

The Testimony of Silence

It is very odd that many of the features of the modern church, which are taken for granted, have absolutely no precedent or support from the New Testament. In fact, there is silence on these very issues. This goes to show how far the modern church has drifted from the apostolic model and why it is false. I will give some examples.

The Gospel

Gospel preaching based a divine love for all

The clear basis of the Gospel proclaimed by virtually every church and every Christian is founded upon the basis that God loves everybody. I have contended against this in many papers showing that there is no truth in this whatsoever and that it misrepresents the theology of God's word and the clear statements of Scripture. However, there is a simple way to evaluate the practice of the apostles, which must be our model.

Everybody agrees that the Acts of the Apostles is a testimony of the way the early church developed and it gives us a picture of the practices of the apostles in building churches, evangelising, and the actual words used in preaching the Gospel. No one disagrees with this. If we wish to support our idea that the Gospel is based upon God's love for all, then we must first find it here.

Well the fact of the matter is that not only do the apostles never use the love of God as a basis for Gospel preaching but the word 'love' itself does not even appear in the book of Acts at all; not even once.

Without examining the whole of the Bible on this matter, this fact of the absence of the word 'love' in the Acts is enough to show us that it is unbiblical to preach such an [Arminian Gospel](#).

There is silence on the love of God being used as a basis for Gospel preaching and no mention that God loves everybody, though there is mention of him hating certain people.

A gospel of healing

All Charismatics accept that healing is a very important part of the church and is a right of every Christian. Healing is repeatedly sought in answer to prayer, both at an individual level and during corporate meetings; it is also taught that it is to be used in evangelism as an aid to the preaching of the Gospel. Pentecostals go further and claim that healing is a vital part of the 'Full Gospel' and that healing is in the atonement; that is healing is an automatic right for all those who are born again because Christ purchased it by his atoning blood.

If this is the case then we ought to see repeated examples of Christians being healing in the apostolic letters and no case of any genuine Christian being sick. In fact we see the opposite. There is not a single example of a sick Christian being supernaturally healed by prayer, not one, but there are many examples of apostles, their co-workers and others being sick and even near death; for example Timothy ([1 Tim 5:23](#)), Epaphroditus ([Phil 2:25-27](#)), Paul ([2 Cor 12:7-10](#)) and Trophimus ([2 Tim 4:20](#)).

We need not conduct an evaluation of Scriptural teaching on this subject in great detail (which we have done elsewhere²); this fact alone is enough to show that the modern conception of Charismatic healing is false.

There is silence on any Christian being supernaturally healed in response to prayer.

A Gospel of prosperity

Many Charismatics have gone further than believing in a Gospel of healing from sickness to believing that continual wealth, health and happiness is the lot of the Christian. This is the Gospel of the 'Word & Faith' churches, also known as the 'Health & Wealth Gospel', or derisively as, 'name it and claim it'.

The simple truth is that there is not one iota of truth in their claims and not a single Scripture that can be used to defend them. The paucity of the idea is found in trying to aver that John teaches this in [3 Jn 1:2](#), I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers; which is, in fact, just a simple and normal, colloquial greeting. The root meaning of 'prosper' here meant to 'have a good journey' and was equivalent to saying, 'I hope you are well and doing OK'.

Every aspect of the health and wealth Gospel is denied by the plain teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Regarding Christians being wealthy see [Matt 8:20](#); [2 Cor 6:10, 8:9](#); [1 Tim 6:10](#); [Jm 2:5, 5:1](#). Regarding Christians being in full health all the time, see previous subject. Regarding believers always being happy see [Acts 14:22](#); [Rm 8:17](#); [1 Thess 3:4](#); [2 Tim 1:8](#).

This is a rogue and dangerous Gospel to be condemned as heresy.

There is silence on this matter in Scripture.

A Jewish gospel

'What is this Jewish gospel?', some may cry. Well, the Jewish Root Movement, which has gained many converts from those who have left radical Charismatic churches as a result of their errors, is a heretical group which focuses believers upon all things Jewish. It is the modern variant of the Judaisers that plagued Paul, and which he confronts in Galatians and Hebrews, and is similar to the Ebionites, which was a movement that plagued the early church after the death of the apostles. Although the most extreme edge of this gospel is proclaiming that one must obey the law to be saved, lesser variants involve focusing believers on to Israel and Jewishness in order to be blessed and to grow in grace.

Just as Paul stated, that the Judaising teaching troubling the Galatian churches was 'another gospel' ([Gal 1:6–8](#)) so the modern Judaising teaching found in the Jewish Root Movement is a false gospel. Apart from ignoring very clear teaching by Jesus and the apostles (in fact the NT is considerably toned down by Jewish Root teachers) it fails to see the overarching example set by Israel in Scripture. The answer to this false gospel is the same that Paul gave, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed ([Gal 1:9](#)).

The chief problem with the Jewish Root gospel is that it completely takes the focus of the believer away from Christ and places it upon a fleshly, sinful, earthly nation that has been rejected by God. This is a sin of the greatest order. The Biblical Gospel always elevates Christ.

The details of this false gospel are many and varied and cannot be evaluated in this short section; thus I refer you to other papers of mine on this matter available on my website (or by request from this author), including a whole book (*The Veil of Moses*).

In simple terms, the Jewish gospel fails to understand that the history of Israel was an example to the church, to Christians, regarding the lessons we must learn from her continual failure. Paul says,

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

1 Cor 10:6

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

1 Cor 10:11

God chose Israel to be the vessel for God's truth on earth and to be a missionary vehicle to other nations. Not only did Israel fail to be a missionary at all (apart from a few proselytes that came to Israel) but also it squandered that truth in pride leading to continual acts of syncretism, which God condemned as adultery. Israel continually ran after men for support (e.g. the kings which made political alliances instead of trusting in God) and lusted after the methods of the world in religious services; using idols to worship Yahweh. Its chief problem was trusting in the world and in men—hence the value in teaching the church lessons.

The key promise claimed by Israel is that it is the child of Abraham and thus chosen by God above all other nations. But Paul shows that this is to miss the point; the promise to Abraham was that his seed (singular) would inherit the covenant promises of the Gospel given to Abraham ([Gal 3:16](#)). This seed was Jesus and all the covenant blessing became his and not Israel's. Indeed, regarding Israel, when the waited for Seed came, Israel rejected that Seed and killed him, losing God's favour ([1 Thess 2:14–15](#)). The rejection of the Seed led Jesus to proclaim that Israel was no longer God's kingdom [Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it, ([Matt 21:43](#))], his new kingdom would be based upon life in Jesus. The covenant of God with men is now a spiritual covenant entered into by union with Christ through the Gospel. All things are now new ([2 Cor 5:17](#)) and the old covenant has passed away; the Mosaic Law is now inoperative ([Heb 8:13](#)).

So, the kingdom is no longer Jewish, there is no place for a national Israel in God's plan (or any human nation); that place ended at the cross and its history is now a lesson for the church. So, there is no future millennial Jewish kingdom that will rule the world. God's kingdom is not of this world at all but is spiritual and centred in Christ. Any focus upon human, earthly things (like Israel) is a distraction from Christ.

Therefore, Christians do not have to follow Mosaic Law to be holy. They should not adopt Jewish customs, neither should they celebrate the Mosaic feasts; indeed Paul says that to do so is to enter into bondage ([Gal 2:4, 4:9, 24, 25, 5:1](#)). Circumcision is folly ([Gal 5:6, 6:15](#)). Those who indulge themselves in following a Jewish type of 'church' service, who celebrate the feasts, who look to the Law of Moses and who use rabbinic methods of interpretation are already in spiritual bondage, but their position will worsen as they dishonour Christ.

There is silence in Scripture on the need to believe in a Jewish gospel (other than condemning it) or for Christians to practice Judaism in any shape or form. There is no blessing in focusing upon Jewish matters.

The hope of the Gospel—not via angels

The Gospel hope is the obtaining of the fulness of the principle of eternal life, which we already possess, and the blessings of full salvation. Ultimately that is dwelling with Christ on a renewed earth where heaven also dwells. However, before the Second Coming, believers who die go to be with the Lord in heaven; thus our hope before the end is to go to heaven in bliss awaiting the final consummation of our faith.

Now it is a common misconception that the spirit / soul of the believer who dies is taken to heaven by angels; however, this is wrong. The ministry of angels was active towards saints under the Old Covenant, thus the many mentions in the OT; however, after the cross this all changed. Since the cross the Trinity dwells within the heart of believers by the Spirit and no mediatorial angels are required. The ministry of angels is currently directed towards those who are to become saints; i.e. the protection of the elect until they believe in Christ ([Heb 1:14](#)).

The person who escorts us to heaven is none other than the Lord Jesus himself; he comforted us with these words:

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

[Jn 14:3](#)

This is crystal clear; the Lord himself receives us when we die and prepares our place in heaven. We need no angel.

Paul also was clear about this:

Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better.

[Phil 1:23](#)

When he died (departed) he would immediately be with Christ.

There is silence in the NT about angels taking saints to heaven.

The consummation of the Gospel—millennial ideas

Now this is not the place to discuss the multitude of ideas about the end, which are usually broken down into four broad theological systems (Historic Premillennialism, Dispensational Premillennialism; Amillennialism and Postmillennialism). However, I do wish to examine the question of whether there is any sort of millennium mentioned in Scripture. The starting place to examine the truth or error within millennial systems is to find the Scriptures about the millennium. The problem is that there are none to find.

Now those who teach a millennium, usually those of the premillennial variety, go to apocalyptic Scriptures that are filled with symbolism and are notoriously difficult to interpret, such as Zechariah, Revelation or Daniel. This is not the way to establish a doctrine.

The proper way to establish a doctrine is to first identify the clear statements in Scripture, and particularly those teachings of the apostles on the matter since these are the final words of Christ

to the church. The apostles were guided into all truth to set down the fundamental doctrines that the church was to believe. So we need clear statements not apocalyptic symbolism that is contentious, plus we need apostolic statements which are the finality of progressive revelation.

When we do this we find that there is not one statement about a supposed millennium anywhere. If it is such an important doctrine (so as to found new theological systems and church denominations) then it should be taught by an apostle, but there is silence on this matter. From this we have to deduce that the idea of a millennium kingdom (being a reign of Christ upon the earth for 1,000 years before the end, or a reign of the church before Christ comes) is false.

If we then look to the only place where a millennium is ever technically mentioned (in [Revelation 20:1–8](#)) then we note the following:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth.

1. The angel that binds Satan is Jesus (remember this is a symbolic book). He explained the need to bind the strong man and the apostles tell us that he triumphed over Satan at the cross ([Mk 3:27](#); [Col 2:15](#)). This means that the 1,000 years began at the cross not in the future. This alone destroys all millennial theories about a future golden age. [An angel coming down from heaven, ... laid hold of the dragon ... who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.]
2. The purpose of the binding was to stop Satan deceiving the nations. [So that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.] This was to stop Satan enabling the development of a global empire under his control whereby he could then destroy the church through political persecution (Revelation expounds this theme). Though empires tried this they were always restrained from completing it.
3. At the end of time, Satan is let loose to fulfil God's plan in founding a global empire under Antichrist that will persecute the church. Many Scriptures explain this as the apostasy and great tribulation. [Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations.]
4. Those who are said to have been martyred by the beast (Antichrist) are souls in heaven that sit with Christ during the 1,000 years. The spirit of Antichrist is behind all persecutions in history. In premillennial systems this takes place on earth in the future, but John tells us that it has already taken place (and is taking place now) in the Gospel age initiated by the

cross. The saints' reign with Christ is in heaven in the Gospel age, not on earth in the future. [I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus ... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.]

5. The general resurrection from the dead is after the 1,000 years; that is after the Second Coming on the Day of Judgment, when the Gospel age is finished. [The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.]
6. The first resurrection is the regeneration of the believer who is born again to have a resurrection life, eternal life. Such are not affected by the second death (condemnation of divine judgment to hell). Dead saints reign with Christ in heaven. [And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ... This is the first resurrection.]

Consequently, there is absolute silence about a millennial kingdom in the future of any kind in clear apostolic teaching. The millennium is a symbolic description in Revelation of the Gospel age. It began at the cross and ends at the Second Coming.

The Church: structure and leadership

Church names

The names given to churches are varied and wonderfully picturesque; all sorts of odd names adorn church buildings and denominations these days. It is accepted by almost everybody that this is normal. As Protestantism fragments ever further, then the first thing that a new church does is to take upon itself a name to distinguish it from everybody else. No one has any qualms about this.

However, there is no precedent whatsoever for doing this and the practice is offensive to God.

The point of naming a church is to establish an identity for this church as opposed to everyone else; it is to set it apart from the brethren elsewhere. By the act of naming a church one immediately indulges in a divisive spirit.

The Biblical teaching about church is that it is the body of Christ on earth, something that is a mystery to the world. When the Lord builds a church in a certain location, then that church becomes that part of the body of Christ in that place; it isn't separate from the nearest church but simply another part of the same family. Thus we see churches identified in Corinth, Rome, Thessalonika and multiple churches in the region of Galatia in what is now Turkey. None of the NT churches were given any names by an apostle, not one, because it is schismatic to do so.

It is a worldly thing to need to name factions. The earliest believers did not adopt names for themselves but the world began to identify them as Christians in Antioch [the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch, [Acts 11:26](#)]. Before that the church used a descriptive term, 'of the Way' rather than a formal title ([Acts 9:2](#)).³ However, no church was given a title, rather we see 'the church in Philippi' or 'the Jerusalem church'.

Thus the modern churches do not need names and thus have no requirement for letterheads, billboards, signs on doors, websites, advertising banners or any other modern paraphernalia.

There is complete silence on the naming of local churches.

Church buildings

Almost every church in the world believes that it is necessary, as soon as funds allow, to move into a rented public building and gradually amass funds to purchase land and build a dedicated 'church' building or convert a large warehouse, shop, pub, or office. I know of churches that have spent literally millions of pounds on such structures.

There are good people who have very small churches who still feel that they should meet in a public building, such as a school. I know of several where the church comprises less than 10 people. To these I would say, the Lord bless you in your work, but you would be better off meeting in a home, just as the apostles and the Lord himself did. If no one has a lounge big enough, then I understand the need for rented premises; but this is rarely the case (it is for one friend). I once visited a large Baptist church structure that had four people in the congregation, who all sat distant from each other in pews while the leader preached from a platform. This is nothing like Biblical church life.

The reason for most large 'church' buildings is the avarice and pride of the leader for large numbers. This is a huge snare for leaders. Even leaders of good reasonably sized churches in moderate premises soon crave to build a new space and enlarge the work instead of subdividing it and planting new churches (as the apostles did). This attitude denies the Biblical precedent and apostolic practice; it is one reason why evangelism is so unsuccessful.

The problem, for virtually all modern church leaders, is that there is no precedent, command, example, or teaching on having a dedicated church building of any sort. None whatsoever. If the apostles did not need it, why do we? If the apostles were successful in evangelism based on subdividing churches and planting new ones, why don't we do the same? If Jesus never needed a large dedicated building, why do we? If the early church prospered to cover the Roman Empire without any buildings with a few decades, why do we get them to prop up systems that don't work?

The gathered church is a family of God's children under their Father; everything in church life is centred on this principle. Thus ministry is based upon mutual edification of all members (1 Cor 12). The church is called 'the household of God' a word which means 'family' or 'kin'. The basis of church life is fellowship (*koinonia*), where everyone shares of themselves and gives of themselves; continual interdependency (Acts 2:42). Even leadership is like a father in a family rather than formal in an organisation.

As soon as you leave a house and get a building then all these principles start to fall apart and the gathering becomes formal, institutional and increasingly organised until it becomes a monolith, hard, authoritarian and dead. There is good reason why God set the precedent of churches meeting in homes in the NT.

There is total silence on the use of large public buildings or dedicated new buildings for church gatherings in the NT.

Single, authoritarian, local church leader

Virtually every modern local church has a senior pastor, a minister, a 'preaching elder' (as opposed to a 'ruling elder') a vicar, priest, rabbi, moderator, prophet, apostle, bishop, or some other titled officer who leads the church, either as *aprimus inter pares* or as a sole leader. This is

accepted as common practice because it is the way that the world runs an organisation. It has always been human nature to have a tribal or clan leader.

However, this is not the way that Jesus worked, who demanded that leaders should be servants, and it is not the practice or teaching of the early church.

And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves."

Lk 22:25–27

In order for the church today to have a single authoritarian leader it must find both teaching and precedent in apostolic doctrine in order to do so. In fact, there is none at all. There is not a single verse in the NT which mentions or describes a single church leader. In fact, the testimony of apostolic doctrine is that local church leadership is based upon a plurality of equal elders and no one else. There is no other church leader identified at all.⁵

If local church leadership is based upon a team of equal elders who can all teach,⁶ then there is no place for a single dominant person to lead.

There is silence upon one man leading the local church.

Single, overarching, multiple church leader

Anglicans have their archbishop; Charismatics (though originally set up to oppose episcopalianism) have their apostle. Other groups call their denominational leader by a variety of names; especially in Pentecostalism. All this follows worldly materialistic thinking where tribes have their clan leaders, nations have their kings and even democracies have their prime ministers and presidents. The world likes to have a single, global leader and this is because it follows the structural hierarchy of Satan's demonic ranks. Make no mistake, hierarchical systems mimic satanic organisational structures.

In contradistinction, the church is based upon independent local structures that have no formal association with any other (but there is a fellowship of love) and no higher leader than an elder; and even local churches have a plurality of these.

The agglomeration of power into the hands of a few began within 200–400 years after the cross, coming to fruition in the teaching of Cyprian. With him, the monarchical bishop reigned supreme over a number of churches. In a short time this led to the reign of one man over many metropolitan bishops—the pope. But the initial creation of a leader (diocesan bishop) over elders in local churches (called presbyters then) is totally unbiblical.

Just as denominations are unbiblical, so the leadership of large church units is unbiblical; thus all those who boast of authority over many churches, whether archbishops, apostles, prophets or anything else, are unbiblical.

There is silence on the idea of a man controlling a number of churches.

Multiple leadership functions

We have established that the only leaders in the local church are elders working as a team. Despite this, the church today reveals a wide variety of leadership functions; each with their own titles and job descriptions. We could mention: worship leaders, apostles, prophets, counsellors, administrators,⁷ youth leaders, children's workers, various office staff, general managers etc. This is to say nothing of institutional leaders; such as vicar, priest, father, pope, cardinal, arch-deacon, reverend, diocesan bishop or rabbi. There are Christians suffering the leadership of such false officers around the world.

None of these various officers have any Scriptural basis; there is silence about them all.⁸

Female leadership functions

It is becoming increasingly common for evangelical churches to follow the practice of liberal and apostate churches in giving leadership roles to women. Sometimes the woman is the pastor, sometimes an associate pastor but very often the woman is a counsellor or pastoral worker. In fact, some churches have a male minister but all their counsellors and pastoral leaders are female. It is also common that women set themselves up as private counsellors offering help to church members even though they have no ordained ministry in a church. None of this is Scriptural at all.

There is not only silence on women church leaders in Scripture but the concept is roundly condemned.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

1 Tim 2:11–14

Nothing could be clearer; Paul does not permit a woman to teach or to have any authority over a man. Any pastoral role implies authority and is forbidden to women. The reason for this is that women are more easily deceived. Paul also says:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says.

1 Cor 14:34

The context is in the judging of prophecy and speaking authoritatively. Women are allowed to pray and encourage in church (1 Cor 11:5) but must not speak with authority.

The concept of women in leadership positions only appeared in church history in heretical groups (e.g. the Shakers, the mystics, Montanism). It rose to prominence after the worldly appearance of feminism; churches then copied this worldly idea. There is silence in Scripture on women leaders.⁹

Salaries for leaders

It is well-nigh universal in the church to find that leaders are paid a monthly salary, and have all the associated perks of modern pay structures (health care, retirement pension etc.). In this case, it ought to be possible to see this being modelled by the apostles in the way that the early church looked after leaders.

In fact we see nothing of this at all. The demand is made of leaders that they learn to look to the Lord in faith for their support and never look to man. It seems to be a part of the shepherding ministry that the individual must first seek the Lord directly for his own livelihood.

This is not as extreme as it sounds since very few leaders are actually called to full-time ministry. By misunderstanding what churches are people have built big gatherings. By misunderstanding what leadership is people have believed that a full-time man is always required. In fact churches are small, meet in homes and have a team of equal elders who share the burden. Such a situation never needs full-time ministry. Furthermore, Paul set the example of not charging for ministry at all, despite considerable mission expenses.

The teaching of the NT is that giving to leaders is ad hoc, according to faith and only for those who are so busy in the word that they cannot work for a living. This really only applies to itinerant leaders. Only missionaries and evangelists need support, but this must be by faith and not in the form of salaries.

There is absolute silence on leaders receiving a monthly automatic salary.

Platform ministry

The point of the platform (or pulpit) is to segregate the official leadership from the people; it is the dividing line between clergy and laity. However, Scripture teaches no such division; in the NT the word *laos* is the whole people, including the leaders.¹⁰

Having a platform is the way of the world; in gatherings there is always a raised dais on which the performer stands to address the audience; this is the same whether the performance is a political speech or an entertaining review. The platform distinguishes the important people whom the audience pays to see. Thus in churches the people on the platform are the leaders whom the congregation submits to; they are the higher class that are literally on a higher plane.

None of this is Biblical. Not only is there no separation of the people into formal sections of officials and ordinary folk, but the apostolic pattern is a complete involvement of the people together. Paul's teaching was not only in public but very often house to house where there were no formalities. In his public teaching he ministered in house churches where there was no platform. Seating was so cramped that sometimes people sat on the window ledge ([Acts 20:9](#)). This is the same manner in which Jesus ministered to his people—everybody seated together as friends in informal settings.

There is silence about platforms, or formalised ministry, in church meetings.

Ecumenical associations

The modern church is riddled with corporate associations of all sorts. There are denominations that stretch across the world; there are denominations that are limited to a nation. There are regional affiliations of many disparate churches; there are national para-church organisations that comprise hundreds of churches; there are even global organisations, such as the World Council of Churches. Some churches find themselves in many associations. For instance a UK evangelical church may well be in the Evangelical Alliance, the FIEC and Affinity at the same time. In Sussex there are churches that are in the previous three organisations and another, the [Sussex Gospel Partnership](#). None of this is Scriptural at all.

The first point is—what is the point? None of these organisations or affiliations appear to do any good to the churches, apart from giving the pastor some kudos. Since these organisations were set up, the UK church has dwindled and the statistics show that it is in near terminal decline. Some denominations are facing extinction and some have already vanished. Paganism is the fastest growing religion in the UK. In Victorian times church attendance was near 95%, now it is less than 10%. It is no good complaining that Victorian church attendance was largely superficial, since current church attendance is also largely superficial; real evangelicals comprise one or two per cent of the population; Reformed evangelicals only a portion of that.

So these organisations and affiliations, which are usually established to foster evangelistic or church planting projects, are useless failures. Some support local churches in a more general way, but this is a failure also since so many local churches have closed down in the last 20 years. Despite this failure, new affiliations continue to arise. Sussex has seen two new ones in the last few years.

The Bible knows nothing of this. The only church unit in Scripture is the local church and this meets in a home. There is no other unit of fellowship sanctioned by the apostles.¹¹ Neither is there any church office superior to that of the elder. Local churches are only governed by elders working as a team of equals; there is nothing above this.

Since this is the case, there is no place for a formal association which gathers a number of churches together under a committee of leaders who are not accountable to a particular congregation. All denominations, all para-church organisations and all inter-church affiliations are unbiblical and all contain a mixture of evangelical and apostate, or compromised, churches. However, this does not prevent local true churches having informal fellowship with one another and supporting each other, just as the Greek churches sent famine relief to the Judaeon churches. What is to be condemned is a formal institution above that of the local church.

There is silence on the matter of denominations and church affiliations.

Camp meetings and conventions

‘Camp meetings’ was the name given to the Methodist church gatherings in pioneer America in the early 1800s; a more modern term in the UK would be ‘Bible Week’. This is where thousands of people, usually based in families, would camp out in a field surrounding a main meeting tent where church gatherings would be held at night and seminars in various smaller tents in the day. There would also be entertaining events, crèches, and kid’s meetings.

The point of this is usually to give a shot in the arm to struggling smaller churches and to give a propaganda boost to the churches within the denomination of the organisation sponsoring the week. Thus it would comprise of hotshot preachers who would whip up the very large congregation, and the worship would be driven by a large orchestra or rock band to generate the necessary emotionalism necessary for the preparation of the ministry.

Smaller versions of this were often found in the 50s in America during the healing revival. Where there is a gathering of thousands of people it is easier to whip up emotions and manipulate the crowd mentality. It is just like a football crowd where individuals do things they would never consider doing on their own. The real purpose is to foster the agenda of the organisers, whatever that is. Another variant, at a regional level, would be large gathering in a big hall once a month

under a variety of names. This again would comprise multiple churches and a few thousand people but at a smaller level.

None of this has any Biblicity whatsoever. We have already established that the local church is the only unit sanctioned by God and that this is small and meets in homes. When churches gather in these big venues they require a new level of leadership authority. That is usually claimed to be a modern 'apostle', or sometimes 'prophet'. The local church elders would be in the large congregation with their people but on the platform of the Bible Week would be an apostle dominating the proceedings. This is unbiblical. There is no level of leadership in the church above that of the local team of equal elders.¹²

There is silence on camp meetings and such conventions in apostolic teaching.

Cell groups and house groups

Having established that there are no church structures larger than that of the local church, we now explain that there are no church structures smaller than that of the local church. When the church meets, it meets as the church, with elders present. There is none other.

Now because modern churches have developed into much larger structures than a home church, it is logical that church members miss small, intimate fellowship and feel out of place as a small cog in a big machine. Thus modern churches create smaller units to meet in the week. They call these, house groups, home groups, cell groups or some such name. Since they are smaller than the church, they have a new type of leader, called a house-group leader or such like. Scripture knows nothing about such a person.

Furthermore, what goes on in these groups varies in the extreme. Some are smaller versions of the main meeting; some are little other than a social group; some just do relaxing things together (like bowling); some just have low key fellowship—a chat over coffee. Some Charismatic churches apply the principle of homogeneity to house groups, so there will be a group for doctors, a group, for women, a group for industrial workers etc. This is a flat denial of the fellowship of many members seen in 1 Cor 12.

Some have taken this a step further; having house groups already, they then have a smaller division still, often called cells. This structure is sometimes part of a spiritual warfare programme whereby these cells are called to wage spiritual warfare against specific demons in a town or region (a practice unknown in Scripture).

Some churches go even further having a large centralised town meeting in a big venue; local congregations for a district of the town; house groups for smaller parts of the town and cells for a street. Thus there are four types of church meeting with diminishing numbers. None of this is biblical.

There is absolute silence in Scripture on all these sub-divisions of the local church; there is no warrant for them whatsoever; they are all false.

Church meetings

Instrumental music in worship

Almost all churches in the world use instrumental music to aid the singing of the saints in church meetings. Many churches today, especially those of the Charismatic variety, not only use such music but employ very loud, amplified, contemporary instrumental music more akin to pop concerts or rock bands. Again, if we want to make a case for this we must first demonstrate that such behaviour was an apostolic principle used in the early church.

Again, not only is there no apostolic precedent for doing this, and no apostolic teaching allowing us to do this, there is not a single word about instrumental music in the whole of the New Testament in connection with the church. There is none at all. The only mention of an instrument is in [Revelation 5:8](#) where it is symbolic for the worship of the saints in heaven and in [1 Corinthians 14:7](#) where it is used metaphorically to illustrate a point about being understood.

Thus there is nothing whatsoever about instrumental music being used in the early church and indeed this was the case for hundreds of years afterwards. Instrumental music was not widespread in the church until after 1200 AD, and even then was not used by the Reformers or many Reformed churches until the 20th century. Spurgeon, Calvin and Luther did not use instrumental music.

There is silence about instrumental instruments being used in the church.

The centrality of the sermon

For Protestants it is automatic that the sermon takes centre stage in church meetings. No one bats an eyelid to check whether this is Biblical or not; it is just taken for granted. However, a careful reading of the NT shows that this is not a Biblical precedent. The problem partly arises from the repeated mention of apostles preaching and the confusion between the teaching and evangelistic ministry of leaders.

The word 'preaching', which appears in English Bible versions, is actually using one English word to translate a wide variety of Greek words that refer to different things. In Greek there is a clear preaching of the Gospel to outsiders in an evangelistic ministry. This word thus translates Greek words which mean 'proclamation', 'evangelising' or 'heralding'. For instance:

They returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

[Acts 8:25](#) [Here 'preaching' is 'evangelising', *euaggelizo*.]

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

[Acts 11:19](#) [Here 'preaching' is 'to utter sounds', *laleo*.]

Preaching the kingdom of God.

[Acts 28:31](#) [Here 'preaching' is 'heralding', *kerusso*.]

[God] has in due time manifested His word through preaching.

[Titus 1:3](#) [Here 'preaching' is 'proclamation', *kerugma*.]

These verses, referring to the preaching of the Gospel, use Greek words that do not refer to the teaching of the church in a Sunday meeting. For this the Greek uses a different type of word, such as:

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching.

Acts 15:35 [Here 'teaching' is 'teaching, to discourse in order to instruct', didactics, *didasko*.]

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

Acts 20:7 [In the AV, 'spoke' is 'preach'. Here 'spoke' is 'converse, to discuss, argue', *dialegomai*. 'Message' is 'word' or speech', *logos*.]

So we see two types of leadership discipline: 'preaching' to evangelise and 'teaching' for the saints. Teaching itself has two types, discussion for general edification and instruction, or lecturing to hammer home doctrine. Thus Paul, as an apostle, both preached and taught:

For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle -- I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying -- a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

1 Tim 2:7

As a preacher, he evangelised a place; then, as converts were gained, he taught them and as an apostle laid a foundation of Jesus Christ on which to build the church. The other apostles used the same method,

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5:42

In the temple they evangelised (preached) but in homes they taught.¹³ Thus the NT differentiates between preaching and teaching.

Therefore, we see the preaching being exemplified in Acts in order to evangelise men (e.g. **Acts 2:14–36**); but even these sermons are not like the formal, prepared, professional sermons used in church meetings today. This is much more like the professional sermons of Greek rhetoric, which was such an entertainment to Greeks. It is this format which was taken up by the Reformers and everyone since. The sermonic evangelisation of the apostles was unprepared; a passionate proclamation of Christ as Saviour.

Teaching disciples, on the other and, has always been informal, based upon discussion and utilising questions and answers. This was the method of Jesus teaching his disciples and it was the method used by Paul in dialoguing with the churches he taught. In general, the teaching of the gathered flock is by dialoguing; the method of instructing the flock in doctrine is by didactics, especially when teaching in homes (something few even bother to do today, unlike the apostles— **Acts 5:42, 20:20**). In practical terms, dialoguing is suitable for the Sunday gathering; didactics is more suitable for the mid-week Bible study where doctrine can be properly expounded. A formal sermon is suitable for neither.

Therefore, there is utter silence on the modern method of teaching the church formally by a professional sermon on Sunday. It is a practice that elevates men and entertains audiences, but actually does little good to hearers who retain so little of what they hear. The Biblical practice also

presupposes that church must be small and meet in homes where dialoguing can take place efficiently.

Intelligent preachers of the past have always recognised this; theologian pastor RL Dabney believed that congregations only retained 4% of his preaching. Thus many preachers supplemented the Sunday message with home visitation (as Richard Baxter) or with the publication of the sermon in print (as with CH Spurgeon, Martin Luther, John Calvin and many Puritans). The good results of the great preachers of the past is not due to their verbal preaching but to their publication of their preaching allowing the flock to properly digest it.

There is no Biblical evidence that the sermon should be used to teach the flock on Sunday.

Charismatic tongues

You may think that this is an odd choice since there are several references to tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians. However, none of these have any reference to Charismatic tongues at all; there is an observable difference. The tongues mentioned in Acts and 1 Corinthians (which appear to have vanished within a decade or two and are not mentioned in the later letters, and only by Paul) are specifically stated to be known languages. This is clear from [Acts 2:1–11](#). The miracle was not a babble of unknown sounds but the speaking of a language or dialect by men who had no prior knowledge of it. That is the whole point; it showed the universalism of the Gospel spoken by the apostles—it was for all nations instead of just Israel.

Paul's point in 1 Corinthians is that the tongue must be interpreted (not an impression but a proper interpretation of each word) in order for the people to hear the wonderful works of God in the tongue. That is another point; the tongue was always praise for God's works ([Acts 2:11](#)); it was neither a prophecy nor an exhortation.

However, the tongues evidenced in Charismatic churches are merely a babbling noise or gibberish. They are not earthly languages spoken by people who had no background in them. In fact, doctors have testified that they are identical to the babblings of mentally ill patients or those who have temporarily lost their reason.

This is admitted by Charismatics since they claim that these sounds are angelic tongues and not human languages. However, although Paul mentions angelic tongues in [1 Cor 13:1](#) this is a poetic device and not a statement of fact; it refers to superlative tongues; the highest form of speech. Angels are spirits who have no bodies and hence no tongues; neither do they speak any language at all, being spirits, but communicate by the Spirit. So there are no angelic tongues.

Thus the tongues of Charismatics find no place in the Bible. There is silence regarding this matter.

The silent majority

The New Testament is filled with descriptions and commands regarding constant interdependency in the local church. From Scripture you would think that the local church gathering is a hive of everyone edifying everyone else. Thus we see references to mutual edification ([1 Thess 5:11](#)), to everyone bringing a contribution ([1 Cor 14:26](#)), to everyone having a gift that should be used ([Eph 4:7–8](#); [1 Pt 4:10](#)) and constant use of the phrase 'one another', as in edify one another. We even have a whole chapter devoted to expounding the principle of the

whole body using its particular gifts and talents to serve the rest of the body (1 Cor 12:1–30). There is an enormous amount devoted to body ministry in the apostolic writings.

But what do we see in practice today? We see one man, or a very few people, ministering on a platform and the whole of the rest of the church being silent and not contributing anything to the meeting. Scripture is silent on such a silent majority. Brethren, this is a travesty. There is no justification for the majority of the church never doing anything in the meeting and for the gifts of the majority falling into disuse.

There is silence about a silent majority in the church meeting.

Conclusion

The number of features in current church life and teaching that have not the slightest support from Scripture is staggering and something that ought to concern every believer. If you took all these unbiblical features out of the modern church you would have nothing left.

One of the common characteristics of these rogue ideas is that they tend to elevate men. Far too often the cause of problems in the church is the focus upon men instead of Christ. Now it doesn't matter if the man is good or bad, not even good men should be the focus of the church—only Christ must be pre-eminent.

The modern church has to learn to shed its false ideas and aberrant practices and steer away from centring upon man; if it does not it will be wiped away in the judgment of God as he produces a more pure work from his own hands. In history he has done this through the fires of persecution, and such a day is already hot on our heels in Europe. The coming persecution is not to be feared but will be a means of grace to purify God's church on earth as it prepares to meet her Saviour, who comes in glory to be marvelled at in the saints.

Footnotes

1 An succinct example of the most recent of these is [Contra Love-Sussex](#).

2 For instance in my paper, [Over anticipating the kingdom](#).

3 'The Way' was commonly used in the Acts to describe Christianity; referring to Jesus as the Way of life, (19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22) or the way of salvation (16:17); sometimes it means 'the way of the Lord' (18:25). Compare [Isa 40:3](#) 'the way of the Lord,' [Ps 1:6](#) 'the way of the righteous'. Jesus called himself 'the way' ([Jn 14:6](#)), the only way to the Father.

4 'First amongst equals', which is an oxymoron.

5 A deacon is not a spiritual leader but an assistant to the elders to oversee practical issues such as finance and giving.

6 [1 Tim 3:2](#); [2 Tim 2:24](#). A 'bishop' (overseer) is another word for elder, being more common amongst Greek speakers.

7 The appearance of 'administrations' ([1 Cor 12:28](#)) in some Bible versions is the Greek word *kubernesis*, which means a pilot or steersman and is a reference to the guiding ministry of an elder. It is translated in the AV as 'governments' since the steering of the ship is an office of

rule; in fact the word can mean 'rule'. The word is not referring to a general manager type of function.

8 Apart from the mention of 'rabbi' in condemnation. Jesus categorically used it as the prime example of a title not to be used by the church.

9 Even in the OT the appearance of a woman leader was a curse on Israel, such as Jezebel. Deborah was not a formal leader but the encourager of Barak. The command of the 10,000 man army was in Barak's hands but Deborah had the mind of the Lord in giving Barak directions.

10 E.g. 1 Pt 2:10, 'people' = *laos*.

11 The synod of Jerusalem was not a continual worshipping body but a temporary gathering of churches to resolve a doctrinal problem. It also comprised the whole people not just the leaders. When it finished the churches went back to their previous independent state. No further synod appeared during the period of the writing of the NT.

12 NT apostles comprised of two sorts. The first were the apostles of the Lamb, which were the 12 plus Paul. These had to have seen the risen Lord Jesus and were inspired to write Scripture. The second class were the apostles of the churches, such as Junias or Andronicus (Rm 16:7). These were effectively missionaries sent from the churches to plant new works. A modern apostle is a church planter and he has no authority in his home church as an apostle. Only elders have authority in the home church.

13 'Proclamation', *kerugma*, can also be an element within the teaching of the church: Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching [*kerugma*] of Jesus Christ. Rm 16:25. Here the proclamation of Christ builds up the church. When the teacher instructs the flock and in doing so proclaims Christ, the *kerugma* becomes part of the teaching. Thus 'proclamation' straddles both evangelising (preaching) and teaching.