How Heartless Is The Church?

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Lately, some have hinted that the church has in the past been heartless and emotionless when dealing with underprivileged and minority groups. Some have charged that our brethren have been guilty of racial prejudice and have not allowed a full fellowship between our "white" brethren and the Negro brethren. Most, however, realize that our "white" brethren have endeavored on numerous occasions to establish the Lord's church in Negro communities. The reason for this was because they were assured this was the desire of the Negro people and would enhance the growth of the church in these communities. Also, anyone who recalls the acceptance Marshall Keeble enjoyed will realize that this prejudice is not so prevalent among churches of Christ. He enjoyed much of this acceptance among the "white" people of the church. Anyone who makes this charge is using his head to plan trouble and division rather than for logic, reason, and honesty.

One of our brethren wrote a book regarding the Martin Luther King story. (This was written prior to his murder.) Rather than applauding Mr. King, as most books seem to do, it exposed him. Recently, however, some of our brethren charged that the author of this book could have contributed to the murder of Mr. King. Those who make this charge either have not read the book or do not realize the power and accuracy of documentation. This book can not be successfully denied and these self-righteous critics have not done so. Therefore, their only course left was to attack the character of the author.
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The evangelist has been lecturing on the topic of the message of Martin Luther King. Any preacher who wishes to devote his precious time to such discourses has too much free time and liberty on his hands. I can not picture the apostle Paul spending his time on such matters. I can not even picture him discussing continuing the message of Peter. He continued the message of Jesus Christ. Which do you want to continue, the message of M. L. King of Christ? Any faithful Christian who is seeking first the kingdom of God should know this answer! Further, we agree with the editor of the Christian Journal which comes from Fort Worth, Texas. He states that if there ever was a message that needed to be discontinued, it is the message of Martin Luther King! Reason—his was simply a message of lawlessness! To which we might add, his was a message of infidelity, atheism, communism, and treason! Why continue this!

Other critics have attacked the church stating that it is not concerned about the needy. They tell us we need to be doing more. We readily admit that we never seem to do enough. But, we part company when it comes to the manner of erasing this problem, and just how much emphasis should be placed on this activity. The church has not the right to let the needy continue on in their need. But, neither has the church the right to make itself a harbinger of a social gospel. I am sure that the social gospel started with the idea of filling a man's belly and then filling his soul. But, all too often we turn to filling his belly and letting his soul go starving. The social gospel is concerned with the outer man rather than the inner man. The social gospel cares not for the ordinances of Christ (including baptism) nor does it care for a faith in Christ (including His deity). It is concerned with "what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, and how ye shall be clothed".

The social gospel is so different from the gospel of Christ. Christ was concerned about the outer man, but His first concern was for the inner man. Christ wished to take care of the spiritual man and let the other work itself out. Christ said "take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He further said "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The social gospel wishes to dispense "social servives"
rather than gospel teachings. The social gospel is just opposite of the gospel of Christ. It is a "new gospel" to the church of Christ. Paul gives us the divine estimate of "new" gospels when he says that "there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Christ's foremost commission is not to feed the world, but, rather, to "preach the gospel."

The church has not the right to let the needy continue on in their need. But, neither has the church the right to allow an able bodied man to live off the church as a talented beggar. The government nor the church should allow a man who refuses to help himself to live off public means. "If a man does not work neither shall he eat" is a Biblical injunction. The government should not guarantee a lazy man a salary just because someone argued the cause in the name of Christ. Many things are done today in the name of Christ which would, in reality, be an abomination to Him. This list would include civil-disobedience, rioting, dis-respect for private property, begging because of laziness, and the new morality. These are done in the name of Christ, but are, we repeat, an abomination to Him.

How heartless is the church? I do not believe it is heartless at all. Have our brethren denied fellowship between the "white" and the Negro brethren? I think not, but have instead encouraged such and have helped take the gospel to all. Did any of our brethren contribute to the murder of Martin Luther King? I think not, but it was just a matter of "reaping what we sow." Lawlessness breeds lawlessness and violence. Is the church disrespectful when it asks some to quit continuing the message of Martin Luther King? I think not, but it is asking instead that we continue the message of Christ which is far better. Is the church wrong not to follow the social gospel? I think not, but is following the wiser path of the gospel of Christ. Is the church wrong in insisting that a man support himself with the labor of his hands rather than through the talents of begging? I think not, but is simply following a Biblical injunction of labor and the right of one to enjoy the fruits of his labor.
The Lakehoma Christian is published weekly by and for the Lakehoma Church of Christ. It generally contains news for the congregation. But, this week, it was felt that these matters needed to be said. I admit that these problems do not directly affect us here at Lakehoma. But, it is my intention that these problems will NEVER directly affect us! I would hasten to add that these may not be the sentiments of all the members of the Lakehoma church. Those views expressed which are merely opinion may not be shared with the reader. I must say this because this paper bears the name of the Lakehoma church of Christ. But, I will emphatically say that these are the views of---

--- Hershel L. Franklin

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