

## Nurture or Nonsense?

By Roelf L. Ruffner

For nearly five decades now many among the churches of Christ have been in a full blown apostasy. Religious liberalism has run rough shod over the principle of Scriptural authority in all matters of life and worship. In the area of fellowship liberals and compromisers have done incalculable damage to the cause of New Testament Christianity and religious unity. Their mantra has been the same as expressed by the false teacher Max Lucado several years ago – “Anyone who calls God Father is my brother.” They will fellowship any individual or denomination which proclaims themselves to be “Christian” (Mat. 7:21-23).

A case in point is the sad shenanigans of Lipscomb University (Once David Lipscomb College) in Nashville, TN. LU has digressed beyond the youth minister type liberalism of the 1970s and 80s to the ecumenicalism of most modern day denominations. I imagine most of the faculty of LU’s “College of Bible and Ministry” considers the churches of Christ to be a quaint religious “movement” which originated in the protestant religious revivalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century or as some of them say, “our movement.” In their minds they are as much a member of a denomination as a Southern Baptist or a Roman Catholic. And in the Lord’s eyes their fellowshipping of denominations and unscriptural practices show them to be correct (cf. 2 John 9-11). They are spiritually members of a denomination and not the Lord’s church. How anti-Christ the very idea of a denomination is! “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

But LU and other liberals are now thrashing about, trying to find a fit in the denominational world. They have flirted with denominational speakers brought in from the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, etc. to tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In March they will bring in for the second time mega-church preacher John Ortberg of the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church of the San Francisco Bay area for “Nurture 2015.” In 2014 his church left the Presbyterian Church USA because of its support of sodomite clergy and joined the ECO (Not an acronym! - RLR): A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians known as “an umbrella organization of theologically conservative Presbyterians” (Wikipedia). Mr. Ortberg has written several

books about having “an authentic experience with God.” That is theological gobble-de-gook for plain old subjectivism. How does one tell an “authentic” experience with God from an “unauthentic” experience? What standard does one use to judge this experience? Not the word of God but rather your own emotional gauge, which may be wrong. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). The Nineteenth Century “New Light” Presbyterian revivalists used to tell naïve souls to “pray it through” at the “mourner’s bench.” No obedient faith needed. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). I would not trade one verse of the Bible for all the world’s religious sob stories. A whole barrel of religious enthusiasm cannot remove one sin from my soul. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:36-39). Notice Philip did not ask the Ethiopian if he had “experienced God.” On his part the Ethiopian just wanted to humbly obey Christ’s Plan of Salvation which Philip had preached to him. The joy he felt came **after** he had obeyed the Lord and been immersed for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). But the participants in Nurture 2015 will hear none of that from Mr. Ortberg.

Dear reader, I hope you do not draw from my comments that I want these people to continue down the “broad way” (Mat. 7:13) to Hell. Aside from the disgust, repulsion and anguish I feel towards their efforts there is an abiding love and prayer that the folks at LU will renounce their errors and repent of their sins. I would gladly extend to them the right hand of fellowship. Yet I know that this may not happen because they have much to lose in this life if they turned from their digressive ways. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Others among have been deceived and truly believe that they are doing what is right in God’s sight. “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them” (Deut. 11:16). As for the rest of us who choose to take the “strait gate” and the “narrow way” (Mat. 7:14) let us continue to alert others of LU’s sinful ways but let us hope and pray that they come back to the Truth. Brethren, let us never stop praying (1 The. 5:17).

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Ortberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ortberg) as of January 22, 2015

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menlo\\_Park\\_Presbyterian\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menlo_Park_Presbyterian_Church) as of January 22,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ECO\\_\(denomination\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ECO_(denomination)) as of January 22, 2015.