

THE FATHER OF THE CULTURE DRIVEN CHURCHES

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Rick Warren

Rick Warren has succeeded in doing what many evangelicals before him have failed to do. He has drawn our Baptist churches into evangelicalism and then into the "emerging church" drama. With his numerically large church attendance and his Baptist background and his conservative-sounding doctrine, he has introduced evangelical practices into what were once traditional Baptist churches.

Rick Warren criticizes Baptist churches clinging to "tradition" that does not take into account modern culture; like the tradition of Bible preaching as defined in II Timothy 3:16, "*doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.*" Baptist Warrenites now use evangelical-style preaching that uplifts people without sweeping out the dirt from underneath their feet, preaching which professes righteousness without condemning sin, preaching, which "reaches the people where they are," without guiding them by the hand to where they ought to be.

Baptist evangelicals are forsaking the tradition of "*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught...*" (Titus 1:9) Holding fast to the

King James Bible, which has been handed down to us through the centuries from the Textus Receptus Greek text, and not forsaking God's words for the new boys on the block, Wescott and Hort and Nestle and Aland and Black and Metzger, who have beguiled us with *better* manuscripts, which lay in dusty libraries, Vatican trash bins, and hidden caves, unused for centuries.

Baptist people are forsaking the tradition of godly, spiritual music that refreshes the soul without swaying the hips, as commanded by God in Ephesians 5:19, "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and SPIRITUAL songs (apparently there are UNSPIRITUAL songs), singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord:*"

Baptist people are forsaking the tradition of modest dress, as God commanded in I Timothy 2:9. Isaiah 47:3 teaches that it is a shame to be unclothed, and lack of clothing is associated in the Bible with bad music (Exodus 32:18-19, 25), drunkenness (Lamentations 4:21, Habakkuk 2:15), prostitution (Ezekiel 16:36, 23:18, Revelation 17:16).

Yet, the preaching of dress standards is labeled by Warren, and now some Independent Baptists, as legalistic as found on page 236 of THE PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH. Pastor Warren does not even understand basic Bible terminology. Legalism is adding works to faith to produce salvation. (Galatians chapters 2-3, Romans 9:32, Hebrews 6:1)

On the copyright page of his book THE PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH before you even arrive at the Table of Contents you will find something on the copyright page. On that page Pastor Warren lists seven different "bibles" he quotes within the pages of his book. These include the New International Version, then New Revised Standard Version, New Century Version, J. B. Phillips, and The Message.

Interesting, Rick does quote several times from the King James Bible, but since it is not copyrighted, he did not have to receive any man's permission to use it.

Baptist pastors, Rick Warren does not respect what your fathers stood for! On page 236, he refers to "isolationists" who "reject new translations of Scripture, current musical styles, and any attempt to

modify man-made traditions..." Scriptures have already been mentioned in this article to support "man-made" tradition, despite the fact that Warren goes on to say that isolationists have a "list of what is permissible and what isn't *regarding issues that the Bible is silent on.*" (Emphasis mine) Of course, it is entirely possible that his Bibles ARE silent on these issues, but the King James Bible is very clear.

On page 55, Warren accuses us old-fashioned Baptists of being dishonest by saying, "*In contrast, churches that try to perpetuate the culture of the 1950's usually deny their intent or they try to prove with proof-texts that they are doing it the way it was done in New Testament times.*"

Well, excuse us for using the Bible as our guide! If I stand accused of preferring the 1950's to the 2000's, I will not be offended. In the 1950's women still wore dresses, sodomites were still afraid to come out of their closets, and men still led their homes. Yes, we still prefer that era to today, when modestly-dressed women must make their own clothes, certain states (and Disney) recognize the "rights" of sodomite "couples," and more than half of all marriages end in divorce - when the couple bothers to marry at all.

Of course my question is how in the world did Rick Warren fool so many Baptists and especially our young ones?

HIS SEEMING STRONG STAND ON EVANGELISM

Page 64 of his book reads, "Any church that is not obeying the Great Commission is failing its purpose, no matter what else it does." Page 32 reads, "You measure the health or strength of a church by its sending capacity, not by its seating capacity."

These declarations could easily have been made from a Baptist pulpit. By these statements, however, he does not mean the confrontational, on the streets, one-on-one soul winning demonstrated in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Instead, he teaches the drawing of the "unchurched" into a "seeker service" designed specifically to win souls.

He accomplishes this not by door-to-door soul winning, but with advertising, surveys, seeking out what the people want, and community programs. He brings the "unchurched" in, then preaches the plan of salvation from the pulpit sandwiched in between a rock and roll show with Jesus name added.

Warren teaches not to pressure a man to receive Christ (page 304), despite the great Apostle Paul's example, who "*disputed with*" and "*persuaded*" men in Acts 19:8. At the invitation, rather than bringing sinners to the altar, he asks visitors to indicate on their visitor card whether (A) they believed in Christ that day, (B) they had previously "committed their life to Christ," (C) they were still thinking about it, or (D) they doubted they would ever receive Christ.

The use of a "seeker service" instead of one-on-one soul winning is man's method, not God's method. Even at the day of Pentecost, the thousands who heard the Gospel had not come to any service at all. Peter and the other Apostles took advantage of the crowds on the street during a Jewish feast day. They had not church building yet. In fact, in the book of Acts, there is not one record of anyone being saved or even baptized in a church building.

It would be stretching the imagination to believe that 3,000 were baptized in the upper room. More likely, in Acts 2, the Apostles baptized in one or more of the twelve public pools of Jerusalem.

In Acts 8, Philip preached and baptized in a city of Samaria, where no church existed yet. The Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized in an oasis in the desert in Acts 8:26-36. The Apostle Paul was baptized by Ananias in the house of a disciple named Judas in Acts 9:11-18.

Cornelius and his companions were baptized in Cornelius' house in Acts chapter 10. Lydia and her household were baptized in a river in Acts 18:7-8.

Holding a seeker service to bring the "unchurched" to the church, then not inviting them to trust Christ as their Saviour and to be baptized immediately after salvation is not Scriptural. In the book of Acts, those who were saved were baptized "*the same day*" (Acts 2:41) and "*the same*

hour" (Acts 16:13). The non-confrontational, non-personal method of soul winning is not scriptural.

D. L. Moody once let a crowd go without pushing for a definite decision for Christ, and the next day scores of them died in the Chicago fire. Rick Warren's salvation survey at the end of his seeker service lets sincere sinners slip out unsaved.

CULTURE OR WORLDLINESS?

The book should be titled **THE CULTURE DRIVEN CHURCH**, for that is its central theme. The basic premise of the book is that the church should adapt itself to the culture of those whom they are attempting to reach with the Gospel.

Yet, the Bible says, "*come out from among them, and be ye separate...*" (II Corinthians 6:17). Jesus was "*separate from sinners.*" (Hebrews 7:26). In fact, separation is not on the part of the saved, but the unsaved and unspiritual, who "*separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*" (Jude 19). There is a definite division in the New Testament between the lives of believers and unbelievers, the spiritual, and the carnal. Anyone can be saved, but the saved are commanded to be separate from their carnal culture.

However, Pastor Warren makes such statements as: "One of my favorite movies is..." (page 28). "I intentionally dress down to match the mindset of those I'm trying to reach." (Page 171) "There is no such thing as 'Christian music', only Christian lyrics." (Page 282)

While it is true there is no verse in the Bible specifically mentioning some of these issues, since there were no movie theaters in Peter's day, there are some definite Bible precepts which pastor Warren has on purpose overlooked.

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes..." (Psalm 101:3) *"Abstain from all appearance of evil..."* (I Thessalonians 5:22) *"Mine eye affecteth mine heart..."* (Lamentations 3:51) *"...he hearth cursing and bewrayeth it not."* (Proverbs 29:24) Did Pastor Warren stand up in the middle of

a movie with cursing and denounce (bewray) the bad and vile language during a movie? I wouldn't count on it!

Pastor Warren is bringing sinners out of the world into an environment that is no different from the world. He is like King Ahaz in II Kings chapter 16, who saw an altar in a pagan temple in Damascus. He liked it so much, he had the priests in Jerusalem make one just like it. He then arranged the furniture of the temple around the Syrian altar. There his priests performed sacrifices.

However, it did not stop there. The people continued to model their religion after the world, until they had become wholly pagan. Hezekiah, Ahaz's son, had to remove the high places where the people worshipped instead of at the temple, and break the idols whom they worshipped instead of God.

Go ahead, Baptist Warrenites, rearrange the furniture of the temple; it's your children who will abandon the temple. It is your children who will worship idols. It is the men of God of the next generation who will have to evangelize your own children and grandchildren.

As the adults enjoy their rock and roll in the confines of their churches, the children will develop a taste for rock music, which they will fulfill in smoke-filled arenas. As parents dress down to go to church, their children will dress down even more to go to the mall or the beach.

CONCLUSION

Pastor Warren labels our churches as "traditionalists" unwilling to give up "man-made" traditions, clinging to a few "proof-texts," and "isolationism" that is stuck in the "culture" of the 50's. He then encourages our young men to mix and mingle with the world, and model the next generation's churches after the "worldly lifestyles," abandoning such ideas as confrontation soul winning, old fashioned church music, and modest dress standards, and especially hard-hitting preaching.

Yes, he has a crowd. Yes, he is rich. Yes, by worldly standards he is successful. However, the main question is this "is he right?"

Warren and other evangelicals reach into our Baptist churches and entice our young people away because they have proven themselves incapable of producing their own young people who are spiritual and who would go into the ministry.

Although they talk much about "life application," their encouraging messages uplift the spirit without touching the soul. They minister to spiritual junkies looking for a quick fix. Because this generation cannot "*endure sound doctrine*" Rick Warren has become the teacher willing to tickle their ears. (II Timothy 4:3-5) Much like Billy Graham, Warren will impact this generation, but leave no godly heritage for the children and will ruin the orchard. Warren has given birth to the EMERGING CHURCH movement and it is nothing more than like the Jesus Freaks of the 60's.

Pardon me but give me a Dr. Jack Hyles, who produced a second generation and a third generation of Christians serving God. The real proof of a church is in succeeding generations. There is rarely a second-generation Warrenite. Their children develop a taste for the worldly lifestyle that their own pastors have taught them to live by.

A church ought to be a haven from the world, not an extension of it. Baptists are being fooled by Warren's conservative-sounding doctrine while being influenced by his worldly philosophy and lifestyles. We are to work at bringing man up to God and not bring God down to man in our churches. The local church must be a foretaste of Heaven not a foretaste of the world.