no longer to accept their attempts to worship him; and number five, God was going to punish them for their departures from his word.

"Contemporary Culture" is being viewed by those who teach in institutions of higher learning among churches of Christ training young preachers as the new evangelism. The old means such as radio, television, and the printed page are out for many congregations advancing what they see as this new evangelism. No longer will error and its proponents be confronted privately and publicly with a "thus saith the Lord." Getting inside their lives, meeting their needs, doing things the way they do things, and talking like they talk (even to the asinine point of urging the use of ebonics at Harding Graduate School of Religion by white people when working in predominately black areas of town), is believed to appeal to the lost through their culture and win them to Christ and his church!

Concentration on "contemporary culture" yields to "contemporary worship." While "contemporary worship" is being heralded as a matter of worship style and taste preference that breaks out of the mould of "traditionalism"—like, for example, a set order of worship, all it boils down to is nothing more than a harmonization of denominational practices which they call worship. I have invited people to attend

the worship with the church of Christ who are accustomed to arriving at their denominational church on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock and not leaving until two or three o'clock in the afternoon on a good day! A smile usually broadens across their face when I suggest that we know what we are doing in churches of Christ in worship to God. There are five avenues of worship commanded in the Bible, and when these sincerely and satisfactorily have been engaged we conclude usually in an hour or so. We do not have to holler and scream like the prophets of Baal and play around with an amalgamation of medleys accompanied by a host of musical instruments and shout disconnected thoughts into a microphone hoping that somehow the Holy Spirit will come down and make sense of it all for those present. Yet, dissatisfied and unhappy with "worship in spirit and in truth" and "orderly worship," Christians with years of faithfully worshiping God are turning away into the morass of futile, confusion and contradiction that has accompanied denominational practices from their beginnings.

Careful to conceal their sources, current "change agents" are being viewed as committed and creative when the truth of the matter is they are cheap copycats of the current craze of religious charlatans. A case in point comes from the writings of a bestselling religious author and church guru named Rick Warren. (Rick Warren is a Southern Baptist preacher trained at the Dallas Theological Seminary.) In the wake of Bill Hybels' super-church, the Willow Creek Community Church, Rick Warren arrived at the same methodology and allegedly independently of any knowledge of the Willow Creek Community Church. (His ego parallels that of a politician in recent years who in his zeal for office claimed to have invented the Internet.) He is of importance in the present discussion because he has authored three books that have become church manuals in churches of Christ advocating contemporary everything from culture to worship. His books/manuals are *The Purpose Driven Church*, *The Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, and *The Purpose Driven Life*. Why do members of the churches of Christ need to know about these books? Because the changes they suggest are being implemented in local congregations without the leadership being informed of the source of these new things. For example, have you been hearing about "forty days of prayer"? Search the New Testament for such a practice and you will come away with nothing akin to it but a statement from the apostle Paul, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11). Read *The Purpose Driven Life* and there it is! Forty days of prayer. A local church of Christ in Memphis recently advertised the use of this book in one of its classes in their church bulletin. Such "changes can corrupt" and will continue to corrupt.

Conscientious commitment to the inspired word of God is commanded in II Timothy 3:16-17, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works,” because “changes can corrupt.”