

A Picture of The Church
The Way it Is

Note that the title speaks positively, using the definite article “the”. It is not an observer’s, or critic’s rationalized viewpoint, nor is it simply an author’s opinion, but an authentic representation of the subject involved. That subject is the condition of the universal church of today.

If the writing was a generally positive critique of the church in general, or even a major percentage of it, it would probably be acceptable without much question and little dissension.

And that observation goes to the heart of the problem, even malady, that characterizes most of the institution—the world over, and for many centuries now!

So how can I be sure that my analysis is authentic? Because I measure the church—its doctrine, its character, etc. against the scriptures, which clearly set forth its requirements for faithfulness to God, His word, and His church. This may sound oversimplified, but it is where the root of the failure lies!

Those principles are not subject to opinion, nor consensus, or any conditional factor—but are absolute revelations from God, which we are commanded to learn the true interpretation of, and to obey and conform to, with total church unity!

The last clause alone, proves our failure—because no matter how impossible such a demand may seem to be, the first church had the record of being all of one accord in its total testimony! Why? Because they worked at it assiduously to get it right, and keep it right!

Please see the section titled “The Modern Church vs. the Original (Model) Church”, for extensive treatment of the subject.

Romans 1:25 refers to those “who changed the truth of God into a lie”. And, as John Gill says, “not the truth of the gospel, which they were unacquainted with”, but the truth of nature as it reveals God, and His creative works.

That, of course, was natural, unsaved man, but the church is guilty of changing the truth of the gospel! Once it introduced the idea of voluntary salvation into the doctrinal picture, the Gospel was thereby revised and the seeds of its adulteration were sown—only to be augmented and developed by further humanization of associated divine truth, until we have the full-blown Arminian theology with which the church is almost totally indoctrinated.

Some of its corrupt belief elements (theology) may be concisely summarized as follows:

1. Universal free will.
2. “ atonement for sin.
3. “ salvation availability.
4. “ divine love, will to save (all).
5. “ ability to believe the gospel.
6. “ access to God by prayer.
7. “ audience with God for worship.
8. “ solicitude for mankind.
9. Partial (vs. total) human depravity– to validate the free will concept.
10. Unbelief (of the Gospel)—a new basis for condemnation vs. original sin.

The church, then, is an empire built largely on the foregoing philosophical constitution. That is, of human concepts; not sound, correctly interpreted gospel doctrine! False premise = false results!

While it is indisputable that each believer’s personal salvation is founded upon the true Gospel principles—because God himself directly and independently causes the regeneration of His elect ones—the earthly organization misrepresenting the true church is not adequately spiritual in practice, because of its corrupt theology, or doctrinal errors.

It (the church) is in dire need of radical reformation, and it doesn’t even know it. Which ignorance is inexcusable, because it is incumbent upon every Christian to have the same interpretation of its fundamental principles. The literal meanings of which are revealed in the bible.

That is, the various doctrinal beliefs on a simple elementary , or advanced level are to be mutually agreeable (singular) throughout the church. Unanimity is God’s mandated requirement! Therefore, unanimity must be every Christian’s , and every church’s goal—which must not be compromised.

But, of course, it did, until as Spurgeon said (paraphrased slightly) “it is full of flowery errors, which in no way resemble the truths held in the original church, except as a product of their decay”.

That is your heritage from the early manipulators of the gospel truths, such as Pelagius, Arminius, and Wesley, down through the present era, which is rife with the erroneous philosophy of the free will concept, known as Arminianism.

That is “the picture” of the modern-day constitution of the church—or a false gospel contrived by man and blindly and irresponsibly accepted by the vast majority of Christians, who dare to call it the truth.

And being furthermore falsely comforted by the consensus of their belief system—they, as the comedian Tim Sample says of his imaginary son—not only don't know they are wrong, but don't even "suspect" it,

In trying to emphasize the gravity of what is so seriously wrong with the church of today—with rare exception—I will use the following illustration.

If someone from any local church in my area were to ask me to consider attending and joining their assembly, I would say that I wouldn't, or couldn't! They might say, why, isn't our church good enough for you? And I would say, no, it isn't! While they would no doubt be put off by such a criticism of their church, I would add that it isn't good enough for them, either. If a church is in serious doctrinal error, it isn't right for anyone to be involved with.

To extend the scenario further, various other reactions would occur. First, they would no doubt defend their church, as being sound in doctrine, with an effective ministry of edification and evangelism.

Even if after further discussion and introspective examination, they were to concede some inadequacy and failure, the tendency would be to rationalize the problem by comparing themselves to other churches who might be less "spiritual" than them. And they would say, i.e., there is no such thing as a perfect church, so we must at least choose the best that is available.

Or, don't the scriptures say "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together"?

Because of the doctrinal controversy that exists between the two factions, does a Calvinistic Christian have to worship in an Arminian church? I used the phrase in the title of a short article herein: "never against principle". The implication of which is to determine the applicable principles of everything we think, or do—and not to violate the requirement of those laws established by God; not ever! God never acts contrary to His word—so neither should we. Can we do it for the sake of assembling? Is that a greater principle, or duty, than being doctrinally and ethically right, in obedience to God?

How does a Calvinist justify saying amen to a prayer, or sermon point that he believes (knows) is not the truth? Must he, or can he, sing the words to a song that he knows are not scripturally right?

Please note, that I am not expecting absolute perfection in anyone, or any church. We are left with an old nature that can not be eradicated, but will, when allowed, cause us to think and act unspiritually many times in our earthly lives. But, we are not excused by perpetuating any such wrong thoughts, or beliefs and actions.

God has said, very appropriately to the subject at hand: “make not provision for the flesh”. Not for its humanistic ideas, emotions, philosophy, or anything which can be contrary to decisions and actions, grounded in established scriptural principles (rightly interpreted), and empowered by the spirit of God.

We have to think much more thoroughly, than simply assuming that the injunction of meeting together in church assemblies is literally mandatory, without any consideration of possible extenuating circumstances. In other words, the passage cited, is not a stand-alone command on the subject.

A distinction must be made to recognize that there are various factors involved in a Christian’s testimony, or works which are worthy of credit, that may not relate to certain doctrinal controversies that otherwise exist in their lives.

For example, acts of kindness, service in certain ministries (such as educational, professional, mercenary, medical, personal care and assistance, etc.) can be faithfully performed on their merits.

One Christian may be more regular and faithful in prayer, than another who might be more sound in doctrine—neither case excusing their deficiency, but creditable in the area noted.

And while the above assumptions may be true to some extent, there remains a troubling question for which there is no easy answer.

It is one thing to fail at times to be faithful in some, or all of our responsibilities. We all do that to varying degrees. But what about persistent chronic faults in our lives, which go on for years uncorrected, or not repented from?

As I have discussed in other enclosed writing on the subject, there are serious demands which God makes for us to obey. One is an overall requirement, that includes practically everything we are commanded and taught to do. That is, to walk with Him, and abide in His will, by obedience to whatever principles we are to follow.

So if, for example, we have wrong doctrinal beliefs, and they do not get corrected—are we not “out of God’s will”? Can anything relieve or compensate for that problem? Are we really walking with Him? The scriptures tell us that two cannot walk together except they be agreed. What else needs to be said? How can we rationalize the literal meaning of those words?

If I don’t fundamentally believe right, how can I always pray correctly? Will I not use my doctrinal interpretations in my prayer language? And what does God think when I misstate His word?

Now, the greater concern must be whether, under such circumstances, God even hears or gives a Christian access to Him when he comes in error, or technically “out of His will”.

To assume that His grace and mercy overlooks or allows us to have fellowship, or audience with Him, when we are guilty of a particular unfaithfulness would seem to be the height of presumption and disrespect for His will and authority.

The psalmist said in Ps. 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear me”. Granted, doctrinal error may not be iniquity as such, but there seems to be an applicable principle implied in the statement. I commented on this subject somewhere in this publication—but unable to find it at present, I will repeat the essence of it.

Paraphrasing, by using “error” for the word “iniquity”, the thought would be: If I regard error (wrong doctrinal views) in my heart (mind) God will not hear me. Why is this not what happens to some serious extent? In principle, it must be true, because God is very explicit in His demands for us to maintain sound doctrine.

The problem is with us, that we do not take our responsibility to “study and rightly divide the word of truth”, as being the imperative mandate that it is. If we did, we would not stop short of learning the absolute truth in every doctrinal area, nor deviate from it, once it is established in our minds.

Take stock, then, as to where you are in all of this—for practically the entire church is “found wanting”, in the sense of Dan. 5:27.

The only alternatives I can see for Christians in this situation today are (1) if you are in a church that needs reformation, and can get cooperation from the leadership to study and work at the problem, it could justify your staying in the church—otherwise, (2) if the church refuses to undergo efforts at reformation, and you know that it is in serious doctrinal error, you can not, in good conscience and obedience to God, stay in that unfaithful alliance!

There is no loyalty or obligation due to any “Christian” organization that feigns to be what it isn’t. Loyalty is owed to God and His word, not to man’s institutions—when they espouse and advocate false interpretations of His scriptural truths. Lest you miss the point, we cannot honor God, in faulty circumstances—especially with a liberalized, adulterated gospel, all because we either do not know the hard truth of the pure gospel, or refuse to accept and steadfastly support and honor God in it.

There is no other option, or alternative that God has given us, or that we will not face judgmental consequences for adopting. As for the church, it is not a democratic institution where we may choose what or who to believe, but an absolute theocracy where God is our ultimate

authority; having fully and clearly revealed all His principles for us to learn and live by.

And that with singleness of mind, and oneness of heart, we are to maintain a unified testimony which glorifies Him.

How far, indeed, the church has strayed from that main purpose—which is, however “hard” to accomplish, its “reasonable service”.

Just think how many times Israel disobeyed God’s explicit terms , by which they would have secured His promised blessings for their wellbeing and security. And then the awful consequences they suffered. Is the church really any different, when it has repeatedly and increasingly gone its own way, in defiance of God’s specific instructions, with all His related promises, and warnings?

Additional points on the controversy at issue:

Administering the Arminian form of the gospel (preaching, witnessing, etc.) cannot add one soul to heaven, nor keep one out! Neither can the Calvinist system—even in its purest form. This is because salvation is strictly a work of God, and cannot be affected by man—no matter what doctrinal position he advocates.

There is no eternal effect on the world by what man does with the gospel, or any other doctrinal subject. It is a matter of faithfulness and service to the Lord by upholding and obeying His word; properly understood.

The latter phrase may be taken for granted as a mutually agreed factor, which every Christian believes , and aspires to. But the proof is “in the pudding”. Results, not rhetoric!

As long as there is a theological controversy—or different gospel interpretations—there is, by the ones in error: disservice and dishonor to God, that will not go unjudged.

Can we deny how much better it is to find out something seriously wrong ourselves, and not have to be told by someone else—especially in a reproofing, censorious way? As long as we live, we have the privilege—but more importantly, responsibility of self-judgment. 1 Cor. 11:31.

Oh, you may say of course, I know the scripture. But there may be a serious fault in that assumption. A pastor said the same thing to me once in regard to another scriptural reference. But, since he was not obeying the command or principle involved—he did not know the real meaning of that particular scripture.

Think, if you would, how dangerous unproven assumptions can be! That, in essence, is the Arminian version of the gospel. It is literally based upon mis-assumptions—and the root of that

being more what its adherents want to believe, than simply misinterpreting doctrine.

There are no innocent or plausible excuses for maintaining wrong beliefs. The admonition to study and prove the revealed truths of scripture to ourselves, overrides any rationale or reason we might try to use to justify any contrary ideas, or concepts that we hold.

In brief, then, there are no allowable alternatives to that underlying responsibility. But, in contrast to obeying that mandatory precept, the great majority of the church is carrying the baggage of the bogus tenets of Arminian theosophy—or simply stated: a false gospel!

While we decry the fact that our congressional representatives and senators are so ideologically party-bound that they seldom agree on issues, etc.—look at the church record of failing to settle controversies and differences; thus exhibiting similar perpetual disunity. In fact, making it even worse, we're not even dealing with our internal issues involving doctrinal problems.

This, despite the fact that we have the resource of absolute truths, and the spirit of God by which to know, and live and act in obedience to them.

Can we argue the fact that much of our “Christian” lives is lived in the flesh, or the old nature—instead of in the Spirit, or new nature? The evidence is overwhelming, but where is the conviction, the conscience, the sensitivity and concern to do something about it? They are lost in the circumstantial conditions of the first question.

Sure, we know our old natures are going to exert themselves, and cause us to slip and fall many times while we are in these mortal bodies—but when the carnal, fleshly part of us dominates our lives, is where we have characteristically failed to overcome those temptations, and thus failed to live a generally victorious, God-honoring life.

When brethren disagree on something as important as major doctrine (or any doctrine), and they fail to hear each other on the subjects, isn't that tantamount to ignoring the Lord, as well? If we refuse the messenger, do we not disregard the message—which, if it's true, must technically come from God, as surely as His direct biblical word?

I heard a Christian say once, when confronted by brethren over an issue that needed resolution and settlement—but who wouldn't discuss it with anyone—that he was waiting upon the Lord for his answer and direction.

If, indeed, the way God was trying to speak to him was through those brethren—did he not refuse to hear God in that instance? And what if God did not elect to use any other personal method of working with him? We cannot set limits on God's prerogatives, or ways in which He can work in our lives.

“Able also to admonish one another”, Rom. 15:14. Which implies the qualifications to do it—i.e., personal example, knowledge, and grace. And the willingness of the erring brother to receive the necessary admonition.

And if the latter responsibility is not fulfilled, has not such a one refused to let God have full control of his life? How, then, can he be in fellowship with God, and actually continue to walk with Him? The truth must be that he can't. Or, to reiterate a previous comment or implication: we assume so much, and know so little, that it makes a mockery of true faith and discipleship.