

A Return to First Principles - Seven Reasons Why

by Hugh Kane

Hugh Kane's sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to return to first principles for true unity and scriptural worship.

Scripture: Isaiah 8:20, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 18:20, Acts 24:14, 1 Corinthians 11:24, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 2 Corinthians 6:17, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Church Reform", "Separation From Error"

Description

Hugh Kane preaches about the importance of returning to first principles and separating from unscriptural practices in the church. He emphasizes the need to question denominational names, the purpose of gathering, God's order of worship, the one-man ministry concept, the use of titles like 'Reverend,' the method of financing the Lord's work, and the growing apostasy in Christendom. Kane urges believers to come out from false teachings and practices, aligning themselves with God's truth and honoring His name above all else.

Transcript

reface

I am taught by the Word of God to be able to give "a reason" for the hope that is in me, "with meekness and fear." This I will endeavor to do with the Lord's help. The conclusions I have reached are the result of much searching of heart, deep thought and earnest prayer. When a servant of God leaves a free house and salary, and goes forth, "taking nothing of the Gentiles," trusting himself and family to God alone, for the supply of every need; with nothing to gain by way of ecclesiastical preferment of prestige, you will admit he has serious and conscientious convictions.

My decision hinged itself upon this question, "Is the position I occupy a scriptural one?" Around this question, on my knees, before God, the battle has been fought and the victory won. The issue was probably hastened somewhat, because of the deepening apostasy, which, like a thick fog, is fast settling on Christendom. On every hand we can see departure from the faith. Every fundamental doctrine of the Bible is either doubted or denied today. For a while I stood on the "inside" and protested, as many good men in the denominations are now doing, but finally I concluded that my place should be on the outside, that while I remained inside I was part of the corrupt mass of Christendom, which is steadily growing

worse, and over which is hanging impending judgment.

Therefore, in obedience to His word, I have gone forth unto Him "without the gate" (Heb. 13:13), trusting Him alone for all things -- after spending eighteen years in the ministry of the Baptist Church, in which there are many dear men and women of God, whom I love in the Lord Jesus.

None of them can say that I ever asked them to leave their denomination and follow me. Neither shall I do so; much as I desire to see them walking according to the teachings of God's Word.

Will the earnest seeker after the truth, carefully and prayerfully read this booklet, and compare its teaching with the scripture references given; as it is written only for their highest and best spiritual good.

My prayer for all the Lord's people is, that they may be delivered from legalism, tradition and worldliness, and be enabled to see the scripturalness, simplicity, and beauty of gathering unto His precious name alone. Only by a return to first principles can there be a God-given unity among the people of God. If in any measure I am enabled to help in this direction I shall be grateful. "To Him be the glory now and forever" (2 Pet. 3:18). -- H. Kane

A Return to FIRST PRINCIPLES

Seven Reasons Why

Let us consider some of the things that pertain to the ecclesiastical position from which I have resigned, and see if they harmonize with the New Testament precept and example. Men may reason, make deductions and come to certain conclusions; but should we not make this our one rule of decision, in everything that pertains to faith and doctrine -- "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Let us lay aside every preconceived idea, and come in simple faith to God's Word. Let the mind be open and unbiased, ready to receive whatever God, by His Spirit, may teach us, regardless of whether it refutes our former conception of what Scripture teaches or not. Every fair-minded believer will admit that this is the spirit in which to approach the Word of God. With this point conceded we will come to the consideration of the question, "Was the position I occupied a scriptural one?" In order to decide this question, we will have to raise a number of other questions, and in answering them, the issue will be decided. I concluded the position was unscriptural, for the following reasons:

1. Because A Denominational Name is unscriptural and should be disowned by all Christians.
2. Because The purpose for which God's people gathered in apostolic days is not scripturally observed, nor His Word obeyed.
3. Because God's Order of Worship has been substituted by human programs and innovations.
4. Because A one-man ministry is contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God, and hinders His operations.
5. Because The Title "Reverend" is a divine attribute. It is an arrogant assumption for any man to claim it.
6. Because The Modern Method of Financing the Lord's Work is not His way, and dishonors His Name.

7. Because The Apostasy of Christendom in character and destiny is such that God is calling to His people, "Come out" (Rev 18:4).

I. Because

A Denominational Name is unscriptural and should be disowned by all Christians. Is it right to take a denominational name, such as Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, and the like? In vain would one have walked the streets of Jerusalem, Antioch, or elsewhere in apostolic days, in search of a "church" with any of these denominational names on the notice board; nor any of those of recent years, such as Pentecostal, Nazarene, Seventh Day Adventist, Christian Science, Bible Students, Latter-Day Saints, and many others. But why try to enumerate them? Their "name is legion."

In apostolic days there was "the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). All those who were in fellowship with that church were known as "saints," "believers," "children of God," "Christians," etc. They bore the name of Christ alone and were satisfied in that name. Indeed, we read, they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41). As I leave denominations, I may be asked, "To what do you now belong?" My reply is, "Nothing but Christ." If I am asked where I worship, I answer "With believers in Christ, who meet in His name, according to New Testament simplicity."

Of course, Christendom and the world will persist in giving some appellation to all who disown man-made names and systems. But when we remember that our Lord was given the worst opprobrium that the religious leaders of His day could think of -- even Beelzebub -- surely we can bear any stigma that men in their ignorance may inflict.

If some person ignorant or evil-disposed, should persist in calling my wife by some nickname, that is no fault of hers. But if she should tack that name to mine -- persist in using it, in fact, be proud of it -- while I loved, protected and cared for her, and I was dishonored and grieved, she is to blame. What does our Lord Jesus think of us, and is not His heart grieved with such an unscriptural practice? You may treat it as a matter of indifference, but I assure you it is a matter of great importance. Jehovah attaches a great dignity to His name and its use. He is very jealous about His name. He wants us to own no name of human origin.

JOHN BUNYAN -- who is claimed by the Baptists -- was cast into Bedford jail, because he would not attend the Parish Church; nor would he use the prayer-book. He refused sectarian names. This is what he wrote in 1672, the year of his release from prison:

Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others. I will tell you I would be, and hope I am a CHRISTIAN, and choose if God will to count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost. And as for the titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians and the like, I conclude that they come neither from Jerusalem nor Antioch, but from hell, or Babylon.

They are not my words -- if they were you might call me intolerant and uncharitable. They are the words of the "immortal dreamer." As we ponder them, we cannot but wonder what denomination he would belong to if he were alive today.

MARTIN LUTHER -- Much abused in many quarters -- had many commendable points. Here is his protest against his name being used as a sectarian title:

In the first place, I pray you to leave my name alone, and not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul would not that any one should call themselves of Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name of the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; let us call ourselves only Christians, after Him from whom our doctrine comes.

Not only names of men, but titles after countries, customs, ordinances, and everything else should be rigidly disclaimed, and 'that worthy Name' alone acknowledged. How different today if this rule had been enforced from the time of its suggestion (1 Cor. 1:12-14; 3:3-7).

Almost every denomination in Christendom bears the name of its founder, or one of its distinguishing tenets. This is not according to the mind of Christ, whose prayer was "that they might be one" (John 17:11). To accept no name but His only -- to refuse every other name, would surely be a step toward that unity He so much desires. Why should the Church -- "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" (Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7), desire to be known by any name but His alone?

The children of Israel were commanded to worship in the place where Jehovah had "put His name," and in no other place (Deut. 12:5). Our Lord Jesus enunciated the same principle when He said: "Where two or three are gathered together in (unto) My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). There is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The apostles and early disciples confessed it, preached it, suffered and died for the sake of that Name -- "a Name which is above every Name" (Phil. 2:9). Dear child of God, discard every name that scripture does not warrant. It is blessed to be able to sing in truth,

"Now none but Christ can satisfy,"

None other Name for me;

There's love and life and lasting joy,

Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

II. Because

The purpose for which God's people gathered in apostolic days is not scripturally observed, nor His Word obeyed.

On the night of our Lord's betrayal He instituted the "Supper" -- a feast of remembrance -- and commanded them to do it. "And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24,25).

Did the early Christians come together on the Lord's Day merely to worship and listen to someone preach a sermon? New Testament usage clearly sets forth the fact that they came together to break bread and drink the wine in memory of their absent but coming Lord. That was the primary purpose for which they came together, though ministry and worship were included. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:43). "And upon the first day of

the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, ready to depart on the morrow" (Acts 20:7, R.V.).

Notice, they did not come together to hear Paul preach -- however great a privilege that might have been -- but "to break bread.") It was with that intent they "came together," as the text clearly proves. If this was their purpose, should it not be ours today?

This was the practice of the early church. In obedience to His loving and farewell request, they came together upon the first day of the week to remember Him. Surely, we want to remember, often, our absent ones, whom we love. We like to look upon some picture or emblem that reminds us of them, and the true Christian should upon the first day of the week, in simple apostolic procedure, meet to "show (proclaim) the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

That which occupied the most conspicuous place in the Assemblies of God's people then, was neither a "preacher" nor a "pulpit" but a "table", on which rested the symbols, "bread" and "wine". Those early believers were gathered unto Him (Matt 18:20). He was the magnet to which their hearts were drawn, and by which they were charmed and satisfied. The beauty of that method of gathering was its very simplicity. No arrangements nor adornments of men; no "altar services," no "priestly vestments," no specially "robed choirs," no rendition of elaborate and attractive music to tickle the fancy and please the ear. They had no one to lead their assembly worship but the Holy Spirit; He was sufficient; He directed their hearts to Christ. In "the beauty of holiness they worshipped Him, their Lord. This was worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). It was beautiful and God-honoring, because it was His own arrangement. The vainglory of the flesh found no place there. No one was seen but "Jesus only" (Matt. 17:8).

A well known and gifted Bible teacher in America wrote on this point:

Where is Christ when His people come together? He is there, where He said He would be: "in the midst". Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20, Gk.).

It is not "where two or three gather", but "where they are gathered". Men can gather in the will and energy of the flesh round any standard they may choose. But the Holy Spirit, is the gatherer of the saints, and He gathers them to the person of the risen and exalted Christ. If the assembly of the saints is to be according to His mind, it must be according to this pattern. In spirit we are gathered round Christ, and where He is in the heavenly sanctuary.

What a splendid and faithful testimony to the Truth. I cannot, however, but wish that men so well taught in the Word, as the one here quoted, would go one step further and put this beautiful truth into practice, by gathering simply unto His Name and Person, to observe the feast, and worship in His presence, apart from any man-made program or "form of service."

In apostolic days when the Lord's people gathered together in a worshipping capacity, Christ was the "center" and object of attraction for their souls. His love had drawn their willing hearts to Himself. Around HIM those early believers gathered, because He had said: "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

"Sweet feast of love divine

'Tis grace that makes us free,

To feast upon this bread and wine,

In memory Lord of Thee."

III. Because

God's Order of Worship has been substituted by human programs and innovations.

At the observance of this weekly feast it was not necessary to have a human president. There was a divinely-given liberty that was not circumscribed by any one man placed in authority. Christ was LORD at his own table, and in the exercise of His Lordship, by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the worship of assembled guests was directed and controlled. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).

Man's thoughts -- supported by ancient customs -- supposes, or takes for granted, the necessity of having a humanly-appointed leader to control and direct the worship of God's house -- His people. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). Let us seek to learn God's thoughts and ways, as it has pleased Him to reveal them to us. In the 11th Chapter of 1st Cor. we see the Church in its assembled capacity and purpose, "to eat the Lord's supper" (verse 20). This thought is brought out clearly, as the apostle proceeds to correct a disordered condition existing there at the time. Here, too, the apostle teaches the essentials of self-judgment and spiritual discernment in order to worthily participate. Hence, the necessity of being right conditionally, as well as positionally.

In Chapter 12:27, we read, "Now ye are the body of Christ." The human body is used as an illustration. Notice the following important truths here taught:

1. By the Holy Spirit all believers have been baptized into that one body (verse 13).
2. The very place each member occupies in the body has been assigned by God (verse 18). Not by the wisdom or judgment of men.
3. The various gifts to the church are positioned by God (verse 28).
4. Every gift is to operate as the Holy Spirit dictates (verses 4-11).
5. No one gift, however useful, can function for all the others (verses 15-17). To persist in having one gift do the work of all will result in weakness and extinction of God's gifts. Men will then manufacture others as needed, according to the desire of their hearts -- even as they are doing today.
6. Every member of the body, however feeble or obscure, is necessary, and should receive loving and sympathetic consideration (verses 22-27).
7. Though the members are many, yet are they one body (verse 12).

Under this divine arrangement, neither "prelacy" nor "clerisy" obtains.

In ch. 14:26-33 clear instructions are given in connection with the exercise of gifts, which, beyond all doubt, precludes the idea of a "one-man ministry" in the Church of God.

Neither is the ministry of woman, or the exercise of her authority, permitted in this particular sphere (see Ch. 14:34, 35 also 1 Tim. 2:11, 12). We are not, however, to conclude that women have not a "ministry" to

render. By way of stimulating thought in this direction I would call your attention to the ministry of Dorcas (Acts 9:39), of Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:15), and other women who "ministered unto Him of their substance (Luke 8:2,3). The word "minister" in the New Testament never conveys the idea of domination, or that in order to minister one must be a "dominie" or a "superior." They truly serve the best who, forgetful of self, plod on in humble service as He directs, seeking not the applause of men but desiring only to please and glorify Him. "Whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be chiefest shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:43,44), are the words of the Master, Himself.

In passing, I would call your attention to chapter 13 -- "the LOVE chapter," much overlooked, we fear, in practice at least, and yet SO important. Love is the divine lubricant in which all the wheels of the Church's activities are to move, and her varied "gifts" be exercised. The lack of this heavenly element has caused friction, faction and failure in the past. How much we need Love today! We need it, to teach, preach, exercise oversight, warn the unruly, heal breaches and estrangements that are sure to exist where this divine element is lacking. We need it to believe, hope, bear, suffer; in the home, in the assembly, in business and under every circumstance. It is the greatest of all virtues. Love is eternal. Let us always have a large supply on hand and never act except under its constraint (2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 4:15,16). However eloquent a man may be; or well taught in the Word of God, without LOVE his ministry will be but as "sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal" (Ch. 13:1). Without it he is "nothing" (verse 2), and what he does "profiteth nothing" (verse 3).

A careful reading of the 12th and 14th chapters of 1st Cor. clearly shows that when the Church came together, it was not for the purpose of hearing someone preach (though God-given ministry should be thankfully received), neither is it the thought of receiving blessing that draws His people hither; but rather, having been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), they come together to give -- "to offer up (as priests) spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

They come thoughtfully, thankfully, reverently, adoringly, giving to Him the homage of their hearts. They come as purged worshippers, "Clean every white," through His precious blood. They lay their gifts at His feet, who gave Himself for them, saying: "Of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chron. 29:14).

In Exodus 23:15 we hear God saying to His people "Thou shalt keep the feast... and none shall appear before me empty." How much do we give Him? "Thou, shalt take of the first of the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and thou shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shalt choose to place His name there" (Deut 2:62).

With overflowing hearts and full baskets for Him we should rejoice in His presence and worship.

"Here we rest in wonder viewing,

All our sins on Jesus laid;

And a full redemption flowing

From the sacrifice He made."

There, "without a cloud between," we worship; but not by proxy. The medium of a "clerical caste" or human priest is excluded from the Church. All believers are a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). "They have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." They worship "within the veil"; not in fear, but

draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19-25). What a privilege! How blessed and soul-satisfying to the child of God. There is no place on earth so sweet to my soul, no hour so precious to my heart, no period so refreshing to my spirit as the time I spent at Calvary remembering Him.

"Sweet resting place of every heart

that feels the plague of sin,

Yet knows the deep mysterious joy

Of peace with God within!

O Lamb of God, Thy bleeding wounds,

With cords of love divine.

Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee

And linked our life with Thine."

IV. Because

A one-man ministry is contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God, and hinders His operations.

Is there anything in the New Testament to support the theory of a "one-man ministry"? I have searched diligently, but so far I have failed to discover it. You may be sure I would not have vacated that ground if I could have found any certain standing in the Word of God for it. Where do we find in all the range of Scripture, that one man was set over a Church to do all the teaching and preaching and to direct all its spiritual activities; or that the Lord's Supper could not be observed, unless the pastor or some "ordained minister" was present to preside?

Someone may suggest that Timothy was pastor at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete. Not so. They were apostolic delegates, invested with power to act in the place of the apostle Paul. Among other things that Timothy was sent to Ephesus to do was to "charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). (They tell us, today, that we are not to talk much about doctrine, just diffuse the Spirit of Christ, and live by the golden rule.) Titus was to "set in order things that were wanting and appoint elders" (Titus 1:5) at Crete.

Notice, he was not to appoint an elder in every city, or church, but elders. Timothy was not pastor of the church at Ephesus, for we read in Acts 20:17, that when Paul reached Miletus, he "sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." It seems strange that he did not call for Timothy, "the pastor of the church," or whoever was the pastor) if the modern idea of "ministry" is scriptural. They knew nothing about "clergy" and "laity" in those days. These elders are called bishops (R.V.) in the 28th verse of the same chapter.

A bishop is an overseer, and an elder is a presbyter, therefore, these are all synonymous terms and refer to the same office. A bishop was not a man set over a number of churches, neither was a presbyter a man set over a local congregation, nor an elder one of a number in a local church, inferior to the rank of presbyter, or pastor. They were all on the same level, and exercised their God-given "gift" within the local church or assembly. The apostles ordained (appointed) elders in every church (Acts 14:23).

Will someone tell me who has the authority to ordain "elders" today? We must have truth, not tradition. In the church at Philippi there were bishops (overseers) (Phil 1:1). Mark, that epistle was not addressed to the pastor, but "to the saints, with the bishops and deacons," "Why not to the pastor? Why is he not mentioned? For the simple reason, that such a thing as a "one-man ministry" was unknown in those days. No one at that time took up "the ministry as a profession." They did not receive their appointments at "Conference", or by discretion of "the bishop", nor had their "call" to be endorsed by "the Presbytery."

We do not read of an "Installation" or "Recognition" service being held to induct the "pastor" into "the pastorate" or anything corresponding to it. There were no such customs in those days as a "minister" getting "a hearing", becoming a "candidate" for this or that pulpit; accepting the "call" as from God; neither do we read of any servant of God, in apostolic days, receiving a stated salary. True, "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Christ spoke these words when He sent forth the seventy.

Their "salary" consisted of lodging, and "eating and drinking such things as they give," and that only from such as received them and their message. They did not beg from door to door. This word, here rendered "hire," means also reward, and is so rendered elsewhere. For instance, in Revelation 22:12, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me." You may say that the conditions have changed since apostolic days. I admit it, but God has not changed, neither has His Word. Let us return to it.

The man-made system of ministry, I indict under several counts:

1. It is without scriptural warrant, which in itself is a sufficient reason for rejecting it.
2. It stunts and nullifies the development of God-given ministry in the body of Christ.
3. It renders a service that is unfair to the church in general, because only those churches that can pay the largest salaries obtain the services of the men possessing the greatest ability. This is unfair to the weaker churches.
4. It tends to make its votaries selfish and covetous; ever seeking for a place paying a larger salary.
5. It makes them in many instances men-pleasers, and servants of men, rather than servants of God (Read Gal 1:10).
6. It creates within the church a priesthood, or hierarchism -- a priesthood within a priesthood -- which is unscriptural; for, as we have already stated, and as the Word of God teaches, every believer is a priest, whose privilege it is to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (Heb. 10:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6).
7. It divides the church into two sections, known today as "clergy" and "laity". As the late Dr. Arthur T. Pierson well and truthfully stated it -- "This chasm between 'clergy' and 'laity' marks a rent in the body of Christ. The Church began as a pure democracy, but passed into an aristocracy and finally into a hierarchy. The creation of a clerical caste is a matter of historic development."

Let us discountenance and discontinue association with unscriptural usages, teaching believers the truth, as we have opportunity. True, there is a ministry which is "according to the Scriptures." But where do we find in all the range of God's Word anything that corresponds to the modern idea of "ministry"? Can we discover the faintest trace in the New Testament anywhere of any one of the following ideas?

"The Priest and His Parish"

"The Clergyman and His Church"

"The Pastor and His People"

When studying God's Word have you observed anything about

"Candidates for the Pulpit"

"Students for the Ministry"

"Getting a License to Preach," or "Ministers' Salaries," etc.?

The modern idea of "ministry" -- copied in modified degrees, by Protestant denominations, from Roman Catholic dogmas and devices -- is foreign to New Testament principle and practice.

"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11, 12).

We cannot further discuss the subject of ministry here. Search the Word for yourself.

V. Because

The Title "Reverend" is a divine attribute. It is an arrogant assumption for any man to claim it.

What right has any sinner, even though he be saved by grace, to take unto himself the title "reverend"? It belongs to God, and to God alone, and by accepting it we rob God of one of His attributes. The word "Reverend" occurs only once in all the range of Holy Writ, and in that particular place God claims it "Holy and reverend is His name (Psalm 111:9). The Pope of Rome has the monopoly on the attribute "Holy," calling himself "His Holiness," "The Holy Father," etc., while all the other clergy (Protestant and Roman Catholic) lay claim to the other attribute "reverend," and some of them, not satisfied with being on a level with God Almighty, have gone a step or two higher, and styled themselves "Very Reverend," "Right Reverend," and "Most Reverend." Thus, according to their titles, they are more "reverend" than God Himself.

The title belongs to God and not to man, be he saint or sinner. Some of the best known and fully accredited denominational teachers concede this point, but still retain the title themselves.

This very dignified elevation gratifies the human heart, and it requires the grace of God to enable a man to vacate such a pedestal. Jesus said, of certain religious rulers, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). He also said, they "love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But be yet not called Rabbi; for one is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called Masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt 23:6-11).

In religious circles today -- Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jew -- we have, among others, three titles of respect, namely -- "Father", "Reverend", and "Rabbi".

"Among the Hebrews there were three titles of divinity, Rabh, Rabbi, and Rabban. Rabh signifies great; Rabbi greater, and Rabban greatest. These Rabbis were regarded as infallible oracles in religious matters, and usurped not only the place of the law, but of God Himself. They decided all religious disputes and received the greatest homage." (Bible Student's Companion)

Have we not the same graded distinctions in Christendom today, claiming, in varying degrees, place, power and popularity, and known as "The Reverend," the "Very Reverend" and the "Right Reverend," according to their clerical rank?

All of these distinctions are contrary to the the teachings of Christ and the example of His apostles. No such titles are given to them in the Word of God.

How true were the words of the late C. H. Spurgeon. "There are a great many reverend, very reverend and right reverend sinners in the world."

Recently, I read in the "Question" and "Answer" page of a widely read, religious, and "fundamental" magazine the following inquiry and reply:

"It is my understanding that Mr. Spurgeon was never ordained and never claimed the title 'Reverend'. Am I not correct?" The editor at that time, himself a Baptist minister, well taught in the scriptures, and widely known as a writer and Bible teacher, replied:

"It is also my understanding that Mr. Spurgeon never was ordained as a minister, and never claimed the title of Rev. . . . It is against my own practice to use the title."

Here, I am reminded of the words of the young man, Elihu, (My God is He) who modestly, and quietly waited until Job's "three comforters" had exhausted all their "wisdom" before he spoke. Hear His words: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles" (Job 32:21,22).

Is not the title "Reverend" very flattering, and most gratifying to the flesh? Elihu would have none of them, if he lived today.

As for myself, I desire to be known henceforth simply as a servant of God, and I want my walk and conversation to prove that I am His servant indeed. If I, the servant of God, am to be esteemed in any measure by my fellow-Christians, it shal not be because, in front of my name, an attribute stolen from God has been placed by an "ordaining council"; neither shall it be because of any peculiarity of dress, but only for my "work's sake" (See 1 Thess. 5:12, 13).

VI. Because

The Modern Method of Financing the Lord's Work is not His way, and dishonors His Name.

Did the church beg at the world's door in apostolic days? Certainly not. God's work and God's servants were not supported, partly through the church, and partly by the help that the world gave. "They that preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14). Those early preachers of the good news "went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7). The Lord has ordained that the channel through which His servants should be supported is the church -- His redeemed people. Let us not demean our Lord. Is He so impoverished that He cannot take care of His own interests without the assistance of the world? How

ludicrous preachers make themselves, when on Sunday they berate the devil, and before the week is through they are begging at his door for a dollar to help pay the "pastor's salary" and assist in "running the church".

A merchant in a certain New York town, where I was "pastor," told me one day that the churches there could not survive apart from the aid given to them by the business men, most of whom made no profession of being Christians. In belief, this man was a "Universalist". The remark made me "feel cheap", because it was only too true.

A certain denomination, not having a "church" in that town when I went to live there, later organized one. The first thing they did was to form a church "Guild." This was done by serving ice cream and cake, followed by a card party, under the direction and presided over by the clergyman who, with his wife, "graced the occasion." What a beginning!

For none of these things have we a precedent for in the Word of God.

God is able to conduct His own affairs apart from the aid of the world. When Zerubbabel went up to Jerusalem to build the Lord's house, during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, the enemies desired to build with them, but Zerubbabel and his brethren said "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra 4:3). We find the same divine principle in operation in the church in the days of its infancy, and should be operative still.

God had to charge His idolatrous and unfaithful people, Israel, with "robbing" Him -- actually defrauding Him. In tones of injured innocence they asked, "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" He replied, "In tithes and offerings." He then enjoined them to give Him the things that rightly belonged to Him, saying, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in my house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3:10).

What a challenge for their hearts, and for ours! Shall we accept it?

Are there not many today, who profess the name of Christ, guilty of the same thing? They take pride in being honest in their dealings with their fellowmen, but with an air of assumed piety that rob God. They willingly lavish their money upon themselves, and their friends, for pleasure and comfort; but on Sunday they drop a little bit of silver into the collection box, and sing with a sense of satisfaction, and apparent zeal:

"Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold."

What does God think of it all? Why not sing consistently and truthfully --

"Take my mite; but I will hold

To my silver and my gold?"

As a result of this systematic "robbery" there is a shrinkage of funds. Then all kinds of worldly and unscriptural schemes are resorted to, in order to reimburse God, and carry on the work of "the church," -- suppers, sales of work, fairs, bazaars, card parties, theatrical performances and dances, -- all of which are

detestable to the Lord, and dishonoring to His name.

Do we not hear God saying as He did to Judah and Jerusalem, "Who hath required this at your hand?" (Read Isaiah 1:1-18).

The Lord asks the offerings of His redeemed people only, which are to be given to Him gladly, liberally and lovingly "as the Lord has prospered" them (1 Cor. 16:1).

What an avalanche of wealth there would be in the Lord's treasury (to use in the evangelization of the world) if every child of God could realize that they, and all they have belongs to Him, Who loved them and "gave HIMSELF" for them (Gal. 2:20).

Dear child of God, you believe down in your heart, that the modern, worldly method of raising money for things religious, is not God's way. How can you be in partnership with such things?

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

VII. Because

The Apostasy of Christendom in character and destiny is such that God is calling to His people, "Come out" (Rev 18:4).

Is there a growing sense of apostasy today? Yes, it is here. The Word of God declared it would come. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some (not all) shall depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1). That departure and "falling away" is here (2 Thess. 2:3). The truth of God is being corrupted by men who occupy so-called evangelical pulpits, as perhaps it never was before.

While I occupied the denominational pulpit I was asked to give my money, and was supposed to ask the members of my congregation to give their money to help pay the salaries of theological professors -- destructive critics -- who are making and molding the theological thinking of the men who are going out from these institutions of learning to be leaders and teachers in churches, Sunday schools, and on the Mission field. Such men have no clear gospel message for the people -- they know not how to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Apostate teachers may come "as angels of light" and "fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15), but we are not to be deceived by them. They are "false teachers who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1, R.V.). They "speak great swelling words" (2 Peter 2:18; Jude 16). Their ears "itch" for everything else but the Word of God. They do "not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3), but we are not to believe them. Apostasy departs from the faith but still wears the garb of religion, and from it we are told to "turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). The end of apostasy is judgment and destruction.

In the past God had to say of His "vineyard" (Israel), "I will lay it waste" (Isaiah 5:6), and of Judah "no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16). Of the professing church He says "I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

I do not view the increasing putrefaction and leavening of the corrupt mass of Christendom with earlier surprise or alarm. The Word of God has instructed and warned us concerning it. We are to separate ourselves from it and "hold fast" His truth "till He come" (2 Tim. 1:13; Rev. 3:11). Apostasy is incurable -- it is a doomed thing.

For a long time I stood on the inside and protested, but I saw that, though I loathed this spiritual wickedness in high places, and preached against it, yet, while I remained there, I was part and parcel of it.

Therefore, I concluded that the best and most effective testimony I could give against it would be to obey the Lord and disassociate myself from false doctrines and unscriptural practice, and "go forth unto Him without the camp," and if need be, bear reproach for His name (Heb. 13:12, 13).

"When we see Thy love unshaken --

Outside the camp.

Scorned by man, by God forsaken --

Outside the camp.

Thy loved cross alone can charm us;

Shame need now no more alarm us;

Glad we follow, naught can harm us --

Outside the camp.

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Let me say, I have not separated myself from the Lord's people, as such, but only from unscriptural position and practice. There are many dear saints of God in the denominations, whom I love "in the Lord." Their condition may be right, but their position is wrong. I may be criticized because I have left them to the destroyers of the faith, even to "wolves in sheep's clothing." Be it so. My reply is if I have to choose between staying in an unscriptural position with the "sheep" and by doing so dishonor my Lord, or by stepping out and thereby please and honor Him, then "the die is cast." I will obey Him, whose word to all His people today is: "Wherefore come out from among them (unsaved people, and unscriptural practices) and be yet separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17, 18). God has revealed His truth to me, and I must obey and please Him, at any cost. As to the servant of God, in the denominational pulpit, and the saints in the pew, I will say that the same path of faith which I have decided to travel is open to them, if they have "ears to hear," exercise of heart, and the desire to obey His Word. May many of them, even amid the Babel din of this restless and pleasure-seeking age, hear His sweet voice saying, "This is the way, walk yet in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

It may be said by some, "You have left one sect to join another."

This remark (unkind and untrue) is made to serve (no doubt) as an excuse by some for their being in an unscriptural position; or it may be an expression of ignorance. This accusation is almost 2000 years old. Listen: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our

fathers believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets" (Acts 24:14, R.V.). Part of the accusation brought against Paul in verse 5 was that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Sectarianism is an old and noxious weed. Paul had to deal with it in his day. It lives still. However, if, by returning, to first principles, I have "joined a sect," it is the "sect" of the first century. It is of small import to me what men think of me, or say about me. My chief concern is how I may please Him.

"Content to fill a little space, If God be glorified."

I have not left the Baptist denomination to join another sect, nor to form a new one. God knows there are enough of them now. I shall, however, own and seek the fellowship of all who own the Name of Jesus alone, and are seeking to teach His truth, and walk in His ways. The way may be thorny and uphill, but the path my Master trod was not easy. I may, like Paul, have to "work with mine own hands," but even then I shall be in the goodly company of an apostle, and of Him who worked at the carpenter's bench. The task may be humble, but I shall be in holy company. Therefore, "All, all is well."

In this short treatise I have tried as clearly as possible to state my position, as I see it, and my reasons for making the change. Am I a fool in the eyes of any? Then let me be a fool "for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4:10).

Before passing judgment upon me, take these things to the Word of God. Let it decide. The path I have taken has nothing in it that can give the flesh occasion to glory. It is a lowly path, but I believe it is the path my Lord and Master and His apostles trod. If it glorifies Him I shall be satisfied.

"There's surely somewhere a lowly place,

In earth's harvest field so wide,

Where I may labor through life's short day

For Jesus crucified.

So trusting my all to Thy tender care,

And knowing Thou lovest me,

I'll do Thy will with a heart sincere,

I'll be what You want me to be.

This is "the good and the right way" (1 Sam. 12:33).

"Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (1 John 2:5).

CONCLUSION

Dear reader, if you are a child of God, obey Him regardless of who else it displeases. Your allegiance should be first to Him. However, if you are not His child, but still unregenerate, it will be with you as it was with Gallio, long ago. He "cared for none of these things" (Acts 18:12).

You may be religious -- like Nicodemus -- even a leader in religious circles, as many are today, but not saved. If so, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3; Titus 3:5).

If you are being deceived, may the Lord open your eyes that you may see your lost condition and "flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. 3:7), but if you are a believer, and delivered from that wrath (1 Thess. 1:10), may the Holy Spirit lead you into all the truth of God, and impart to your heart grace and courage to return to the FIRST PRINCIPLES of God's Word.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/hugh-kane/a-return-to-first-principles-seven-reasons-why/>

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