

The Satanic Capture of the Church

AN ESSAY

Introduction

The modern church is captured; it is nothing like what the Biblical church is meant to be. It is a rogue system ruled by men but in truth dominated by Satan.

There are a few churches here and there trying to exist along traditional lines and seeking to maintain good doctrine, but even these hold principles and practices that are unbiblical. For instance, churches with generally sound doctrine tend to be ruled by an unbiblical senior pastor, use unbiblical instrumental music, freeze out the congregation from any meaningful spiritual contributions and a single man dominates the meeting.

Beyond these marginalised churches the situation is far, far worse. Charismatic churches have completely fallen into the encroaches of paganism, occultism, syncretism, mysticism, authoritarianism, worldliness, antinomianism, sacramentalism and worse. Often the majority in these churches is not even Christian because the Gospel preached is utterly corrupt and has been for decades.

Within the radical Charismatic Movement are more unorthodox factions that are outright fully demonic and heretical practising open occultism, such as necromancy, divination, magic, spiritualism and advocating violence to critics.

But there are many more factions in the so-called Christian church and they are all deceived works full of heresy and aberrations.

In this essay (not a dissertation) I want to concisely demonstrate how the church has been captured from the earliest times. The Biblical injunction to modern believers is, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues' (Rev 18:4).¹

The current system

Everyone today has a picture of what going to church means.

It means leaving home, travelling some distance, and going into a large imposing building, or a hired building. It then means sitting down in a row of seats or pews (if an older building). It then means being silent and respectful unless singing a song or joining in corporate prayer. In some churches a little individual participation is allowed, such as prayer or testimony. The meeting is dominated by a single character from the front who directs what goes on, when it goes and how it goes on. In some churches there is one leader for worship and another one for a sermon and administration. Rarely is the Lord's Supper celebrated, if at all. At the end everyone goes their own way home with a short greeting to a friend or the leader. In a very few places there is a social coffee afterwards.

¹ Applied here to Babylon, the corrupt end time world culture. However, I attribute this to the modern church which has been captured by Babylon. Luther wrote a tract called, 'The Babylonian Captivity of the Church' in 1520, but the church's captivity is much worse since then.

Let me say that the apostles would have no familiarity with this system whatsoever; it would be completely alien to them. It is not how the ekklesia gathers.

The Biblical system

I have explained very many times what the Biblical system is, so I will simply summarise a few key points,

Essentially the local church is a family, not an organisation or an institution. As a family community of love every local church is small so that principles of fellowship can apply. Koinonia (fellowship, community) cannot exist in a large gathering in a big hall – but fellowship is why we gather together. Together we reflect the community of love that exists in the Godhead.

So we meet in order to do each other good, encourage one another in the fight, exhort each other to love and good works and worship the Lord. This is done primarily in celebrating the memorial Lord's Supper. Praise is sung a cappella, there is no instrumental music of any kind. Try to find any reference to instrumental music in the church in the NT. The early church fathers, such as Chrysostom, railed against instrumental music in marginal fringe groups calling it idolatry. Martin Luther [1483-1546] called organ music (which had been only recently introduced in Romanism around the 13th century) '*ensigns of Baal*'.

The Biblical setting for this gathering is the home; one large enough to cater for the number involved, which is relatively small (between two and say 30). Only private homes were used for the gathered church in the NT and nowhere else. The temple was used for prayer temporarily by the apostles but worship of Jesus could not occur there without arrest by the temple police. Very quickly a home meeting was the place used for fellowship (Acts 2:26, 5:42, 8:3) . Paul's meetings in the Hall of Tyrannus were debates for evangelism, not gatherings of the saints.

Leadership of the local church is always by a team of equal elders: parity and plurality. There are no modern apostles in charge, archbishops, priests, popes, cardinals, prophets, vicars, bishops, deans, moderators, senior pastors or anything else. There is no hierarchy of any kind. [Hierarchical leadership systems are demonic; this is how Satan's legions function.] There is no mediatorial leadership of any kind; that would be blasphemy and a denial of the priesthood of all believers. Therefore bishops (in the modern sense), popes, priests and prophets are all blasphemous.

The content of the meeting is dominated by fellowship. Encouragement is by fellowship. Exhortation is in fellowship. Doing good is to each other. There is mutual edification. Teaching (always didactic or expository)² is by fellowship. Teachers will explain doctrine and Biblical texts but then open up the room to discussion and questions. There is no sermon. Note that there is no sermonic preaching activity in the NT church of any kind; sermons were for evangelistic proclamation.

Regarding the KJV Acts 20:7, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight', the word 'preached is a wrong

² Not homilies, blessed thoughts, pursuit of agendas etc.

translation. The word is *dialegomai*, which means: ‘discourse, argue, discuss’. Paul’s speech for hours was answering questions in a general discussion; perhaps after a short didactic word.

Regarding ministries, these are all subordinate to the assembly of saints and the eldership. Apostles today are missionaries or church planters. There are no authoritative apostles over churches. Every so-called Charismatic apostle is a fake ministry; an impostor. Evangelists go out from the body with the support of the saints to proclaim the Gospel. There are no official, formal prophets since John the Baptist, the last of the OT prophets. Prophetic ministry is when a teacher or exhorter speaks with unusual spiritual authority – but this is informal and subjective. Every ministry is subject to the leadership of the eldership.

In everything the focus is upon Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He must be pre-eminent in all things. This is why there are no formal priests – Jesus is the Great High priest; we need no formal mediatorial leadership. Jesus is the great Prophet; we need no other spokesmen from God than Jesus speaking through the Holy Spirit to every saint directly. Thus the Lord’s Supper is the centre of the church meeting and must be celebrated every Sunday. The reason for gathering is fellowship; the centre of the meeting is the Supper.

Why did it all go wrong?

It went wrong because there was, and is, an all-out attack by Satan to deceive, tempt and corrupt church leadership, and thus church members.

An example of the near universal collapse of faith and discernment

We can see that there is a great dichotomy between what is practised today and what the Biblical precedent is for church gatherings. They have little in common. This is why Christians today are so starved of spiritual food and so weak in discernment. 98% of Christians and church leaders willingly complied with the Covid lockdown termination of church services. This was the biggest collapse of faith in the history of the church. Satan was laughing his socks off. In the past even illiterate Christian peasants in Germany openly resisted demands to compromise unto death. In the killing times in Scotland, Christian children risked death in attending meetings in the woods. Modern Christians buckled at the mere threat of a fine³ from an illegal diktat from an authoritarian government.

No true Christian church leader would have complied with this satanic fascist demand. Which raises the question, how many church leaders are even Christian at all? I repeat, no true Christian leader would cancel church gatherings just because a government minister told him to do so (illegally). All churches that complied with this satanic demand lost their lampstand (testimony), if they hadn’t already lost it.

The scope of the satanic attacks

This is a summary of the key attacks on the church.

³ Lockdown fines, when challenged, were mostly overturned by the courts.

Primary issues

DIVERT THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Introduce project after project supposed to ensure 'success' in this or that area (e.g. mission). Focus upon the Holy Spirit but not Jesus. Focus upon the prime church leader. Focus upon the prime leadership agenda.

WEAKEN THE TESTIMONY

Divert attention away from maintaining a genuine witness by centring on lesser things.

DISTRACT FROM GODLY GOALS

Ignore the Bible's focus upon certain prime goals, such as sanctification (1 Thess 4:3), the renewing of the mind (Rm 12:2), giving thanks (1 Thess 5:18), or doing good (1 Pt 2:15). Get the people to focus upon men's ideas instead.

General church issues

ATTACK ON THE DYNAMICS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Get the meetings out of homes. Grow bigger and bigger congregations. Do everything to eradicate mutual edification. Abolish the dynamic of being a family; make the church an organisation or institution. Stop all attempts to develop community.

ATTACK ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

Establish a clergy / laity dichotomy. Create a professional leadership hierarchy. Create multiple secondary leadership jobs. Create an administration.

DEVELOP MULTIPLE TYPES OF MEETING

Instead of just the simple gathered church in a home on Sunday, plus necessary Bible study or prayer meetings as required, get the church to establish many types of meetings. These include: monthly celebrations in a big venue; Bible Weeks where thousands camp out; regular conferences to push a leader's agenda; men's meetings; women's meetings; kid's meetings; Gospel meetings; healing meetings and so on.

ORGANISATION

Get the church to become a bigger and more complex organisation running like a corporation. Get office space. Create multiple administrative departments.

INTROSPECTION

Get the churches to focus inwardly. Stop churches from doing good works to outsiders.

PROJECTS

Get the church to pursue one project after another to keep the members destabilised and unfocused on real spiritual issues.

WORLDLINESS

Get the church to copy the world and be as fleshly and worldly as possible.

Leadership issues

ELEVATION OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership becomes authoritarian. Concept of a single man dominating leadership. Concept of a single man dominating multiple churches. Get authoritarian leaders to appoint weak, sycophantic, co-workers. [Authoritarian leaders are often weak, jealous and insecure.]

DESTROY RISING GOOD LEADERS

When a young leader arises of good character and eminent spiritual gifts with a single mind, find ways to terminate his ministry. Stop him being promoted to leadership. If necessary imprison or kill him. Example: Gottschalk.⁴

SUPPORT BAD LEADERS

Ensure that poorly qualified leaders rise to eminent positions.

MONEY

Get leadership to focus upon money to fund multiple pointless projects and jobs. Demand tithes. Get gifts sent to the leadership and not directly to targets, such as the poor and needy.

Bible issues

STOP CHURCH MEMBERS HAVING ACCESS TO THE BIBLE.

The Devil managed to do this for centuries in the Dark Ages until the Reformation published new accurate versions in vernacular languages. Luther's German translation was the first.

FLOOD THE CHURCHES WITH MULTIPLE BIBLE VERSIONS THAT ARE MOSTLY VERY BAD TRANSLATIONS OR HAVE DOCTRINAL AGENDAS

This is how the Devil perverted Biblical understanding in the last 120 years.

Dogmatic issues

DESTROY SOUND DOCTRINE

Establish popular heretical teachers and multiple dogmatic schools. Produce popular, attractive books that teach error. Produce media promoting the teaching of errors. Give heretics a big platform, such as television.

MAKE TEACHING ENTERTAINING

Get teachers to focus upon entertaining congregations but teach them nothing of value. Promote homilies, superficial speeches, joke-filled talks, agenda-driven exhortations etc.

MAKE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE A TASK FOR QUALIFIED LEADERS ALONE

Establish theological seminars for different schools. Brainwash students with a doctrinal agenda. Make church leadership a job requiring academic qualifications. [The apostles Peter, James and John would have failed this test.]

Sectarian issues

DENOMINATIONS

Gather the churches into various denominations to develop allegiance to certain wrong principles. Examples: Anglicanism (many erroneous doctrines); Methodism (many wrong doctrines, chiefly perfectionism and Arminianism); Brethrenism (Dispensationalism, legalism).

SECTS

Establish multiple sects breaking out from the wider church. Examples: Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists, and Armstrongism.

⁴ Gottschalk was popular and taught Biblical truth, especially double predestination. For this he was removed from leadership, tortured and imprisoned.

CULTS

Establish multiple cults outside the church but attractive to certain types of believer. Examples: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Thought.

MYSTICAL GROUPS

Establish multiple types of mystical denominations that incorporate occult aspects. Examples: Pentecostalism. Charismatic Movement, Signs and Wonders Movement.

Philosophical and ideological issues

LIBERALISM

Get the churches to adopt liberal attitudes to the Bible and doctrine; such as: deny the inspiration and authority of the Bible; deny miracles.

HUMANISM AND RATIONALISM

A focus upon man as the centre of all things.

MODERNISM

Make the Bible comply with modernism, such as Mechanistic Theory, Humanism or Scientism.

PANTHEISM

Pervert doctrine to accommodate a pantheistic view of the universe; deny a personal God.

DEISM

Use this philosophy to deny a personal God involved in the universe and people.

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Apply evolution to Biblical teaching.

THE GAP THEORY

Use this device to enable evolutionary principles to fit in Bible history.

POSTMODERNISM

Use this philosophy to deny absolute truth.

EXISTENTIALISM

Use this philosophy to focus upon man, materialism and turn attention away from God and absolute truth.

A historical analysis of mistakes

The problem: men in leadership

The reason it went wrong very quickly after the death of the apostles is the activity of men. Men seeking authority began to make changes to apostolic practice in the 2nd century. However, this was really the strategy of Satan to compromise the church and pervert meetings. The key issue was the abolition of using the spiritual gifts of all the members in fellowship; the eradication of mutual edification. A church then became notable merely for the gifting of the leader alone.

I have explained these changes in detail elsewhere. Essentially leaders began to accrue authority to themselves and gather the saints into larger meetings. Certain leaders began to use the term 'bishop' as expressing more authority than normal. The term originally meant an elder. The Hebrews preferred the term 'elder' but the Greeks used the term 'bishop'

meaning an overseer. Others preferred the word 'pastor' meaning shepherd. All meant an elder.

Note the temptations:

- Gather the church in ever-larger numbers to give the impression of power in the leadership. Use the excuse that this increases the testimony (it does not; God's kingdom is not earthly).
- Utilise more authoritative terms for leadership than 'elder', such as bishop, archbishop, apostle or prophet.
- Create a clergy / laity split so that the leadership is separated and more prominent.
- Gain other churches under the power of a certain leader so that he leads a confederation instead of a single church.

Legalism

Another early mistake of church leaders was legalism. The focus of sanctification became human effort in following rules laid down by men. Irenaeus [c.130-c.202] was a prime example of this. He did excellent work in combating heresies but his exhortations in the Christian walk were very legalistic. Justin Martyr [c.100-165], another early apologist, was so focused on human effort to be holy that he actively sought martyrdom; and finally embraced this. Read early Christian documents such as the Didache or the letters of Clement to see how legalistic they were.

Biblical sanctification is neither legalistic nor mystical; the two extremes of this matter.

- **Legalism:** obedience to human rules for human behaviour. Sanctification is by human effort. Example: Christians don't go to dances or watch movies.
- **Mysticism:** holiness is achieved by following what is claimed to be the Spirit (how can one tell?). Abstract un-rooted faith is emphasised above obedience. Example: actions led by a subjective spiritual impulse; claiming that sanctification is by faith alone.
- **Biblical progressive sanctification:**⁵ striving for holiness based upon following the Spirit's direction based upon Biblical truth understood by the mind.

The result of churches being legalistic was a loss of spiritual power and a poor testimony. The more people followed rules and regulations the more they followed men and not the Lord working through the Holy Spirit.

Antinomianism

The opposite of legalism is antinomianism. This is the denial of the law of God being applicable to Christians who are 'in the Spirit'. Thus Biblical commandments are ignored or denied. An extreme form of this is the denial that any believer can be under condemnation. This is both preposterous and unbiblical (e.g. Gal 2:11; 'blamed' is literally 'condemned'). Peter was certainly saved (Jn 13:10) when Jesus told him to 'Get behind me Satan'.

This folly is a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching on sanctification. It confuses definitive sanctification (legally, once for all time, to effect our standing in heaven; 1 Cor 6:11) and progressive sanctification (the continual renovation of the soul by obedience to the truth; 1 Cor 1:18; Heb 2:11). It also fails to understand the difference between the purity of the new

⁵ This is not definitive sanctification.

nature in the human spirit and the sin present in the old nature manifested by the vehicle of the soul, which requires condemnation.

Antinomianism is demolished by the fact that there are multiple divine commands in the NT even within the New Covenant (Jn 13:34, 15:12; 1 Tim 6:14; 1 Jn 2:7-8, 3:23, 4:21).

Growth of formal positions of authority

Gradually 'bishop' came to mean a leader over a diocese of several smaller churches. So the bishop's seat church also became more important than other churches. Over time a new layer emerged, that of monarchical bishops whereby certain bishops now assumed power over several other lesser bishops. This led to the idea of archbishops and later to the pope ('lit. 'father').

Over more time certain cities became dominant in terms of church authority, such as Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria. These often developed new emphases in theology. In fact such schools sometimes became centres of heresy provoking conflict with other schools. Thus a respected church leader like Origen could have enormous influence due to his authority but produced heretical ideas. Others, like Cyprian, worked to enhance the authority of leaders and make the church a more formal, rigid, organised institution.

Gradually a given church was known for how elevated its leader was, not the character of the people. The church developed into a very formal clergy / laity split; the people who did nothing and the leaders who did everything. Fellowship vanished. To enable poor leaders to conduct services, a rigid liturgy was written down so that the meeting followed a set pattern every week.

Adopting Old Covenant forms

In this period from the 2nd century where certain men assumed dominant authority, churches began to adopt Old Covenant forms and practices.

For example, at some point bishops began wearing vestments based upon the holy garments of the Israelite High Priest. Eventually all the regalia seen today was assumed, cassocks, surplices, or similar robes, mitres, staff, sashes and suchlike.

The origin of some of these was occult. For example the High Priest wore a turban on his head but bishops and abbots wore mitres. The word derived from Greek armour, a waistband, or a woman's headband. But this, in turn, derived from the Babylonian form of a certain type of head-dress such as used by Babylonian priests. This was later adopted in Greece by the priest of Heracles. So the mitre copied heathen religious precedents.

The later influence was the camelaucum, a cap worn by Byzantine court officials. So the mitre represents both occult priesthood and human authority. It has no Biblical sanction; indeed the apostle Paul forbids men to cover their head in church meetings (1 Cor 11:3-4).

As well as vestments, other objects began to be used such as incense burners (censers), altars, crucifixes, fonts, religious edifices within the building etc. Some of these were inspired by OT religious practices (e.g. censers, Lev 10:1) but others originate from occultism and heathen practices.

The idea of an altar being a focal point in a church building is blasphemy. On the cross, the altar was Christ's own body and the offering of the Lord for sin is never repeated. We

celebrate the victory of Christ over sin in resurrection and ascension and need no physical altar.

Other Old Covenant forms taken up include: hierarchical leadership, feasts, fasts and festivals; sacred buildings, choirs, instrumental music, pilgrimages to holy places, etc. Some Messianic groups even circumcise their male members.

Adopting Old Covenant principles

As well as Old Covenant forms there were also Old Covenant principles. These would include the ideas of: authoritarianism (e.g. mediatorial leadership), legalism, formalism (e.g. a set liturgy), materialism (temples, church buildings, sacred places), etc.

Instrumental music: more Old Covenant work

At first (say around the 2nd or 3rd century) even these formal churches did not use instrumental music, which only occurred in eastern marginal groups and cults following heathen religious practices. But gradually the Roman church (at that time the only church, except for fringe underground groups) began to introduce organ music. This became more widespread in the 13th century; before that it was dominated by plainsong.

After the Reformation, the Protestant churches tried to eliminate the worst aspects of Roman theology and practice, but it was too great a step to change major aspects of how meetings functioned. The Anabaptists tried to change everything at once but descended into chaos with some groups becoming completely heretical. In essence the Anabaptists were correct that formality should give way to fellowship but it was too much for medieval people to contemplate.

Today the reformers are criticised for not going far enough but this fails to understand the times. Even the Puritans in England could not get the queen or parliament to accede to deeper reforms. We should be grateful that at least the great truths of salvation, notably justification by faith, were corrected – and this alone was a huge leap forward.

Battles against theological heresy continued century after century and relatively few church leaders focused upon actual meeting content. A few understood this, such as Puritan John Owen who established two house churches.

Church meetings settled for ‘high churches’ that had great formality and ceremony with priests in vestments, plus bells and smells; and ‘low churches’ where simplicity reigned. But even in low churches there still existed the ‘frozen chosen’ congregations that did little and only fellowshiped with the back of someone’s head seated in pews, with a leader doing everything.

Low churches, such as English particular Baptists and Presbyterians in Scotland still managed to avoid instrumental music and emotionalism. Spurgeon had no instrumental music in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This began to change with the advent of the crusades led by Moody and Sankey where music was ramped up into an emotional festival. Sankey’s hymns became as popular in secular society as Moody’s sermons were in the churches. Low churches began to introduce small pianos and pedal organs and adopt popular choruses. This was the beginning of changing the evangelical churches into entertainment clubs.

During the 1960s, after the Folk boom, many churches began using guitars as well as pianos to support communal singing. After the Charismatic Movement began introducing

Pentecostalism into the mainstream churches this focus upon emotionalism continued to develop. With the advent of John Wimber in the mid-1980s this led directly into using small rock bands to support church singing or even use instrumentals alone.

In the years that followed, church worship became more and more based on entertainment filled with errors. Men with scarves on their head would lead loud raucous music from a rock band and claim that the noise was worship. Worship became associated in the Charismatic mind with instrumental music. Then stage lighting, lasers, PA systems, dance and drama would take this worldly cacophony (I speak as a musician) into new levels of heresy.

Part of this entertainment system was taken up by choruses and trite songs. There would be much repetition to aid passivity and mysticism. Songs were often based on 'me' rather than Jesus and were superficial and emotional, lacking in doctrinal content.

Genuine worship is simple and involves the will emphasising reverent submission. Praise is sung a cappella.

Materialism

Constantine

Going back some centuries, one of the tragedies was the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. This was instituted by Constantine [c.272-337] who had supposedly become a Christian just before becoming emperor in 306.

Overnight Christianity ceased being a persecuted religion and a hated minority and became fashionable. Suddenly, people seeking to impress the emperor announced that they too were Christians. Rich people built churches to house meetings whereas before they had been held in secret in homes, catacombs and forests. These buildings vied for splendour to demonstrate the wealth of the sponsor. They followed the design of basilicas, official Roman municipal offices (a nave, an apse and aisles). This is where the essential traditional design of church buildings came from, not from God.

Christianity became open, superficial, materialistic, hypocritical and lost all spiritual value. A genuine testimony only existed in the underground churches that still met secretly and in certain reform groups such as the later Albigenses, the Waldensians, the Paulicans or the United Brethren.

Monasticism

In the Middle Ages spirituality was not only superstitious but was very materialistic. Certain places were holy, such as monasteries, church buildings, shrines of saints, places dedicated to Mary, and so on. Certain people were holy by their vocation: church leaders, priests, monks – no matter how licentious they were in secret.

The Pope was the supreme church leader with enormous power. One⁶ was able to make the Holy Roman Emperor⁷ pray on his knees in the snow for three days in 1077. The papacy was the height of materialistic power in the world. It not only dominated the people but also monarchies and nations (until Henry VIII). Church leaders claimed power over access to salvation and ruled by fear (few others had access to a Bible to be able to criticise this)

⁶ Pope Gregory VII.

⁷ German king Henry IV.

Peripatetic monks had existed since the 4th century (usually living in the desert or in caves to withdraw from the world - anchorites) but it was in the medieval period that groups of monks gained materialistic power as various orders were commissioned by a pope, such as the Dominicans, Benedictines, the Franciscans or the Jesuits. These held huge amounts of power over the people and even governments and owned vast tracts of land and buildings.

The height of materialism is seen in the sale of indulgences, administered by monks and priests like Tetzl in Germany. For the price of an amount of coins you could guarantee the release of a soul from purgatory to gain access to heaven. It was this heresy that triggered the Reformation when Luther reacted against it in 1517.

Worldliness

Accompanying materialism is worldliness. Under Constantine the church became even more worldly.

Church leaders get tempted to copy the fashions and principles of the world all the time. This is to become more relevant to society and for leaders to have more credibility.

The sorts of areas where churches follow the world include:

- Large meetings – to appear more important.
- Large dedicated church buildings – to accommodate larger congregations and have a presence in the world like any other company.
- Advertising – seeking to attract people from the world and draw attention to meetings.
- Leadership hierarchy – following the world's leadership structures, which emanate from the Devil's administration system.
- Administration – developing formal worldly management system to order the multiple projects of the church. This is usually separate to the hierarchical leadership structure.
- Having a rock band to make 'worship' more attractive to the world.
- Tax exemption – listing the church as a charity in the world in order to get tax breaks from the world.
- Formal membership – setting up a filter for being a church member instead of receiving one another with no formalities. Thus there are commitment courses, membership courses, signed pledges of loyalty and so forth. In some churches this is required before you can break bread (e.g. Brethren churches).
- Televised meetings – broadcasting meetings in order to reach a very wide world influence and elevate the prominence and stature of chief leaders.

We could continue in this vein but this will suffice.

Principles ignored by worldliness

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?
Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Jm 4:4

The world is the enemy of God and the playground of the Devil. Christians must be separate from its principles even though they are in the world to live.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the

lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. 1 Jn 2:15-16

Trusting in worldly issues is loving the world. Churches must distance themselves from the world.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, Jn 15:19

Election and regeneration takes us out of the world and makes us a possession of God. Adopting the trappings of the world reverses the will of God.

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began. Rm 16:25

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him. Eph 1:9-10

By revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. Eph 3:3-6

To make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, Eph 3:9-10

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Eph 5:32

The church is a mystery; that is a divine secret that has been revealed to the elect by the Spirit of God.

This means that the church is a mystery to the world; the world cannot understand the church just like it cannot comprehend Christ (Jn 1:5). The church has nothing to do with the world. Trying to adapt that mystery in worldly terms and trappings is not just a massive mistake, it is blasphemy. It directly rejects the word of God.

Worldliness is a key sin committed by the churches.

Doctrinal errors

Multiple doctrinal errors pervaded church history. Usually their appearance prompted a controversy and the error was confronted. The biggest confrontation was the Reformation over justification. The Roman Church, based upon justification by works and church offices, was confronted by Martin Luther championing justification by faith and sovereign grace. The Reformation established a reset of thinking that centred on the pre-eminence of Jesus, the foundation of Scripture for knowledge and re-establishing divine sovereign grace as the basis of salvation.

The early church saw many battles⁸ to establish the Biblical doctrines of the Trinity and the person and natures of Christ; these were followed by the fight against Pelagianism (what is salvation?). Other errors followed. It is simply impossible here to go through all the heresies that arose during church history. Each one was an attack on the church in a certain area but God raised up theologians to combat every error and establish the truth. However, there are some heresies that ought to be mentioned.

Gnosticism

One heretical movement that needs attention is Gnosticism, which began in earnest after the 1st century lasting about 400 years before it began to slowly diminish. Many attribute the fount of Gnosticism in Simon Magus (Acts 8). It needs mentioning because there is a recent re-development of this as New Gnosticism that pervades some US churches. There are many versions of this where secret knowledge is emphasised which a disciple has to be led into by ritual, teaching, or mysticism.

The original Gnosticism is very complicated featuring many different leaders (e.g. Valentinus, Cerinthus, Menander, and Basilides) with varying emphases. It was originally a sectarian movement, arising from Middle East churches and the roots of it are evidenced in the later NT letters but it later became more of a separatist independent mystical movement. The fundamental issues involve arcane knowledge (*gnosis*) to commune with the divine. The Mandaean communities in Iraq and Iran are the survivors of ancient Gnosticism. Manichaenism is an offshoot of a very syncretistic Gnosticism.

Gnostics adopted dualism: matter is evil and spirit is good. The material world is a deception and what is needed is secret divine knowledge directly imparted to a disciple by an experienced adept. This knowledge brings divine illumination. Practices to facilitate knowledge varied greatly and included: asceticism, hedonism, licentiousness, drugs, fasting, mysticism and so on. A hierarchy of Aeons (angels) also helped a disciple receive illumination, help and guidance. Dualism is centred in the opposition between a transcendent God and an ignorant, evil demiurge creator (often characterised as Yahweh). Thus the material creation is evil.

A divine spark (yes, this is Gnostic) resides in certain pneumatics who are unaware of this. God sends a redeemer, often a Docetic Christ, who brings salvation in the form of the secret *gnosis*. After death they travel the cosmic spheres and are then re-united with the divine. Since salvation is based upon knowledge some Gnostics assumed licentious behaviour. Others were ascetic to the point of refusing marriage, with some portraying the creation of woman as the origin of evil (cf. Pentecostal William Branham).

⁸ E.g. Arianism, Sabellianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Modalism, Monophysitism etc.

This idea of gaining a secret knowledge in order to gain access to the divine or to salvation or even to a special divine experience, has recurred over and over again in church history. Traces of this can be seen in the baptism in the Spirit doctrine of Charismatics whereby those who have special knowledge of this experience are different to and better than ordinary believers.

Neoplatonism

This form of transcendentalism was developed by Plotinus [c.205-270] in Alexandria and is a very important and influential movement. The methodology of Neoplatonism was adopted by many post 3rd century church fathers (e.g. Basil the Great or Augustine), though this does not mean that they adopted its mystical doctrines.

Its essential thesis is the ultimate divine principle is above being. Divine light streams from divine perfection and fades into the void. Existence is a ladder that reaches at the top near the light but the bottom is the lifeless and irrational. The mind can overcome the difficulties by mystical illumination (transcendental meditation) or by mental abstraction, which allows the mind to overcome the hindrances of the psyche (soul) to experience the sublime. It sought direct union with God. It incorporated dualism to a degree; man should be continually looking upward while science (examining what is beneath him) is a distraction. They refused to see the world as a reflection of divine wisdom. Neoplatonism was widely accepted in the Roman Empire.

In reality Neoplatonism combined the Greek mystery religions and philosophy with Eastern mysticism to provide a unified bulwark against Christianity. This was absorbed by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite [early 6th century] whose theological treatises combine Christianity with Neoplatonism, creating a platform for mysticism, including the idea of perfection by ecstasy. It harks back to Buddhist ideas of nothingness, pursuit of emptiness, non-attachment to the material world, and following negative thought for absorption into the Cosmic Soul. There are similar ideas in Taoism (Daoism). Rationality is dismissed in favour of a 'cloud of unknowing'.⁹

Neoplatonism appeared as a foundational influence in many mystical and aberrational movements throughout church history, particularly promoting Catholic mysticism and transcendental groups.

Neoplatonism also set the trend for a syncretism of Christianity and Eastern religion and philosophy. This was most profoundly evidenced in the teaching of PP Quimby (thence New Thought) and then emphasised by John Wimber (the '*eastern paradigm*').

Arminianism

One later key error was Arminianism (a form of Semi-Pelagianism), which was ably confronted by the Synod of Dort 1618-19. Arminianism was a reaction against the Calvinistic doctrines of grace and the Remonstrants (Arminians who were more radical than Arminius) proposed a series of counter doctrines. Dort overturned this and its canons became the foundation of Reformed Dogmatics (Calvinism). Various attempts were made to push Arminianism into England, such as the attempt by Archbishop Laud working with

⁹ There is a mystical book of the same name.

the Jesuits, but it failed to take hold apart from a few individuals and the General Baptists. Later, John Wesley made Arminianism popular.¹⁰

Moody is the turning point whereby Arminianism began to dominate the UK churches. Calvinism began to be seen as austere and un-loving (despite being Biblical) and in a new period of optimism in human ability (due to technological advances around the turn of the 19th – 20th century) there was an emphasis on the will of man. Thus Moody emphasised free-willism – it is man that initiates salvation not God. This was based upon the errors that God loves everyone, that Jesus died for everyone and that there is a universal common grace. Acceptance of Arminianism in the late 19th century was the beginning of accepting a host of errors, beginning with liberal ideas. Dispensationalism soon followed. The 20th century would see the incursion of heresy upon heresy with only a few people crusading against this wave of error. It would take too much space to list all these heresies and rogue church movements.

The Gospel

Doctrinal corruption of the Gospel

The corruption of doctrine was not just an academic matter, bad doctrine impacted the people in multiple ways.

One of the most significant is the perversion of the proclamation of the Gospel.

There have been various attacks to corrupt Gospel preaching. These include:

- Arminianism: free-willism. God loves everybody. Man initiates salvation in co-operation with the Gospel (synergism). Denial of sovereign grace. Denial of the Doctrines of Grace (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, preservation of the saints).
- Amyraldism. An attempt to blend Calvinism with Lutheranism, thence Arminianism. God loves all men and desires to save all men but they don't repent so he chooses the elect for salvation (thus it is hypothetical universalism). Essentially equals Four-Point Calvinism.
- Roman Catholic theology. A type of Semi-Pelagianism. Man needs both prevenient grace and the ordinances of the church to be saved.
- Pelagianism: man is able to fulfil the law of God because he is not totally depraved. Man saves himself.
- Universalism: everybody gets saved in the end because God is love (ignores God's justice and wrath).

Practical corruption of the Gospel

In addition there was a perversion of the methods of Gospel preaching in churches. This includes the altar call system, raising a hand to indicate conversion, reciting someone else's prayer for salvation, and crusade evangelism. Essentially conviction of sin and genuine repentance were ignored.

¹⁰ Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism was slightly different to Continental Arminianism, e.g. it upheld total depravity but proposed a prevenient grace to counter this. Continental Arminianism degenerated into universalism and later Socinianism.

Mystical corruption of the Gospel

This is the result of radical Charismaticism since the mid-1980s, particularly by the emphasis brought by John Wimber.

The idea that being slain in the Spirit (falling in a trance backwards) is a God-given gift has not only perverted church meetings but has corrupted the administering of the Gospel. In many circles today Charismatics actually believe that if you can get a non-believer into a situation whereby he is mesmerised and is then slain in the Spirit he will be saved.

The Alpha Course is the worst example of this mystical heresy. Worse still, it builds people up over time through love-bombing and social gathering to soften people up for a fake religious experience. It is literally emotional manipulation.

Outsiders are invited to a Bible study that is superficial and stripped of anything threatening, like the truth, which is followed by a free meal. The outsiders are welcomed and made a fuss of. Needless to say that lonely and weak vulnerable people are often attracted to this (very often students away from home). After several weeks they are invited to the Holy Spirit weekend whereby there is a more intensive study course followed by laying on of hands to impart the Baptism of the Spirit. Inevitably many people fall to the ground. They are then pronounced saved but there has been no conviction of sin, no repentance, no individual confession before the Lord, no calling upon the Lord from their own heart and no regeneration. Needless to say, the testimonies printed by this group are shocking in their superficiality. Investigative reporters went through this whole experience and wrote stories explaining that they were never saved.

The Gospel in a nutshell

In these following points, show the Bible passages that affirm what you say. Get people to focus on the Bible.

- Total Depravity: a full explanation of the sinfulness of man and his inability to any good before God. He is lost and dead in sins. (Eph 2:1-2)
- Explain that there is no salvation in this world from any human source. No philosophy or ideology or any number of good works will save. (Rm 3:12)
- Show that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only salvation. There is no other way to get to heaven. (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rm 6:23; 1 Tim 2:5)
- Explain that this salvation meant the death of Christ on the cross; his resurrection and his ascension to heaven – all to save us. (Rm 5:9-10; 1 Cor 1:18)
- Explain that true repentance is necessary before God (Acts 17:30). Explain what this means.
- Tell the person to seek God's mercy and call upon Him (Rm 10:13); to pray for forgiveness and to trust in Christ as Saviour for his own sins (Acts 16:31). Explain that God promises that those who seek will find (Matt 7:7-8), that whoever thirsts may come (Rev 22:17).
- Explain that they must openly recognise Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Rm 10:9; Phil 2:11).

Do not:

- Tell them that they are saved. How would you know their heart?
- Recite a prayer and tell them to copy it.
- Tell them to go to a certain type of meeting. If they need further instruction, visit them personally.

He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death. Jm 5:20

Emotionalism and mysticism

In the past, extreme emotionalism, and what we would now call Charismania, was described as ‘enthusiasm’. You can find whole books dedicated to this subject.¹¹

Mystical movements

One of the earliest mystical and charismatic movements was Montanism. This began as a desire to spiritually reform the church, which was already beginning to ossify, and even attracted the church father Tertullian. The pendulum of history continually swings. After a period of much theological refinement and argument, Montanism was a swing to anti-intellectual emotionalism.

Montanus called his movement pneumatic (spiritual) as opposed to psychic (soulish). It began in Phrygia, home to many heathen influences, around 150 AD getting noticed in 175. It manifested as mysticism with phenomena such as tongues speaking and raving prophecies based upon an ecstatic experience. It also exhibited, what was called by historians, ‘convulsions’. Later, the wealthy female leaders Priscilla and Maximilla took Montanism to further extremes becoming a template for many female mystical leaders to come.

This was but the start of mystical movements in church history. I have analysed these elsewhere¹² but we could mention: the Jansenists, the Convulsionaires, the French Prophets, the Zwickau Prophets, the Munster tragedy, the New Light Prophets, the Pietists, the Quietists, the Quakers, the Shakers, and so on.

Revivals

There have been many good revivals where God has revived his church and brought significant numbers of converts into the fold. The Reformation was a great revival; the work of George Whitefield was another (the Great Awakening). Any emotionalism here, such as crying, wailing or falling to the ground on one’s knees, were evidences of a deep conviction of sin not exuberant feelings.

David Brainerd’s work amongst the Native American Indians was sound. The revival initiated by WC Burns in Dundee followed by Murray M’Cheyne was powerful. Also important was TJ Frelinghuysen ministering in New Jersey, America. Other important American revivals include the work of Presbyterians William [1673-1746] and Gilbert Tennent [1703-1764] or Jonathan Edwards [1703-1758] in Northampton, Massachusetts or John Elliot [1604-1690] who pioneered evangelism to the American Indians. The outstanding Connecticut preacher and pastor Asahel Nettleton [1783-1844], was a Congregational pastor who brought at least 30,000 people to Christ and these people stood the test of time (contrary to Finney’s falling away). In Wales the work of Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland the founder of Welsh Methodism and William Williams was important. In 1816 ‘*Le Reveil*’ was a Reformed revival overturning the rationalism that had taken over Europe with workers such as Robert Haldane.

¹¹ E.g. R A Knox, ‘Enthusiasm: a chapter in the history of religion’, Oxford.

¹² See my paper, ‘The origins of Pentecostalism’.

However, there have also been many unsound movements given the name of ‘revival’ that did much harm to the church and released waves of mysticism, emotionalism and enthusiasm. Indeed, the mixed¹³ Welsh Revival of 1904, which was largely characterised by extreme emotionalism,¹⁴ stimulated the creation of the Pentecostal Movement.

One of the worst was the 1801 Cane Ridge Revival in frontier America. This occurred in a ‘camp meeting’ (similar to the modern Bible Week). It not only led to great excesses of mysticism and emotionalism, including falling down backwards, it also resulted in licentiousness. Many other camp meetings followed. The popular saying at the time was that, ‘*as many were begotten as begotten again*’ in these meetings. Others include the 1859 Irish (Ulster) Revival, which exhibited much mysticism and aberrations; the work of John Wesley to encourage emotional outbursts; Finney’s revival works which were based on Pelagianism; the 1901 Topeka Revival; the manufactured revivalism of various Pentecostal leaders, the 1950s Healing Revival; the 1948 Latter Rain extremist revival movement and so on.

All these various enthusiast movements created havoc in the churches. They promoted errors and also serious aberrations of practice. They led people into mysticism, and even occultism. But worse was to follow.

Modern Charismania

Emotionalism overtaking didactic instruction or even expository teaching really expanded after the Charismatic Movement took hold. Such emotionalism and mysticism had occurred in the Pentecostal movement since 1901 (itself developing from the Holiness Movement) but the Charismatic Movement was the importation of Pentecostalism into mainstream traditional churches.

This led to a focus upon mysticism and passivity – the very opposite of active spiritual edification. Initially this was focused upon speaking and singing in tongues and congregational passivity leading to mysticism. Over time this mystical aspect become outright demonic captivity with outrageous phenomena such as evidenced in the Toronto Blessing. But such aberrations were present in Pentecostalism from the beginning in Azusa Street in 1906. The Toronto-type excesses continued in the Pensacola Revival and the Lakeland Revival (which was conducted in a wicked fashion). These were not revivals at all but were incursions by demonic ideas, occult practices, Kundalini yoga influences, hypnotism and mysticism.

Mesmerism

At this point we should consider the effects of Anton Mesmer who developed Mesmerism, thence hypnotism. This was based upon occult mystical practices and Eastern Hindu yoga exercises.

The history of hypnosis is as ancient as that of sorcery, magic and medicine, to whose methods it belonged. Its scientific history began ... with Franz Mesmer.¹⁵

¹³ Some preachers avoided and resisted emotional extravagances but were still successful,

¹⁴ Evan Roberts rarely preached but merely prayed the words, ‘Bend me, oh Lord’ and people would cry and fall to the ground in waves.

¹⁵ Ency. Britannica CD97, art. *hypnosis*.

The principles of hypnotism have led to a widespread use of this device in churches by people that don't even know what it is. If you get a congregation to become passive through practices such as repeated chanting, droning choruses, monotonous music, singing in the Spirit, and generated introspection, you can make the people suggestible to any authority from the platform. Once passive and suggestible (like hypnotism) you can then initiate exotic behaviour, such as: laughing, screaming, dancing, falling over in a trance and so on. These techniques have been used even in non-religious settings to give the same result. It is the same sort of technique discovered by Mesmer.

Passivity is the basis of mysticism. In mysticism the mind and will are turned off and the emotions increased in intensity. This leads to God-like feelings within, in the right circumstances. It is noteworthy in Charismatic extravaganzas like Toronto that people were commanded to '*drink not think*' and to turn their mind off. In other words, to adopt mysticism. Once in a mystical state, where the will is no longer in control, it is very easy for demonic forces to manipulate the people (mostly by deception and temptation rather than possession) to do crazy things such as bark like a dog. The idea is to ruin the testimony and blaspheme God.

The usual defence of such practices is to gain religious ecstasy, considered to be an aspect of holiness. There is a long tradition of this in Roman Catholicism, which many Charismatics are taking up. Ecstatic experiences in the Bible (such as Ezekiel's visions or Paul's lifting up to heaven) were not sought or prepared for but were immediate giftings by God for a specific purpose. The supernatural experience was not the point but what was learned was what was important. Today, mystics seek the ecstatic experience for its own sake; they want the feelings of supernaturalism. It is superficial religion. It is flesh. Ecstasy is never a goal in itself and is not necessary for holiness.

Another excuse used is to say that embracing mysticism is the extension of self-denial. Self-denial is important but this is the denying of our greed, ambition, strength, human sufficiency and animal passions. It is not the removal of thinking, the bypassing of cognitive thought; it is subjecting the will to God's will. We never abandon our brains in order to become more holy.

There are many pagan religious groups that focus upon achieving an ecstatic mystical experience, whether by whirling (Sufi Muslims), yoga (Hindus), drugs (Hashassin Muslims); asceticism (many groups) or communing with evil spirits (witchcraft). Christianity stands apart from these focusing upon a sound mind,¹⁶ self-control,¹⁷ right judgment,¹⁸ and looking to Jesus.¹⁹

Another reason for avoiding mystical ecstasy is the danger of accepting communication from demons pretending to be an angel or Christ. If you are trusting in subjecting feelings how can you possibly know what influence you are dealing with? This has been proved many times in church history where a mystical group advocated sin, such as walking around naked.

¹⁶ 2 Tim 1:7, 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'.

¹⁷ 1 Tim 2:15, 'continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control'.

¹⁸ Isa 28:26, 'He instructs him in right judgment, His God teaches him'.

¹⁹ Heb 12:2, 'looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith'.

Mystical influences

We have mentioned many examples of mysticism that appeared throughout church history. Here is a simple list of some of the most influential.

- Montanism (150 start).
- Gnosticism (1st century till about 5th century).
- Manichaeism (240 onwards).
- Neoplatonism (2nd-6th centuries).
- Hesychasm (14th century). A Byzantine Church group practising unity with God through silent meditation. Pursuing the 'divine light' through complete isolation from the world.
- Roman Catholic mysticism (many strands; e.g. Hildegard of Bingen [1098-1179], Gregory Palamas [1296-1359], Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross).
- German mysticism (e.g. Meister Eckhart [1260-1327], John Tauler).
- The Zwickau Prophets (Storchites; c.1520-1522).
- The Munster Tragedy (1534).
- Moravian mysticism.
- Pietism.
- Quietism (Molinos, Mme. Guyon).
- Quakerism (1652 onwards).
- The Camisards / Cevenols / French Prophets (1688 start).
- The Convulsionaires / Jansenists (1726-1790).
- Some aspects of Methodism (1730 onwards).
- The New Light Prophets (1742+).
- The Shakers (1770 start).
- Mesmerism (1774-1814).
- Methodist Camp Meetings (1801 start).
- The Catholic Apostolic Church / Edward Irving (1827 start).
- Mormonism (1830 start).
- Many (not all) aspects of the Holiness Movement (1867 start; e.g. Maria Woodworth-Etter [the Voodoo Priestess]).
- Christian Utopianism (19th century; e.g. Zion city).
- Some aspects of the Higher Life Movement (1875 start; Pearsall Smith).
- Pentecostalism (1901 beginnings, 1906 Azusa St).
- The Latter Rain Movement (1948; e.g. Franklin Hall).
- The Manifest Sons of God movement (late 1940s).
- The Healing Movement (1950s; e.g. William Branham).
- The Charismatic Movement (1960 onwards).
- The Signs and Wonders Movement (1980 onwards; UK 1985).
- The New Apostolic Reformation (1990 onwards).

Ecumenism

The ecumenical movement also had an impact even on churches not formally within the ecumenical fold. This led to an acceptance of syncretism with outsiders on the basis of love and tolerance; union on the basis of a claimed shared spiritual life. At first this was a coalition with Roman Catholics, especially on the basis that they also received the Baptism of the Spirit. So there was an early alliance between Catholics and Pentecostals, but this spread wider. Eventually the line was drawn at reducing the Gospel to its most basic points that all could agree to, which was very little. Any mention of Total Depravity, the

sovereignty of grace or Purgatory being heretical was avoided. The later inclusion of the Inter-Faith Movement is but a new development of what began with ecumenism.

Various aberrations and heresies

The ecumenical movement was another blow to theological purity that had begun with Arminianism, New Thought, liberalism, neo-Orthodoxy, New Evangelicalism, adoption of evolutionary theory, incursions of occultism, and many more isms. It started with a diminishing of doctrinal purity but led to accepting doctrines of demons.

In the late 19th century error was emphasising the human will in salvation (Arminianism) or questioning the inspiration of the Bible (liberalism) but in the fulness of the Charismatic Movement we saw outright occultism (demonic ideas) in such things a necromancy ('grave sucking') and divination (Bible 'Tarot'-type Destiny cards). People were so deceived that they attributed screaming, shouting, making animal noises, falling down, pogoing etc as the work of God. At what point did the fruit of the Spirit being self-control get forgotten?

Other initiatives led to different aberrations. The Emerging Church led to a Postmodern, liberal, individualistic approach in church that centred in community but in a bad way – focused upon having coffee during the meeting, letting kids run riot during the meeting, dismissing reverence (perhaps outside of the worship session) and such like.

Seeker Sensitive churches led to a complete focus upon sinners and outsiders so that churches had no relevance to existing saints and their families. Even the Gospel message was dumbed-down and stripped of any threat that could make a sinner uncomfortable. Churches became mere entertainment centres.

Church as a social club

This had been developing during the Charismatic Movement advances. Churches more and more became social clubs. Multiple activities would fill up a member's week so that all his time was spent in this or that church activity. Gradually people became dependent upon the church for their whole social life and the life of their kids. Social life overtook being centred upon Christ.

The church as a secular / occult counselling centre

After 1960 a movement began in the churches to introduce professional psychologists into church ministries. In reality these were psychiatric counsellors with little medical background. People took a short course in psychotherapy and called themselves a psychotherapist. These people brought the worldly and occult ideas of Freud, Jung, Adler and others in syncretism with Bible texts. Because they gained credence for being professional, churches supported their ministry and passed problem people to them instead of using elders gifted by God. Thus psycho-heretics applied multiple lies based in psychiatry (Freud was an abusive fraud) to fix spiritual and emotional problems. The result was very mixed up people.

Worse were the churches that centred instead upon exorcisms of believers. Called 'Deliverance Ministries' these were even more fraudulent. For such folk everything was based in a demonic presence that need to be exorcised. People would go for deliverance time after time and never change their behaviour or get rid of their problems. Every little internal problem was caused by a demon, such as a demon of smoking.

What this was really doing was hiding sin that needed to be confessed and repented of. Instead of self-discipline and dealing with sin people went for deliverance, but the sin continued.

In fact genuine believers cannot be invaded and possessed by evil spirits. There is no mention of deliverance for believers in the NT; the apostles never applied exorcism to saints. People filled with the Spirit cannot have a demon – it would scream and fly to be near to God.

Charismatic radicalism

After the 1980s the Charismatic churches adopted more and more errors in developing intensity. Groups such as Word of Faith, the Signs and Wonders Movement, the Kansas City Prophets, the New Apostolic Reformation, and so on pushed mysticism and occultism to the extremes. Examples would be visualisation promoted by Yonggi Cho. This was merely occultism based upon the positive thinking notions, in his case influenced by Soka Gakkai Buddhism. Emotional healing, territorial spirits, grave-sucking, blowing the Spirit, and channelling are other practical heresies. Doctrinal errors include the 'little gods' claim, prosperity teaching ('name it and claim it'), blasphemous ideas about the work of Jesus in atonement, remotely forgiving sin, the dreaded breed (Joel's Army) doctrine, and many more. The radical heresies of Latter Rain theology and Kenneth Hagin's ideas are the root of many of these.

Global Elite strategies

Not all of the corruption in the church is due to perverse doctrines and ideas promulgated by deceived leaders; there have been many heretical movements and theologies attacking the church as a direct result of Elite banking finance to pursue some goal.

The level of this financed infiltration is hard to uncover since attempts are made to keep it secret. However, some examples are discovered by whistleblower testimony and financial and corporate records.

One early example is the heavy financing of Dispensationalism by Jewish bankers. The reason for this was to establish support for political Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel. To achieve this it was necessary (especially in America) to get the 'moral majority' to side with Jews in all things on the basis of a false theology. Dispensationalism enabled this since it posits a two-tier salvation: God's purpose and favour is primarily with the Jews as God's eternal people in a Jewish kingdom; secondarily, God uses the church as a stop-gap in his purposes; the church is subordinate and temporary. Thus to be blessed one must bless Israel. [Note that since America has been blessing Israel everything has become worse and worse and the nation is facing economic collapse.]

Although first articulated in a cultic heretical church (the Catholic Apostolic Church in London) the tenets of Dispensationalism were promoted chiefly by Brethren leader John Darby, who was a member of the Elite East India Company. Amazingly, Darby was able to publicise this new theology through five preaching tours in America. In the late 19th century even one extended trip to the USA would have only been possible to aristocrats and wealthy businessmen, but Darby was funded by a Jewish banker.

After the initial establishment of Dispensationalism it was necessary to promote it worldwide; the Scofield Bible achieved this. The charlatan and criminal CI Scofield was able to do this by financing from Jewish bankers and businessmen and then publishing by

an Elite-owned publishing house (Oxford Press). With heavy advertising, the Scofield Study Bible became a huge best-seller for decades; its erroneous notes were treated like Scripture.

Various aspects of the Charismatic Movement received financing by Elite organisations, such as the Calvary Chapels. Groups and individuals who claimed a miracle of finance from God to get established, in reality were sponsored by bankers and corporatists.

Thus each new aberration in the church favoured the overall objectives of the Elite cabal. These included the introduction of pagan and occult concepts, mysticism, New Age ideas, Theosophical influences, a focus upon materialism and money, the Interfaith Movement etc.

Simple summary of false initiatives

This is not an analysis of individual proponents and movements but of ideas.

Chief church issues

- Meeting outside the home in a dedicated building or large hall.
- Authoritarian leadership.
- Single church leader.
- Leadership over several churches in a denomination.
- Clergy / laity split.
- Silencing of the laity.
- Elevation of the leader.
- Leadership over several related denominations.
- Introduction of formal membership.
- Introduction of instrumental music.
- Multiple false meetings.
- Introduction of camp meetings / Bible Weeks.
- Ecumenism.
- A focus upon money.
- Interfaith Movement.
- Introduction of false apostles and prophets.
- Introduction of administration jobs.
- Charitable tax-breaks.

Chief doctrinal errors

- Anti-Trinitarianism.
- Errors regarding Christology (e.g. Monophysitism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Arianism).
- Pelagianism.
- Semi-Pelagianism.
- Denial of Predestination.
- Roman Catholicism errors (e.g. justification by works, Purgatory etc.).
- Humanism (e.g. Erasmus).
- Antinomianism.
- Arminianism.
- Socinianism.

- Moral Influence theory of the Atonement (Abelard).
- Middle knowledge of God (Molinism).
- Mediate regeneration (Saumur School).
- Amyraldism (Saumur School).
- Universalism (Unitarianism).
- Rationalism.
- Moral Theology (Finney).
- New Divinity.
- Humanism.
- Liberalism (e.g. denial of Bible inspiration and miracles).
- Modernism (e.g. evolution, scientism).
- Neo-Orthodoxy.
- Pentecostal Theology (e.g. baptism in the Spirit, tongues, prophecy).
- Higher Life Theology (mystical sanctification).
- Liberation Theology.
- New Evangelicalism.
- Charismaticism. Multiple issues involving syncretism with paganism, theosophy, occultism, mysticism, mind sciences, liberalism, Feminism, Postmodernism etc.)

Mysticism

Early church

- Montanist pneumatic enthusiasm.
- Greek mystery religions.
- Gnosticism.
- Post-3rd century: Neoplatonism.

Late Middle Ages

- Catholic mystics.
- German mystics.

Post Reformation era

- Pietism.
- Quietism
- Quakerism.
- Revivalism of various sorts (e.g. Jansenism, New Light Prophets, Cevenols).
- Methodist mysticism.
- Wesleyan Holiness Movement enthusiasm and mysticism.

Modern era

- 18th century: Mesmerism.
- 19th century: Holiness Movement, Wesleyan camp meetings.
- Catholic Apostolic Church enthusiasm.
- 20th century: Pentecostalism, Pentecostal revivalism, Charismaticism.

Pagan occultism

- Precursors: Montanism, Neoplatonism, mysticism, Munster, New Light Prophets, Cevenols, and Catholic Apostolic Church.
- Holiness Movement. Trances, exotic behaviour, extreme mysticism.

- Pentecostalism. Trances, gibberish tongues, occult prophecy and word of knowledge, exotic behaviour, exorcisms, mysticism, channelling (spiritualism), and occult healing methods.
- Agnes Sanford. Inner Healing, mysticism, visualisation (magic).
- Charismatic Movement (includes: Word of Faith and precursors, New Apostolic Reformation, Kansas City Prophets, Signs and Wonders Movement). All of the above plus necromancy, Bible Tarot cards, divination, magic, spiritualism, crystal gazing, radical prophecy, territorial spirits, extreme exotic behaviour. Note that a leading pioneer in the Signs and Wonders movement was a former witch²⁰ who returned to witchcraft after being eventually expelled.

Human philosophy

- Early church: Platonism, Stoicism, Pythagoreanism, Plotinus.
- Post-3rd century: Neoplatonism, Augustinianism.
- Middle Ages: Scholastic Aristotelianism.
- Post-Middle Ages: multiple philosophical movements, e.g. Scepticism, Rationalism, Transcendentalism, Empiricism, Idealism, Humanism etc.
- The Enlightenment: emphasis on Rationalism and Scepticism. Universalism.
- 19th century: Hegelianism, Nietzscheanism, Mechanism, Liberalism, Modernism, Evolutionary theory, Nihilism, Existentialism, Marxism etc.
- 20th century: Rationalism, Utilitarianism, Psycho-heresies, Feminism, Postmodernism, Climate Alarmism.

All such movements caused corruption in certain church circles. E.g: Marxism led to Liberation Theology in South America. Feminism led to women leadership in Charismatic churches and some institutional churches (e.g. Anglicanism). Climate Alarmism is adopted by UK Anglicanism.

The current situation

Today we have all the historic heresies that ever appeared all existing on Earth at the same time. Someone, somewhere, is promoting a heresy that has long been defeated but is now being resurrected. This even includes Gnostic Docetism, the idea that Christ was not human but was a mere phantom because matter is evil and Christ could, therefore, not be material.

Never has there been such error in the churches. This is because a) there are so many unbelievers in the church and, b) the lack of discernment has never been so commonplace.

But as well as error there are practical aberrations that are off the charts. The number of evil practices are shocking. Occultism has invaded the church, latterly through the Trojan Horse of the Charismatic Movement and beginning with PP Quimby [1802-1866], to a level never seen in history. Churches are filled with ideas and practices emanating from Theosophy, New Age, Eastern Religions²¹ (note Wimber's Eastern paradigm), mysticism, Hermetism, magic, divination, spiritualism ('spiritism' USA) and so on. Pentecostalism's Azusa Street meetings had witches and mediums operating in the meetings (which scared

²⁰ Lonnie Frisbee who worked in Calvary chapels and the early Vineyard Movement.

²¹ E.g. yoga, Kundalini yoga, visualisation (from Soka Gakkai Buddhism) etc.

people) as long ago as 1906. Pentecostalist leader Charles Parham denounced such evil occultism that made him '*sick to his stomach*', but no one listened.

I am reminded that various teachers lamented how awful the churches were in their time; such as, BB Warfield at the turn of the 20th century, Amy Carmichael in the early 20th century, AW Pink in the 1940s or Martyn Lloyd-Jones in the 1960s. They could have no idea that their time seems like a golden age compared to today.

This is not accidental; it is the result of a strategy developed by Satan working through human proxies. These proxies are not just heretics in the churches but also members of the evil Elite Cabal in the world that finance such heresies and resource them. For example they funded and supported Dispensationalism, the Charismatic Movement and Messianic Christianity. Their goal is the destruction of the true church.

The mainstream church is finished and the time has long been to leave it and start small house meetings acting secretly and independently.

For those many isolated folks who cannot find any local people to fellowship with because all the local churches are fully corrupt, take comfort that many men of God did not go to church (I am not encouraging avoiding fellowship at all): Elijah, Daniel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph to name a few.

Key factors

What are the key factors that ensure a genuine Christian church experience?

Christ

The first thing is the centrality of Christ.

Though obvious, it is shocking that much of what goes on in the churches today is based upon ignoring the Lord completely. When mysticism, occultism, worldliness and fleshly behaviour abound there cannot be a focus upon Christ.

Christ must be pre-eminent in all things, and especially in the weekly celebration of breaking bread on Sunday.

The Bible

The second thing is the centrality of the Bible.

There must be an objective, absolute basis to test one's principles and practices. The Bible is that fundamental rock. As the expression of the mind and will of God, the Bible is the source of truth that we must focus upon and test everything by.

This means that the Bible must be studied to develop a foundation of doctrinal purity. Such dogmatism (much derided these days) is vital to have a basic understanding of what constitutes truth. The collation of Biblical doctrines constitutes a theological system.

The Spirit

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to guide us, and to take the things of himself and give them to us. It is therefore vital to be alert to the voice of the Spirit in directing us, usually through prayer and Bible study.

One-anothering

Over 60 times one-anothering is mentioned in the NT, e.g. love one another, receive one another. The principles of koinonia are vital in church life. This means fellowship, giving and taking, sharing with one another.

Church life especially is based upon one-anothering, fellowship, koinonia.

A sound theology

Following Bible study, it is vital to develop the principles of a sound theology. It is foolish to denounce theology or claim that you are not a theologian. Every Christian is a theologian (someone that studies God).

You are either a good or bad theologian. Strive to be a good one. Learn the basics of Biblical doctrine and gather the various subjects into a whole. You can be aided by existing dogmatics if you get a sound one.

Testimony

Maintain a good testimony unto God (not man).

This will mean being a true reflection of Christ in the world.

As part of this it is necessary to do good to people outside the church. Have a reputation of a group that does good to the community. Find ways to give practical help to the needy.

Summary

To summarise the changes we could say this:

- Churches abandoned fellowship and one-anothering.
- Churches centred on other things than Christ being pre-eminent.
- Leadership became authoritarian. Multiple authoritarian leadership types (e.g. apostles, prophets, senior pastors, moderators etc.).
- A single leader became dominant in a leadership hierarchy.
- Clergy / laity split. Silencing of the laity.
- Churches became centred upon being a social club.
- Churches became organisations.
- Churches became entertainment centres.
- Churches fell into mysticism and occultism.
- Churches succumbed to doctrines of demons.
- Churches succumbed to demonic practical aberrations.

This does not cover all the developments in the degeneration of the church by a long way; that would require a much larger book. Essentially there was a degeneration of:

- Fellowship,
- Leadership.
- Theology.
- Teaching.
- Church practice.
- Evangelism.
- Worship.

Influences that wrecked the church

- Legalism.
- Paganism.
- Mysticism.
- Human philosophies.
- Occultism.
- Authoritarianism.
- Heresies.
- Materialism.
- Sacramentalism.
- Syncretism.
- Pragmatism.
- Worldliness.

Conclusion

The chief problem in the church is men taking authority to themselves. It happens in every age. Sometimes the man is ambitious and seeks power, but sometimes the man is humble but untaught and gradually assumes too much authority by making foolish unbiblical decisions, often based upon insecurity, pragmatism or bad influences.

What is vital is that church leadership is based upon a team of equal elders. These must be humble men, well versed in Biblical knowledge and with a caring heart. Such will lead carefully under God.

The church they lead will be small and will act like a family not an organisation. It will function on the basis of fellowship and not rigid practice established by men.

This fellowship is not just a sharing of gifts based on mutual edification, but a sharing of love based on self-sacrifice. It is where people put others above themselves.

Above all it is where the people concentrate upon serving God and worship the Lord Jesus. Jesus is first and foremost and all submit to him.

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