

9-24-1967

Is the Church Phony?

John Allen Chalk

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_audio

Recommended Citation

Chalk, John Allen, "Is the Church Phony?" (1967). *Herald of Truth Audio*. 172.
https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_audio/172

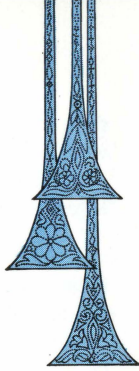
This Audio is brought to you for free and open access by the Herald of Truth Records at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Herald of Truth Audio by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

IS THE CHURCH PHONY?



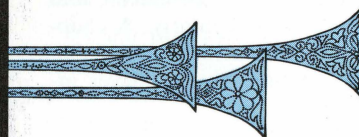
Number 817
TRANSCRIPT OF THE

Herald of Truth
..... *radio programs*



HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
radio program

P. O. Box 2439 Abilene, Texas 79604



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Is the Church Phony?

Today's youth, and certainly today's college student, displays an almost inherent distrust of all social and religious institutions. Many entrenched social systems, devised in another age to meet other problems, badly need inspection and, in most cases, have outlived their usefulness. Thus examining and rejecting many traditional institutions of our time, the student has also turned to the Church with the same suspicion and distrust.

History records the corruption of time, tradition, and authority in the affairs of men. But does this mean that the Church is also out-dated, ineffective, and corrupt? On the college scene, I am convinced, the Church, as it is commonly understood by modern man, has been eliminated. One recent survey revealed that only twenty-seven percent of all young adults between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two years attend church services regularly. A chaplain at the University of Michigan estimated last year that seventy percent of the students on that campus never attended any kind of worship service.

But, when one looks back to the sources, back to the life and acts of the early church, back to Christianity in its infancy, back to the New Testament church, everything seems out of proportion with student attitudes of our

time. The early church was a vibrant, dynamic, world-wide fellowship that ultimately, through martyrdom, ground the Roman Empire into the dust. But today's college student says of today's church, "It's phony!"

This reaction seems highly inconsistent with what I believe genuine and current student interest in the Bible. As an example: during the past school year at one state university in Texas, seven thousand copies of the Gospel of John were taken by students from "free offer" tables in two off-campus stores.

You are probably wondering, even if you are a college student, "What is the man talking about? What does he mean? Just what does the college student say about the Church?" I think the following comments made in the last few months by collegians will bring the matter into clearer focus.

One college girl told a Yale University chaplain, "Jesus is my kind of guy but I hate the church." In her own campus language she was saying that, according to her view, the Church does not reflect Christ in its life, neither lives like Christ nor fulfills the ministry of Christ.

This reminds me of another student who honestly challenged his minister, "Show me one place where the church is making any difference in life that isn't being done better by some other institutions." Most present-day churches do seem insignificant and unnecessary in the face of big government, big business, and big charity. But the Church that Christ established, the Church we read about in the New Testament, was ordained and empowered by God to effectively minister to spiritual and personal needs even in today's complex world.

A mature University of Florida law student, who is a church member, told his church leaders: "I'm here at the University for serious business. I don't have time to play church. If you want to get serious, I'm ready." For this young adult, the church offered no challenge for service, no involvement in anything spiritually meaningful. He preferred, until things radically changed, to spend his time with his studies.

I suppose another college girl summarized the whole matter when she said, "I think of Christianity (or the church) as a sort of modern-day club I will not join." I have to agree with this young woman! Traditional denominations, in fact all man-made religious organizations, as seen in today's world, very definitely constitute a "take-it-or-leave-it" proposition that offers no live option.

What have we seen in these comments from the campus? Well, first of all, most collegians see no relationship between Christ and His Church. There is very little understanding or vision of the dynamic, revolutionary quality of the early Church described in the New Testament. This is what has happened: today's student sees no serious attempts on the Church's part to understand and implement her missions or aims in human society. In fact, many young people are repelled by the ineffectiveness and "status quo" attitudes of modern denominations.

Where do we begin, then to reply to these concerns and convictions? I think we first clear the air of a gigantic misconception about the Church versus the churches. I couldn't spend one minute defending traditional denominational structures, frozen hierarchial power, and religious totalitarianism! Tradition, human opinion, disrespect for the Bible, and other factors render most modern-day expressions of Christianity, or the Church, a caricature of that thrilling, pulsating, effective movement described in the New Testament. The early church swept the first-century world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its ennobling influence. When we talk about the Church today, we are talking about what OUGHT to be, about what is so vividly said regarding the early church, about the strong pictures of the Church in the New Testament. Would it be less than honest to reject a caricature rather than examine the genuine? That's what most of us are doing with the Church, I'm afraid.

Now, that helps prepare us for the following idea. It is impossible to talk about the Church without talking about Christ! And it is just as difficult to discuss Christ without including the Church! To His followers He promised, "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). His ministry was one of preparation for the church's appearance among men. When giving final instructions to His apostles just before His ascension, Christ specifically instructed them that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 2:47). Then He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power, direction, and truth of God which the Holy Spirit would give (Luke 24:48,49; Acts 1:4,5).

Approximately ten days after these instructions, the apostles received the baptism of God's Spirit. They were directed, as Jesus had promised, to speak the Gospel in Jerusalem where they had waited until that day. Here is the conclusion of the message preached that day: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye

crucified" (Acts 2:36). This proclamation created the following response from the audience, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). To which Peter answered, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Luke, the author of *Acts*, says that three thousand were baptized, were "added" to the church (Acts 2:47).

In fact, what occurred, as these words imply and as verse forty-seven of the same chapter also says, is that the Church was started that very day. The point is this, from the church's beginning on the earth, she was inseparably bound to the preaching and acceptance of Jesus Christ. Throughout the remainder of the New Testament, the Church is repeatedly identified as "the Body of Christ." Here is one such passage: ". . . and he (God) put all things in subjection under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23). In another New Testament Epistle we read of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church. . ." (Colossians 1:18). In an extended passage in chapter five of the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Paul illustrates the relationship between Christ and His Church. Here is part of that reading: "Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church, because we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:28-30).

Another truth is also overlooked by those who reject the Church as pictured in the New Testament, and as it existed in its early years. And it is this, the Church exists to perpetuate Christ's ministry among men. The college girl who expressed her admiration for Jesus but disdained the Church probably had not thought of the relationship between the Church and Christ's ministry. Our Lord came into the world "to seek and save" lost men; to minister to others; to give His life a ransom for those enslaved by sin and self; to accomplish His Father's will among men; and, in Peter's words, "to do good" to all oppressed men (Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:26-28; John 17:4; Acts 10:38). The Church sees its task in this life Christ lived and so devotes all its energies to the fulfillment of these aims.

But Christ's example is not our only motivation. He actually charged His followers with the responsibility of world evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20). He commissioned them to go into all the world with the Gospel (Mark 16:

15). Of His apostles, and in a similar sense, all of His followers in every age, Christ prayed to His Father: "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (John 17:18). On another occasion when His disciples chose to discuss a theoretical question which had no relevance to suffering mankind and the realization of God's plan in men's lives, Jesus rebuked them with these words: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work: (John 9:4). Jesus directs the Church as man's brain and nerve center directs the physical body. The Church is the body of Christ, and members of that body are told to speak the "truth in love" and to "grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15,16).

My friend, the New Testament Church — the Church as Christ prepared for it and as God planned it — existed historically. Here is an example of how the New Testament Epistles are addressed to concrete local groups within the universal church. "Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" (I Corinthians 1:1,2). Paul writes this *I Corinthian* letter to the Church at Corinth and to all Christians everywhere. Only eight verses later into this same first chapter he tells all Christians everywhere: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

These local congregations also all had a common form of church government. Paul shows it to us in outline form when he writes a letter to the congregation at Philippi. Here is how he begins that letter: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Philippians 1:1). The early Church, described so completely in the New Testament, also had a common doctrinal foundation. In a general survey, the Apostle Paul shows it to us in *Ephesians* 4: "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

My final word today is that this same dynamic, exciting, really successful, serving, concerned, involved Church of Jesus Christ can exist today, and does exist today whenever and wherever men obediently accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. He provides God's remedy for sin and He provides God's direction for our lives in the Church, in His body, over which He rules as head (Colossians 1: 18).

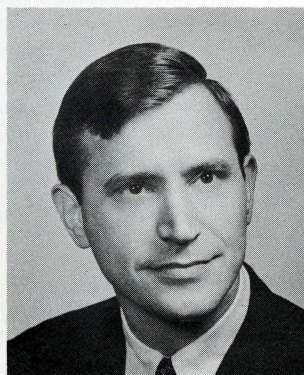
The New Testament Church can exist today, and does exist today, whenever and wherever men accept the New Testament descriptions of the Church and determine to implement them, using them as guidelines for today's believers. I'm convinced Paul tells the truth about what the New Testament can do, that is, "furnishes the man of God completely unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). That certainly includes anything as important as the Church, the body of Christ.

Furthermore, the Church of the New Testament, that vibrant fellowship of all believers that knew victory over paganism and imperialism, can and does exist today whenever and wherever men realize the aims and purposes of Christ's earthly ministry (I Corinthians 12:12-20).

Youth's willingness to condemn hypocrisy and insincerity is one of their greatest virtues. When the college student today rejects Christianity, however, he does so, I'm afraid, because of his unawareness of what the New Testament Church is all about; why it was founded, and what was accomplished by it in those first eventful hundred years.

I ask you to reconsider your present attitudes toward the Church. Go back to your Bible. Notice the triumphant march of Christ's body through the hearts of men and women in the first-century world. Let the *Acts* thrill you with its history of the Church. Allow the New Testament Epistles to explain fully the nature, work and worship of the Church. Then, above all, remember that when one surrenders in obedience to Christ, as a penitent believer accepting Him in baptism, one also becomes, by that same decision, a member of Christ's body, the Church (Acts 2:47; I Corinthians 12:12-18).

No, the real Church God planned and Christ established, the Church of the New Testament days, is not phony! There are counterfeits on all sides. What the world needs today are courageous young men and women who will humbly, obediently, and honestly confront the Biblical truths about the Church, making them a reality in today's world.



John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.