

THE FORMATION OF CHRIST'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM IN THE WORLD

Thoughts shared in an interview with Washington Post reporter Neely Tucker
by Charles Doughty

This treatise was written after the trial in a civil court between the minister and elders of the Maryland Ave. Church of Christ, Harrisonburg Va. Instead of going to Scripture and finding truth as to the role of the preacher and elders in a congregational kingdom of Christ, they went to a court of law. The name of Christ was dragged through the mud and the truth of the New Testament suffered great loss. The whole trial stemmed from who had power and control over Christ's heritage.

This trial is an antitype of the first apostasy that occurred through the murder of the preacher-evangelist and the rise of monarchial bishops after the First Century. The Papacy is not only in Rome; it is potentially in the heart of every elder of a local New Testament congregation who is ordained to the work as a humble servant but who, like King Saul, betrays the Lord with a ruthless ambition and unscrupulous quest of power in order to be a lord of the flock of Christ. The slashing, scourging, bruising, slicing and penetrating wounds of crucifixion are still being inflicted upon the BODY (ekklesia) of our Lord in the world today. Christ took our part in giving His life as a propitiation for the wrath of God, and to this day He has never taken His part against His enemies. It is the job of His called servants to stand up and take His part, and what causes such grief and agony to my soul is that we are doing a very poor job of it. Especially we who are called "evangels," stars in His hand (Rev. 1:20), who are responsible to deliver the message of the King to His congregational Kingdom, have of late fallen down greatly on this job. Because of this, I simply cannot stop weeping in my soul.

Charles Doughty, October 21, 2010 AD

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH

"Whatsoever you bind on earth will have already been bound in heaven. Whatsoever you loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven." (Mat. 16:18)

The Christian Kingdom is so uniquely different from

any thing that man has known or devised that those who prophesied the origin and establishment of it on earth had to use metaphors, allegories and parables. The Prophets employed this method of speech quite frequently. Such speech appealed to a person's spiritual heart.

Jesus, THE Prophet used parables, and explained why He did so. In effect, the parable disguised the communication before the conniving minds of the enemy, and revealed it's truth to the friends of truth. A spiritual Kingdom spells doom to Satan, the prince of the world, and archrival of the God of Heaven and Earth.

One of the most popular, yet most misunderstood doctrines of the New Testament is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. From the context however, it appears that Blasphemy of the Spirit is opposition to the establishment of the Spiritual Congregation of Christ. When the Jews accused Jesus of casting out demons in the name of Satan, Jesus said, "A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." Satan is a spirit, and he knows that mere military power is not enough. A wise enemy tries to divide the opposition before conquering. It is in this context that Jesus spoke of blasphemy.

THE VISION OF ZECHARIAH IS A FACSIMILE OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE CONGREGATIONAL KINGDOM IS ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED ON EARTH.

Soulis anthropoids delight in their own religious industry, art, creativity, wit, business, might and power. There is no doubt in my mind that Zechariah, in Chapter Three is addressing the way in which Christ would establish His Kingdom on earth. According to Daniel 9:25 the first seven weeks (49 years) of the construction was accomplished with great discouragement within, tremendous opposition without, and very limited resources at hand. Joshua and Zerrubbabel were led of the Spirit of God, Cyrus the King of Persia was led of the Spirit of God, and the Prophets, Haggai, Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah were led of the Spirit of God. Hence the famous statement,

"Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, thus saith the Lord!"

The people did not get serious about the work until 16 years after they returned from captivity. Then they encountered fierce opposition from the Samaritans and Arabs and the work stopped. It started again and with a trowel in one hand and a spear in the other the workmen finally got much of the work done.

But then Antiochus Epiphanies (around 168 B.C.) came according to Daniel's prophecy (10:21-31) and left the temple ramshackle and abominated. In the days of Herod, prior to the coming of Christ the temple was rebuilt, and just a few years later, in A.D. 70 (Daniel 9:27), the temple was abominated and desolated by Prince Titus. It was trodden under the feet of Gentiles and would continue, through the possession and erection of their own pagan shrines, until the time of their fullness (Luke 21:24). This is an obvious reference to the end of the age and the conversion of the last Gentile.

"Bring these rebels who would not have Me to reign over them and slay them before Me!"

IN ORDER TO EXIST AS CHRIST'S KINGDOM, THERE MUST BE A DARING DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT, SOUL SEARCHING OF SCRIPTURE WITH FERVENT PRAYER, AND RATHER THAN MAN PLEASERS, PLEASING THE LORD ONLY.

The Kingdom MUST be 100% spiritual, or no Kingdom at all. The time is coming when men will not worship in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim. God is Spirit and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

God cannot dwell in temples made with hands. Even when we gather together in a building for teaching, fellowship, communion, prayer, and gift giving we are not in a physical kingdom. It was the biggest stumbling block in the world for Judaism to move from temple worship to spiritual worship in living tabernacles. They would not do it and they could not do it, because they would not fall on the crumbled stone of the desolated temple, the stones fell on them and crushed them. Carnal worship always crushes the worshipper.

Thus, Solomon's temple was built with the aid of thousands of workmen, great wealth and resources and no opposition. Herod's temple likewise was constructed

with unlimited tax funds, support of the populace, and the political protection of Rome.

The temple of Zerubbabel (Ezra. Nehemiah and Haggai) could not have been built without the miraculous aid of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit hovered over the creation of the universe, so He hovered over the long, tedious, and arduous work of clearing the rubble, laying the foundation, building the walls, erecting the temple, building a moat and, constructing a new city. It was this same Spirit that came down on the Day of Pentecost and directed the affairs of Christ as He would have them done on earth in Acts Chapter Two.

Indeed, the prayer,

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," was answered on that day of Pentecost. Every kindred heart was of one soul and mind (Acts 2:42-47). It would have been inconceivable for anyone to even think of taking a brother or sister to a court of law.

THAT WHICH DOMINATED DANIEL'S BURDEN OF THINKING AND WRITING WAS THE FORMATION OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH.

THUS, EVEN MORE SO, SHOULD BE THE BURDEN OF THINKING, WRITING AND SPEAKING IN OUR HEARTS TODAY BECAUSE WE ARE LIVING IN KINGDOM COME.

The second block of Daniel's time line was sixty-two weeks (434 years). This would bring us down to Herod's reign and the birth of Jesus. Jesus would establish a Temple and Kingdom made without human hands. It would be a spiritual temple.

Carnal worship always crushes the adherent. Carnal worship consists of man-made laws, ritual, liturgical form, heartless ceremony, demanding and expecting reverence from worshippers that is only due God, religious clergy-tinkering with the Bible in order to achieve power and control, changing Bible words dealing with servant leadership in order to form a hierarchy such as a shepherd "Pastor." In Scripture he is just one of many servants in the congregation who are equal. But one man in quest of power seeks to be THE Pastor, chief Pastor or Chief Shepherd or Head Pastor.

THE DEVIL'S METHOD OF OPERATION-CHANGE AGENCY. WISTING WORDS TO MEAN WHAT THE DEVIL WANTS THEM TO MEAN.

The classic example of this is the meaning of the word "ekklesia." The Holy Spirit gave this word in the context of a "called out assembly." That is exactly what it meant and exactly what the early Apostles, Preachers and Deacons took it to mean. The word "church," taken from the word "kirk" entered the religious world in the 12th. Century. Most scholars know this, but the sinister power behind this word is obvious when the scholars even translate the word "church" in non-Biblical historical records. For instance my Holman Bible (page 1731) has a photo of the archeological reconstruction of an immersional "baptisterion" in what is called The Church of St. John at Ephesus. The historical record has it, "The ekklesia of St. John." The word "kirk" (simply meaning 'building') had not yet appeared in history, and was completely unknown to the ancient Christians. They met in buildings, but they called the assembly, "ekklesia." The building was inconsequential.

To take one step further, you will notice that they associated the "assembly place" as The ekklesia of Saint John. The guess of the scholars is this "building" was constructed around the 4th Century. In the First Century all assemblies were known as "Ecclesias of Christ" (Romans 16:16).

Furthermore, the word "saint" in the singular is never found in the New Testament. Of the more than 66 times it is found it is always "saints" in the plural. The letters to the ekklesia "assembly" always addressed the "saints" (Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:2, Jude 3). The only reason the monarchical bishops wanted to make saints out of the Apostles was to draw attention to their own status as they usurped power over the "church." John was a saint, but in no greater sense of the word than the lowest, poorest of covenant Christian disciples. Read Revelation 22:8-9 and learn with John the lesson given by the commentary of an angel, "I am a fellow slave, along with you (John), the prophets and those who keep the sayings of this book."

There is a curse on those who have the audacity of making elevated saints of mere human beings; Christ alone is involved in the saint making business. Baby-

lon became a world power through the rise of elevated Bishops, and elevating Apostles to special sainthood in order to draw attention to their own power. This is why the Apostles will especially rejoice when The Elevated One, The King of Saints, will come with His saints and bring down into the pit those who blasphemed James, Peter, John, Paul and the other apostles by a flimsy, human ceremony of making saints of those already sanctified by the blood of the Lamb. They were undoing what Christ already did.

"Rejoice over her, heaven, and you saints, apostles and prophets because God has executed your judgment on her." (Rev. 18:20).

This is a reference to the prophecy of the Roman Church (Babylon), who tried to draw attention of their glorified sinning clergy by canonizing the Apostles whom Christ had already made saints.

The sea-going beast of Revelation 13, representing pagan and later papal Rome was given a mouth to speak boasts and blasphemies. He was given authority to act for 42 months (one of five designations describing a great Dark Age for the people of Christ and the whole world).

"He began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme His name and His dwelling-those who dwell in Heaven."

"Those who dwell in Heaven" is a reference to the Apostles. When Rome began canonizing these men they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. They canonized them as saints, and yet would not do a thing they taught in Scriptures. In fact, they contradicted the Apostolic Word by teaching original sin and damnation of infants, sprinkling babies instead of immersing adults, teaching penance, a separate clergy priesthood, confession to a priest, the infallibility of the papacy, extreme unction, the worship of Mary, her Sinlessness, and ascension to Heaven with hundreds of other doctrines and a catechism that contradicts the Apostles Doctrine outright.

AND IT ALL STARTED WITH WORD CHANGE AGENCY.

Probably the most devastating change was done to the word "ekklesia." The apostles used the word chiefly as a local, called out assembly in a certain city.

“What is in it for us?”

It all started with the first Ekklesia at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 11:22, 26.) We read further in Acts of other local assemblies- Acts 13:1 (at Antioch), Rom. 16:1 (at Cenchrea), I Cor. 1:2 (at Corinth) and so forth in every city mentioned thereafter. Sometimes the word is used of the collective aggregate of saints throughout the world and in Heaven (Heb. 12:22-23). In this last passage, the New King James translates “Assembly of the Firstborn” correctly. Others call it “church of the firstborn” which is a shame. But there would be no worldwide and heavenly aggregate of saints (all born again Christians are sanctified) if there were not separate, congregational assemblies in the Kingdom of Christ on earth. They are loosed from their sins while on earth. No one can be loosed after death.

But the Devil changed the understanding of the word from the original Greek “ekklesia” to the Latin “ecclesia” and, in time, corrupted its meaning to “Ecclesiasticism.” Instead of a local assembly of Christ it became a pyramid hierarchy with priests (from the Old Testament concept mixed with pagan cultic priests and their rituals), Bishops, Arch Bishops, Metropolitans, Cardinals, and finally “The Pontiff Maximus,” who was declared the “head of all holy churches” (caput omnium sanctarum ecclesiarum) by Emperor Justinian in A.D. 533.

Basically the Devil offered a swap to the leaders of the early ekklesia. Consider the following parody:

“Give me the ekklesia!” said the Devil.

“What will you give us in exchange?” said the self appointed bishops.

“I will give you the best church buildings money can buy,” replied the Serpent.

The high and mighty Bishops scratched their heads and enquired, “If we call ourselves ‘church’ what will you call the ekklesia?”

The Devil grinned and responded with a gesture of confidence, “I will call it ecclesiasticism!”

Already half convinced by the wiles of the Devil, the bishops could hardly wait for the Serpents answer:

Realizing that the snare trap was now ready to be unloosed, the Prince of this world rejoined immediately,

“When people think of ecclesiasticism they think of power. You Bishops will have power with Emperor Theodosius, Emperor Constantine, Emperor Justinian, and all of the nations of the world. You will preside in lofty affairs of State. You will even receive huge funds for operation from state tax revenue.”

All of the Bishops smiled in fiendish glee. Only one humble Bishop hung his head and stated how uncomfortable he would be with such a power structure operating as the Lord’s Kingdom he volunteered what little Scripture he knew-

“You know Satan, that Paul addressed the ‘Bishops’ when the word simply meant ‘overseers’ of the local flock at Ephesus and told them, “Feed the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. ‘Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among whom the Holy spirit has appointed you as overseers to shepherd “pastor” the ‘ekklesia’ of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

“And men from among yourselves, will arise with deviant doctrines to lure The disciples into following them.” (Acts 20:28-30)

What I am saying Satan is that if we swap the simple ekklesia for your power seeking, power hungry ecclesiasticism, the Lord’s flock will be deprived of the Holy Spirit and spiritual power!

The Devil grinned, and then blurted out,

“I AM MANY SPIRITS!” (Rev. 16:14, 18:2).

If Peter graduated from being an Apostle to being an Elder (2 Peter 5:1), and he did not use his authority to push other elders around, striving for an honor to be an ecclesiastical arch-elder, then who but the proud and haughty Devil could have put it in the hearts of elders to strive for monarchical rule over others of the flock and worse yet, strive to be a bishop over a diocese or state.

Peter makes it clear: “Shepherd God’s flock among you (not a para-‘church’ structure) not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God’s will, not for the money but eagerly: not lording it over those who entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd (this is the only time arch-shepherd is given) appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (I Peter 5:2-4).

John Doughty makes an interesting comment on how the Third Council of Ephesus fulfilled Paul’s prophecy of Acts 20:29. He said that from among yourselves (the Elders of Ephesus) would arise ravenous wolves, not sparing the flock and drawing disciples after themselves.

This actually happened at the Third Council of Ephesus where the Bishops from across the Roman World came. Their chief purpose was to vie for honors with the Roman Emperor, Theodosius. One of their main purposes in solving the “Mary, Mother of God” controversy was to impress the emperor with their arguments and political intrigue. “Mary, Mother of God” won out at this council and the worship of Mary became an ecclesiastical dogma.

How strange that Paul’s prophecy was fulfilled in the same city that he addressed the elders of Ephesus, and how ironic that it was in this same city that the worship of the Mother goddess “Artemis” was destroyed (Acts 19:23-41) only to be started again at the Third Council of Ephesus under the worship of Mary, alias the Mother of God.

ONCE CHANGE AGENCY TAKES PLACE: THE WORD IS COINED AND LOCKED IN FOR ALL TIME

Restoring a Bible word back to its original meaning is not the task of moral cowards and spiritual weaklings. Paul said it best in I Corinthians 2:13,

“We also speak those things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.” (I Cor. 2:13).

As a remnant in any generation, restoring New Testament Christian and congregational polity is the most formidable task of the Age. It takes a daring depen-

dence upon the Holy Spirit of God, a diligent searching of Scriptural texts and meaning of words in the Greek. The restorer must look to God in prayer at all times and not be prejudiced by the will and soulish spirit of the natural man who does not understand these words and thoughts of God (I Cor. 2:14).

WORD CHANGE AGENCY IN OTHER AREAS

The same word “change agency” is done with the word Elder. Instead of complying with Scriptural usage of being simply an older man, mature in faith and experience, the denomination splits into a new centralized government by putting an “ian” on the Greek “presbuteros” instead of the translated meaning. Another denomination splits and is formed by using the word “episcopos.” The word simply means overseer, but by interpreting it Episcopalian, the Anglicans can break away from the Catholics with a new government power structure. The power and control of the denomination rests in the multicolored robed mortals who think they have a mandate from heaven to usurp authority over God’s heritage. In reality, the only legitimacy they have is what little they say about Jesus Christ in order to keep their gullible, blind followers in check.

Paul met with the collegium of elders (always in the plural for there was no head elder, leading elder or presiding elder) at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Paul loved them and they loved Paul. He said the Holy Spirit appointed them as Overseers. Here we see there is no difference between an elder “presbuteros” and “overseer of the flock” “episcopos” or “bishop” (Latin); they both refer to the same man. Because of sloppy scholarship in view of these names, and an insane grasp for power we know that two hierarchies, Presbyterian and Episcopalian came into existence. Not only were these “church” governments unauthorized by God, they were guilty of “word weaseling;” they ignored the rules of language and Greek syntax; two forms, two non-Scriptural governments based on the words that describe the service of the same man.

Titus was to set the ekklesia in order (Titus 1:5) and ordain elders in every city. Timothy and Titus had a very close working relationship with the Apostle Paul. Paul called them sons, fellow soldiers and witnesses. Barnabas was a close associate to Paul in his first missionary journey.

“They appointed elders in every ekklesia and prayed with fasting. They committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” (Acts 14:23).

TO TESTIFY TRUTH UNDER OATH OF DEATH

The word “testify” and “witness” comes from the same word “muarterios” and means to bear witness to the truth under oath of death. The apostles would testify concerning Jesus because they had been with Him from the beginning (John 15:27). Through the immersion of the Holy Spirit, The Lord gave great power to the Apostles (Acts 4:33). God bore witness to the Apostles with great signs, wonders and miracles (Heb. 2:4). Concerning the authenticity of the Gospel, John said, “And we have seen it and bear witness to it” (I John 1:2). Those who witnessed “Were beheaded for the witness of Jesus” (Rev 20:4).

The Apostles took the resurrection of Jesus seriously, they were willing to testify unto the death, “Wherefore we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15), and “We are His witnesses of these things (regarding the miraculous power and resurrection presence of Christ) (Acts 5:32, 10:39).

The Apostles were so convinced of Christ’s resurrection and life they lamented, “We be false witnesses” if Christ is not risen (I Cor. 15:15). They would be no better than modern day Jehovah Witnesses in denying the Godhead body of resurrection.

Christ gave power to His two witnesses (Rev. 11:3). Shortly after they finished their testimony, the Beast of Rome killed them (11:7), and continued to kill and dishonor them, allowing their dead bodies to lie unburied prophetically for 3 ½ days, 3 ½ years (Dan. 12:7), 42 months or 1260 days (Rev 11:2) or times, time and ½ time (12:14).

The “naos inner sanctuary” (true spiritual Kingdom of Christ) accepts the testimony of the witnesses. The outer court “hieros” wants them put to death. These witnesses correspond to the Apostle John in the tribulation, kingdom and patience in Jesus, when he was banished to Patmos because of God’s Word and his testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9). Pagan Rome killed and tormented the witnesses first, and then both the Roman world and Papal Rome carried on this attempt to make the evangelistic witness extinct.

The angels of the first ekklesias of Christ were the evangelists or messengers (Rev. 1:20 2:1,,8,12,18,3:1,7,14). Along with the permanent foundational servant administration of Apostles and Prophets, the continuing evangelist was given to the congregation by Christ (Eph. 4:11). Paul commanded Timothy to “Do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). This work was associated with afflictions. Phillip was an evangelist, and his daughters prophesied (Acts 21:8). Strong has the evangelist as being simply a “preacher of the Gospel.” Preaching is synonymous with evangelism (Acts 16:10, Rom. 1:15, 10:15,15:20, I Cor. 1:17, 9:16, 2 Cor. 2:12, 10:16, Gal. 1:8, 9,). The patron angel of the everlasting Gospel to be preached to the nations assures us that the Evangelist will be with us to the end (Rev. 14:6).

In that the New Testament is a more sure word of prophecy (2 Peter 1:19), and the gift of prophecy is fulfilled by the Evangel (Rom. 12:6), we should not despise prophesying (I Thes 5:20). I understand these verses not in the sense that the evangel can foretell future events, but as Revelation 19:10, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The evangel should have such a grasp of New Covenant Scripture that his hearers are convicted by the word as though Jesus Himself were in their midst. Thus, the evangel sees sinners fall before the Lord, or turn against him with the same crucifying hatred our Lord experienced. Those who seek power, money, control and glory will hate the humble evangel that teaches Apostle’s Doctrine. John the Apostle called himself a fellow slave (Rev. 19:10). In a local, congregational assembly such a man as Diotrephes can withstand apostles doctrine and even attempt to expel from the assembly those who do.

I take the Christ given work of the Evangel to be at first associated closely with the Apostles and Prophets. Evangelist Timothy was to “Be not neglectful of the gift that was in him through prophecy, by the laying on of the elders hands” (I Tim. 4:14). It is possible that Timothy had a supernatural endowment because Paul also laid his hands on him (2 Tim. 1:6).

It is the Biblical model and precedent for the prophet to have a companion such as Aaron and Moses, Elijah-Elisha, Paul-Timothy, or Silas and Timothy. The two witnesses were as ONE. This fact is indicated by the words, “Dead corpse” (singular) laying in the public square. Some translators think this is a manuscript er-

ror, but most translators do not understand apocalyptic language.

It appears then, that the Evangel continues the work that was done by the Apostles and Prophets. Although he was an Apostle, Paul called himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ and a slave. Paul loved to be called a preacher “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher” (I Tim. 2:7). He added, “Whereunto I am appointed a preached” (2 Tim. 1:11). When Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, He ordained and called Paul to be an Apostle and preacher. When Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, Silas and Epaphroditus accompanied Paul in his journeys (like apprentices) he was breaking them into the occupation of an evangelist. In His letters to Titus and Timothy he tells them to ordain Elders to oversee the affairs of the congregation.

It is obvious that the contents of Titus Chapter one and 1 Timothy Chapter three were read to the congregation. The candidate of the WORK of the eldership should desire it. The Evangel was not to lay hands on elders without considering his life and qualifications (I Tim. 5:22). Elders could labor also in word and doctrine, and since the congregation paid all elders, those who led out in these areas were worthy of double honorarium (1 Tim. 5:17).

Timothy was to preach, admonish, reprove, rebuke and exhort with much longsuffering. It is the Word that called the assembly into existence and it is ONLY the Word that can maintain it unto the coming of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:1). It appears from reading Revelation 2:20, and this charge that the Evangel is called before the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the preacher-evangelist will be around until Jesus comes to judge the living and dead by His appearing in His Kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). On the other hand, the Elder is made by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). When an elder walks in souliness or carnality, he forfeits his eldership and the preacher should receive a rebuke of the elder before witnesses (I Tim. 5:19).

The evangel-preacher is interested ONLY in this spiritual kingdom and this is precisely why so many carnal minded “church” members oppose him, and sometimes the Elders who out-number him, wishing to please the people, take the part of the opposition.

Paul and his evangel companions “Witnessed to both small and great” (Acts 26:22). All of us are witnesses in the sense that we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

Christ from death and the grave.

CRUCIFYING CHRIST GOES ON BY KILLING HIS WITNESSES

It was the testimony of Jesus that infuriated the powers that be. Paul speaks of testifying of the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). We testify with the original witnesses, that the Father sent the Son to the world (I John 4:14). The word “testify” is the same as to witness under oath of death.

A history of the work at Maryland Avenue reveals that on many occasions the Elders and people have found ways to hurt and kill the testimony of their evangelist-preacher.

Paul and Barnabas “Testified to the message of His grace” for some time in Iconium (Acts 14:3). Some are ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (2 Thes. 1:8). All through Revelation, people are commended or condemned to death for the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:2, 9; 6:9;11:7, 12:11; 12:17; 15:5;19:10).

We sometimes overlook the Evangel-preacher as one who brings a testimony or witness before us. Indeed, all priests of God are to testify, but a great burden of testimony always rests upon the shoulders of the evangel that stands in the pulpit (as the lecture of the synagogue) and spreads his testimony throughout the world. I can think of at least ten times when I had to lay my life on the line for what that testimony entailed and I would not change a thing. I do not hold my life dear in the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

The New Testament government was very simple in arrangement but powerful in accomplishment.

“Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

We see here the Ministry of Paul (an Apostle who was also a witness) along with Timothy (2:19) and Epaphroditus (2:25) who was their “apostle” messenger or commissioner of Christ. In his concordance, under the word “apostle,” James Strong makes a distinction between the Apostle as a sign and miracle working original apostle and an apostle in the ordinary sense of

delivering a message. The early Greek-speaking congregations would have understood this, but we refrain from using the word Apostle to define our minister because it may be misconstrued today. We have not discussed the ministry of the servant-deacons in this treatise because their roles are easier to understand.

That pretty much sums up the simplicity of the Government of the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ. You have the example of Timothy as the one who gives the message, as a model of the evangelists of Revelation 1:20 given to the congregational Kingdom for all time. This would correspond to the Ephesian 4:11 mold of Christ giving the Evangelist to the ekklesia, who along with the elders, would help equip the saints for the work of the ministry. They were to work together for the purpose of presenting the Body of Christ in unity, measuring up to the fullness of the great stature of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13).

If the elders say that Christ terminated the work of the evangelist in this passage, then the evangelist by the same argument could say the Lord terminated the work of the elders. Both servants are to exist side by side, the Evangel ordaining the Elder and the Elders ordaining the Evangel until Christ comes for His Bride. But that would be factitious and no Evangel would want to be guilty of such carnal behavior. But this is exactly what happened in the Second Century, when with the help of the Nicolaitanes “suppressing the people” (Rev. 2:6,15) the aspiring Bishopric found ways to Lord it over the flock of Jesus. The ultimate fulfillment of the philosophy of Nicolaitanism came when the Pontiff was crowned “Vicarius Filii Dei” (God’s substitute Son).

WHERE ARE WE HEADED AS A RESTORATION MOVEMENT?

Well, the Maryland Avenue debacle is an omen to us. Where do we go from here? Thousands of people are going to hear of the “Holy War” between preacher and elders in Harrisonburg. If we fail to receive a warning from God in this, we will be held accountable before His bar of justice.

There are still those who fully understand New Testament church polity. Almost all students at Christian Kingdom College understand it. All of the Elders and Deacons at the congregation of Christ at Mountain View understand it. But all of us are going to be accountable with what we do with this in our generation. Modern day New Testa-

ment Congregations are now divided over this issue. There are about four splits in thinking on this subject.

1. The one-man pastor system. This is probably the most popular government at present. The one-man pastor is pretty much in charge. If he has charisma and is a good dissimulator he can run the show.

2. The one-man pastor and a bullying eldership. This system puts the pastor in the position of being somewhat of a page boy. The elders tell him he has got to do everything and that is why THEY pay him.

3. The staff leadership. This system of government originated as a reaction to bullying elders, and at times deacons who thought they had decision-making authority. They vastly outnumbered the pastor and vetoed just about everything he wanted to do; so the pastor found a way to dissolve the elders and deacons altogether. He then appointed a personal staff (like a political cabinet) to control the “church,”

4. The Evangelist, Elders and Deacons. This is the New Testament polity, but it can only work through dependence upon the Holy Spirit, constant Biblical study and much prayer.

Because it is the method that Christ appointed, it must be built upon the foundation of Christ and His Apostles. This requires much attention to reading, both on the part of the Evangel (I Tim. 4:13 and the Elders. I sat through a 24-week Strategic Planning and Organization Planning seminar, studied Church Growth under Dr. Joe Ellis and wrote my own book on Christian Management, but have come to the conclusion that any man who has Holy Spirit discernment can learn these “growth” principles with a profound devotion to Scripture, love, caring ness, spiritual understanding and profound concern for the Brotherhood of Christ.

Preachers are driven to other “church growth” or comfortable leadership positions because they are intimidated by the carnal minded “popes” they encounter in New Testament congregations. They

are dropping the name “Christ” from the marquee and just calling it “church” with their own devised nomenclature such as church of the valley, victory church, cornerstone church, etc. They do not realize that if they did things Bible ways, called things by Bible names, led with Biblically designated leaders, God would bless them. If I do not teach, train and trust elders, they will turn against me, and that is partly my fault. If I inherit elders that resist the truth, then Paul said, “The Lord pay them according to their works” (2 Tim, 4:14).

If we call ourselves New Testament, we had better be New Testament. God holds us to a higher standard. People expect us to abide by the Word. If we do not, Jesus said,

- “I will come and remove your lamp stand from its place, if you do not repent!”(Rev. 2:5).
- “Therefore repent, or I will come and fight against them with the sword of My mouth” (Rev. 2:16)
- “Look, I will throw her into a sick bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her practices” (Rev. 2:22)
- “Remember what you have received and heard, keep it and repent, but if you are not alert I will come like a thief, and you have no idea what hour I will come against you” (Rev. 3:3)
- “I am going to vomit you out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:14)

I told Neely Tucker, reporter for the Washington Post:

“We are a very unique people. Christ has called us out of this world. We have no human creeds. We follow the New Testament in faith and practice. We are probably the only independent, autonomous religious group left in the world.”

I feel sorry for the lawyers, the Commissioner and Judge who must make a ruling on the rift between Elders and the preacher at Maryland Avenue. It brings a great reproach upon us. It causes blasphemy to the holy name of Jesus and crucifies the Body of Christ afresh.

But the Lord does not need us. He can do to us what He did to Judaism in 70 A.D. “Not one stone was left on the

other.” If we possess the audacity to call ourselves New Testament and act the way they do at Maryland Avenue, Christ will fight us with the sword of His mouth.

Many of us left ‘denominational hierarchies’ for the freedom of New Testament Christianity. But this freedom is not free. We must continue to read and restore what was lost in the Dark Ages. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and other reformers did not restore New Testament Christianity. They had no desire to do so. If we abuse our freedom, we will lose our freedom. I have witnessed in my lifetime a refusal of our brethren to restore the New Testament. To the contrary there has been retrogression among us. Like America, we are surrendering our historical, Christian values that go back over 3000 years to the call of Abraham, and 2000 years to Pentecost. For America, it can eradicate the America as we have known it, and for New Testament Christianity it can eradicate any attempt to restore the true faith, once delivered from Christ and His original Apostles (Jude 1:3). For this to happen in America will bring life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to an end. For this to happen to those who once called themselves New Testament Apostolic Christians, it means the end of their heavenly hope of the golden city built upon the foundation of those Apostles (Rev. 21:14).

Much of what I have written here was shared in a telephone interview with Neely Tucker of The Washington Post newspaper. Since I am writing from memory, much of what is written is an interpolation of that phone conversation. I am sending this treatise to Mr. Tucker so that he can read what was interposed. When we came to the conclusion of the phone call, I told Mr. Tucker:

“If we are not going to be a New Testament Congregation, we would fare better in the eyes of the Lord if we just left and went back to unscriptural governments that make no pretensions of proving anything by Scripture. Go back to the Protestants, Catholics, the Cults and Judaism. Otherwise, if we stubbornly refuse to obey Christ and His Apostles, we will suffer the terrible vengeance of His wrath!”

I once took a course on newspaper journalism at Kent State University. I remember the professor saying

that in order to do a thorough job we must learn to say: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

I was fascinated when Mr. Tucker asked, “Who?”

I answered, “What do you mean?”

Mr. Tucker then asked, “Who should leave the New Testament and go back to their former denomination?”

I replied, “Those who want to Lord it over God’s flock.”