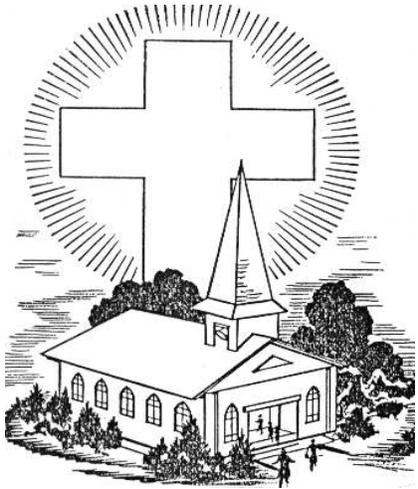


Counterfeit Religion



B. W. Cheney

One of the most useless and dangerous things a man can have in his possession is counterfeit money. Many are in prison today because they have printed, distributed, and dealt with it one way or another. Counterfeiting money in our land of America is a federal crime, and whoever is caught in this illegal business is punished by our laws until they have paid their debt to society.

Dear friend, I am going to tell you about something that is much worse than counterfeit money, and that is counterfeit religion. First of all, we need to understand that the devil is the father of all counterfeit religion. The devil (or Satan) is a deceiver, and John 8:44 says he is a liar and the father of it.

We live in a land where church buildings are a common sight. You can pass through a small town and see anywhere from five to ten different church buildings belonging to as many different denominations. The devil would have us to believe they are all the children of God headed on their upward way to Heaven.

Friend, beware of counterfeit religion because it will only take you in one direction—straight down to a devil's hell. There is a way we check counterfeit money, and thanks be unto God, there is a way we can check and see if we have pure religion or if we have been deceived into accepting a counterfeit one. The only authority we have on this is God's holy Word, the Bible.

Beloved, if you have an honest heart and want to do the right thing in obeying God and His Word, you had better make sure you are not tangled up in false religion when you leave this life. The Bible says in James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

I would like to point out some things that expose counterfeit religions. Jesus said to a Jewish leader in John 3:3 (after the man had acknowledged that Jesus had come from God), "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Then, in verse 7 Jesus repeated this by saying, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

If you have a religion that teaches that you do not have to have the new birth to get to Heaven, your religion is in vain. You may be saying, "My church is the most popular one in town and it is filled to capacity every Sunday morning." To that I would ask the question, "Is it teaching the whole council of God, or is it teaching what the people want to hear?" Proverbs 16:25 tells us, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

We all have eternity-bound souls and every man, woman, boy, and girl have a right to know where that soul is going to go when they leave this life. We can know for a certainty where we are going if we will only take the time to read and rightly divide the Word of truth.

Anytime a preacher tells you, "You cannot know you are saved until you die," he is surely a promoter of counterfeit religion. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." First John 5:13 gives us proof that we can know we are saved in this present life. It says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that *ye may know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Anytime you are taught that a backslider will go to Heaven even though he dies in a backslidden condition, you are being deceived. This is nothing more than counterfeit religion! Ex-backslidders will go to Heaven as long as they continue their walk with God. When a person who was saved at one time turns from righteousness and enters a life of sin again, they have severed their relationship with God, and therefore they become a sinner again. We know by God's own Word that there will be no sinners in Heaven. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matthew 24:13 also warns us concerning staying true to God: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

We have to admit, the devil can paint a pretty picture for many, when he tells them after they are saved that all sin more or less everyday and no one can live without sinning. God's Word again puts these false teachers in their place by telling us in 1 John 3:6, "Whosoever abideth in him [Jesus] sinneth not." Then, verse 8 says, "He

that committeth sin is of the devil." You may still be saying, "No one can live a *righteous* life here on this earth." If that be true, then what are we to do with 1 John 3:11-12, which says: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were *evil*, and his brother's *righteous*."

James 5:16 has this wonderful promise for us: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [not sinner] availeth much." We continue the thought on righteous living by quoting from 1 John 3:7. It says, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Counterfeit religion always has and always will fight against holiness. The reason for this is, the devil knows that without living a holy life here, at this present time, you are doomed for hell. Let us take a look and see if the Word of God backs up this statement.

When we become children of God, then God takes us in hand and starts teaching us how we should live. If we get out of hand, He, being a just heavenly Father, has to punish us or as the Bible calls it, chasten. Hebrews 12:9-10 explains it this way: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be *partakers of his holiness*." God's Word follows this up by saying in verse 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Yes, friend, when you fight against holiness, you are definitely showing God and your fellow man that you are with counterfeit religion all the way.

Many today are under the false teaching of "only believe." You can believe as much as you want to, but if you never confess your sins to God (not man), experience the new birth as recorded in John 3:3 and 7, and become a new creature as Paul spoke of in 2 Corinthians 5:17, you are still lost even though you have a head belief concerning the things of God.

Remember, the Bible tells us in James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Therefore, according to the Scriptures, it takes more than just a believing attitude, or head knowledge to get to Heaven and escape the awful torments of a real hell.

Counterfeit religion is also a great promoter of the thought, "Each one to his own faith." The Word of God again exposes this false theory by telling us in Ephesians 4:4-5: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism." The Bible does not speak of many faiths, but rather of one faith.

A popular saying today is, "Go to the church of your choice." Dear friend, if you are really concerned about your never-dying soul, you will seek God with all your heart, and find out which church He would have you to go. Counterfeit religion says it really does not make any difference where you go, as long as you go to *some* church. God's Word condemns denominations because they cause division among God's children. Paul told the church in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Every person with a sound mind will have to admit, every denomination on the face of this earth teaches something different than the other, and nothing causes division quicker than this. There is no division in God's church because He is the One that puts you in it (Acts 2:47); and if you commit sin, He is the One that puts you out (Romans 6:23).

God has already named His church and no man or woman has any right whatsoever trying to change it. Since the Apostle Paul called the church, The Church of God, approximately eleven times in the Scriptures, then I am fully persuaded that it is the correct Bible name for it. (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; and 1 Timothy 3:5.)

Remember, the devil with his counterfeit religion also calls some of *his* churches, the Church of God. So you see, we cannot go just by the name only. We have to try the spirit by the Word and make sure the place we are attending is not Babylon (meaning confusion) even though the sign out front says, The Church of God.

May this message expose every counterfeit religion there is, and at the same time help all the dear saints of God to draw closer to Him and to each other. May all of us claiming Jesus Christ as our own precious Savior stay clear of sin and counterfeit religion.

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