

## GOD DEMANDS A DIFFERENCE

By

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“Now make us a king to judge us, LIKE ALL THE NATIONS” (I Samuel 8:5). This the Israelites requested of Samuel when they had failed to walk in the divine order that God had given them. When they became “like all nations”, that is, like the worldly organizations that attract the unsaved. When they desire to attract the teenager, they stage a “hootenanny” — folk singers, pressed hair, short skirts and all. When they desire to attract the college student, they imitate the sophisticated spiritual prudery of the college campus. The college student must be impressed by an “intellectual approach.” They know not that the college youth is sick of the false façade of the classroom, that the sophistication of so-called learned professors soon wears thin and the attempt of the church to imitate it appears cheap and silly. What the college student wants is somebody in the church who knows the Bible, and who is willing to teach it without the air of sophistry and arrogance that too often pervades the university hall. He is looking for the simple truth of the man of Nazareth. He goes to church, not to be impressed by men’s pride and prestige, but to be informed by God’s servants.

At least once a week the teenager and the college student should be able to find a place where is reflected the simplicity and humility demonstrated by Jesus and the apostles. Instead of imitating the classroom of the state school, run strictly on the secular basis and dominated by those who either intentionally or ignorantly are aligned with the god of this world, the church school must offer a refuge form the secular and violent world. It should be “not of this world.” There, if anywhere, the student needs to see uninhibited Christian faith, parents and teachers openly and humbly exalting the name of Jesus, and without any hesitancy teaching God’s word as the inexorable truth. There the student must not feel that the truth rests on egg shells. He must not feel that the Bible is at the mercy of unbelieving men, nor that the teacher adds weight to the Word by virtue of his pedantic prowess. He needs to see that the church is different. It isn’t like the world (the campus) at all. It is on solid ground, anchored somewhere far beneath the shaking sand of contemporary scientism and skepticism.

This is not to say that the church is to offer ignorant and foolish ideas in the place of intelligent teaching, nor that the teacher is not to be conversant with science and contemporary thought. The Bible is the composite of the true wisdom of the universe, and there is not place at all for a stupid or ignorant person in the church classroom. What I mean is that the church school is to offer truth of God without compromise and without trying to first win the favor and approval of the university professor, nor imitate a university atmosphere or attitude. The church teacher must know the Bible, not the quarterly, and this is a large requirement. If he is to impress the student with the truth of God, he must be one who spends a lot of time with God, poring over His word, considering how it applies to modern conditions and problems and seeking to live out that life himself. If such is the case, he will not be trying to impress a college student with the idea that he is like the worldly professor — that he is, after all, “like the nations.”

The Bible Colleges also have a tendency to become like the nations. The original idea of Bible College was to train young men in the Bible and to teach courses related to the needs of a minister. To fill this need, a great number of Bible Colleges have been established, often at great sacrifice by Christian servants. Many of these colleges continue to pursue this motive, but many others that receive their support for this purpose are now trying to become “like the nations” and appear to be more concerned with winning the approval of the world than in winning the approval of God. This is seen in the fact that many such schools place great emphasis on the goal of accreditation and recognition by non-Christian agencies of the world.

The desire to be “like the nations” is an obsession with many people. They measure everything by its acceptability with the worldly critics. They are like the president of a major Catholic women’s college who was quoted as acclaiming the lifting of the Friday abstinence laws by saying, “I’m for anything that makes Catholics less separated in public and civic functions.” She wants Catholics to be like the nations. This results in what Catholic editor Dale Francis calls “homogenized Christians.” They want to be able to blend in with the world, and yet still be regarded as Christians.

Many people do not realize how far their church has gone in this homogenizing process. They honor their preacher because he is honored by secular institutions. They think it a mark of success that he may be popular with every civic group, among whom the devout Christians may be a small fraction. They consider him hard-headed or narrow-minded if he refuses to “go along” with the world and if he opposes that which the Chamber of Commerce calls “progress.” They forget that Jesus said, “That which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

A young man recently criticized the church he had attended on the basis that it was more of a performance by preacher and choir than a worship service. This is because the church has tried to out-perform and out-entertain the world. In doing so, it adopts the world’s program and, instead of winning men from the world to the Kingdom of God, it merely becomes like the world.

There is a great deal of criticism directed against the Christian idea of piety. One who upholds Christian chastity, opposes bad habits and generally stands for godliness is smeared as a hypocrite. The true hypocrite, however, is not the one who stands for holiness and Christ-like character, but the one who rejects these things and yet claims to be a Christian. What many do not recognize is that this criticism is coming from anti-Christians, people of “the nations” whose aim is to destroy the church and the faith of the Christian. The half-truths and sensational accusations of these false prophets are immediately published in the leading magazines which are either owned or edited by the anti-Christ. Their express desire is to turn Christians from the object and goal of Christ, to have us measure our lives, not by the Word of God, but by the standard of the world. Jesus plainly said, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19).

The socialist goal of “equality” adds emphasis to the trend to be “like the nations.” While Christ teaches us to discriminate, to examine and “prove the spirits,” to “mark them which cause divisions and offences” and in many other ways to note the difference between God’s people and the devil’s children, the socialist doctrine would

have us wipe out all differences, break down all barriers and work for one homogenized society in which superiority and excellence are bad words.

The uniting of churches is an outgrowth of the desire to fulfill socialist goals of equality, for the churches to be not only like each other, but like the “nations” as well.

It is time for Christians to choose whether they want to “be like the nations” or to be like Christ. You can’t have it both ways. Obviously this world is at enmity with God. “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (John 2:15). There are two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, and “the whole world lies in the evil one” (I John 5:19). There are two ways: the broad way that leads to destruction, which the “nations” are traveling, and the narrow way that leads to life. We can’t walk both ways.

The choosing of a King, in order to be like the other nations, was the road to apostasy and defeat of the nations of Israel. It is the road to failure for all who choose it. Christ’s people, His church, is to be different. We are told to “be not conformed to this world” and to “come out from among them and be separate” (Rom. 12:2 & II Cor. 6:17). When we learn to do this, we will find that the approval of Christ outweighs all else the world can offer. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

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