

CHAPTER ONE: IN THE BEGINNING

The Gospel according to John tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1; KJV).

Bible scholars know that the Old Testament starts with the same that before anything there was God. It was no different with the church; on the day of Pentecost all eyes (in one place with one accord) were on God. But just as with everything else man gets his hands on, the church started out in a marvelous state, and now we can only wonder at what it's been reduced to.

In the Old Testament, God talks to man in the Garden. By the time we get to the book of Malachi, man is being set up for a several-hundred-year silence from God because of man's sinful state. In the New Testament, we see all eyes fixed on the Lamb of God as John introduces our Savior. In the book of Revelation, we see the kings of the Earth (in the church he made us kings and priests) battling against Him, not wanting to lose their personal influence over the Lord's inheritance. (Rev. 1:6 KJV)

In the beginning men fasted, prayed, and sought God for revelation by the masses (for those who were believers, at least). Today, men desire to find their nuggets of faith in books (like this one) and in the media. Now,

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I'm not trying to discourage you from reading, of course; it would defeat the purpose of my writing. But what I am trying to do is provoke you to think. I hope that you view this and any commentary about the Bible and spirituality the same way, with an open mind.

This book should make you seek God, not try to know Him. You should only seek to *know* Him through prayer, His word, and your experiences with Him. There are patriarchs, even of late church history, who get higher marks for their faith than where we are today as believers, which is to say that as time goes on and arrives at us, the condition has and is worsening.

Martin Luther sought something more in line with the divine doctrine.

William Seymour sought the essence of the presence of God. G. T. Haywood sought exact clarity, and there have even been those who stated their faith through miraculous manifestations, such as Mildred Boyd. Some of these people you may not have heard of, but the point that I hope to drive home is that today there is more man and less God in the church, leaving the church in a condition of illustrating only superficial proofs of faith.

Most churches fall under the category of "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5; KJV). We come together on certain designated days and share songs and experiences, we listen to a

refined dissertation of commentary on the Scriptures, and then we shake hands and go home. Many would ask, "What do you have a problem with there?" and I would answer that there is no supernatural evidence that God is in the room nor does the evidence rank abundant in reports of lives being lived as spiritually regenerated! And you say, "But people expressed joy in the dance and came to the altar with tears, and there is such growth in the ministry that God must be in it."

I challenge you with this: those people who danced and cried have they experienced any significant change outside of church? Are those people winning people? And the people who they win do they bear fruit as well?

We all agree, I'm sure, that if something isn't growing, then it is dying or dead. But let me take you a step further to say that just because something is growing doesn't mean it's on the right track.

The Zeal of Thine House has Eaten Me Up!

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People mistake a growing ministry for being the will of God. I know this sounds cynical, but I bring you a radical quote, "The zeal of thine house has eaten me up" (Pss. 69:9; KJV)

We have to change the way we think success works if we want biblical success (results). At the beginning of the church, dancing in the aisles was not the criterion that determined whether God was present or if there was excitement. In the beginning, they looked for the "power thereof" to be manifested in the church.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1; KJV). How did he come to them? Well, in the beginning, after the preaching there was proof to back up what they had just finished talking about. In the beginning, they had what Jesus said a believer would have: "Signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17; KJV).

He was not talking about a social behavior pattern; on the contrary, He meant a supernatural display being manifested somewhere in the believer's life. If we as believers are to resemble what the early church believed in, we must first raise our expectation beyond what all of us have allowed. Oops!

Yes, I said it, *allowed*.

As a country, we can't afford not to have tolerance for variation and people who are different. This I embrace. But perhaps it is divinely sanctioned, for there to be a separation of church and state. It seems the church continues to cling to the government, wanting to be like it toting eager pens to make amendments as it were to the very scrolls written by Apostles in order to make allowances for social deviants in the Body of Christ. Whereas, the government should embrace all things about all people (except for criminal activity) the church should not be infiltrated with things that would water down the intent of the word of God. We as the church should stand apart from the world. Many use the expression "none of us is perfect," and that's true, but we should work toward perfection (see 2 Cor. 13:9; KJV).

Taking you, the reader, into the next phase of our focus, I submit to you that anything successful in its beginning must maintain the same principles that brought it success. Let's take a corporation, for example. The principles a corporation are governed by should be in its mission statement. If the corporation derails from the concepts of its mission statement, it should

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be because the mission or purpose has changed—and it should hopefully change for the better, although this is not always the case.

The Church's mission cannot be changed; it has been expressed in the word of God from its beginning to its transition. Jesus expressed the Church's mission when He read it before those who listened in the synagogue. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19; KJV).

Since this mission has not changed for the eternal church (those who are written in the Lambs Book of Life who will be raptured Rev. 21:27 KJV) why has much of the visible church, in most cases and many respects, left from its first love of being an acceptable sacrifice and testimony?

Let's go back to the example of the corporation, which should be easier to understand. When a corporation fails, whose fault is it overall? Is it the fault of the workers? It shouldn't be, because if the workforce refuses to be directed, it is up to management to correct that problem, sometimes resulting in termination. I believe that the success of any entity depends on its head, which is everything's beginning.