

Preface

Enemies of the Cross of Christ began as a series of articles in “The Elders’ Corner” in the *Bulletin* of the Orangeburg church of Christ, Orangeburg, South Carolina. We had heard the rumblings of controversies like distant thunder, but it seemed remote and far away. For the congregation, the first flash of real lightning was when a friend, an elder of a church in Georgia, was asked to step down as an elder to make way for the innovative changes desired by the preacher and some members. The elder, converted from a denomination, saw the practices as a return to what he had left—practices unscriptural in both content and method. He could not go along and remain true to the Lord.

The lightning flashed once again when a faithful member moved to an out-of-state congregation. In that church the change agents were rapidly moving ahead to *praise worship*, in components and strategies that destroyed the New Testament pattern of worship. The sister had to move to a different congregation made up of former members who had left the changing congregation for conscience sake.

In our travels my wife and I were nearly always being confronted with these issues. The innovators were litigating against the elders of a Nevada church for possession of the building. The preacher in a Scottish church advocated instruments of music. A community church broke off in Hendersonville, Tennessee. The Nashville newspaper reported a division in the Madison, Tennessee, church. One other church had lead singers wired; another stood and applauded the guest Bible teacher. The list goes on and on.

These circumstances led to a series of articles in “The Elders’ Corner” called “Controversies Confronting the Church” aimed at informing the congregation. To share the articles in this new format is an effort to inform and prepare faithful brethren to protect themselves and their home congregations against the storms of change. Our desire is to circulate the material in a variety of printed and digital forms to reach as many brothers and sisters in Christ as possible.

There are several disclaimers. The work is the work of a local eldership and makes no claim to academic or linguistic scholarship. Certainly many of our brethren are producing more worthy works. Especially helpful to me are Dave Miller’s *Piloting the Straight* and Duluth (GA) Church of Christ’s *What Is Happening to the Church*, researched and written by Rod Rutherford and edited and delivered by Jim Dearman. This work also is available in VHS and audio tape formats.

Nor have we addressed fully the underlying ideas supporting change agents and innovations in the guise of a *new hermeneutic* with its *core gospel* concepts. It is our opinion that the assault on local churches is coming from trained local change agents who subversively insert their practices into the work and worship of the congregation. The broader, philosophical war will be waged for the minds of elders, preachers, and teachers on a broader national and international level. Helpful in this broader war is the work done by many faithful brethren in *The Spiritual Sword*. I have found their scholarly and scriptural rebuttals to the ever-advancing ideas of change agents and innovators most helpful.

Neither does this work intend to be complete or exhaustive in content. Please think of it as an essay in the traditional meaning of the word—a beginning. We have chosen to focus on the New Testament pattern and how it is being set aside in favor of the doctrines of men. For definitions and practices, the work focuses on those major ideas that revamp the worship and fellowship. The new and emerging apostate group is radically different from the church of the New Testament; and therefore, even outsiders will immediately recognize them as something other than the church of Christ. Soon they will be a *denomination* in every sense of the word.

For our countless limitations in scriptures, in thoughts and in words, we apologize and ask forgiveness. We have not hesitated to help ourselves to the thoughts and words of more qualified brethren. Our prayer is that this study will help Christians and the church to defend the faith once for all delivered.

To God be the glory in Christ and in the church.