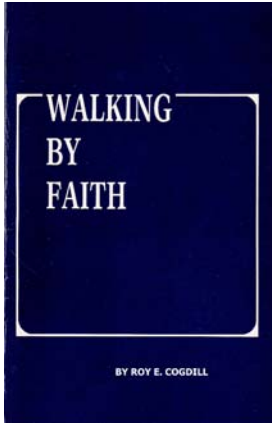


Walking By Faith

An Analysis of Church of Christ Dogma



Roy Cogdill's 94-page booklet, *Walking By Faith*, has much acclaim among church of Christ congregations. It has divided many of them.

Walking By Faith was written to teach Christians the fundamentals of the Christian walk, how the church is to interface with society, how the Christian fits into the scheme of the church, secular society, family, etc. It also seeks to outline parameters that supposedly form the biblical basis for *individual* versus *congregational* regulations. This is most important, since it is the pivot on which many churches have divided.

Most of the book is sound, well written, and logical. It assumes a scriptural premise:

The church is not a court or school of domestic relations. Whatever the Bible teaches should be taught whenever and wherever it is needed by any Christian and by the church. But parent education, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and such related subjects that are not taught in the Word of God are not the task of the church. (Page 8, para 4)

In other words, the church's business is to edify the saints and build up of the body of Christ. This is biblical, according to Ephesians 4. The next sentences, however, establish the crux of Cogdill's doctrine:

Preachers who make a specialty of love, courtship, marriage, parent education, and counselling those who are having difficulty in domestic relations and in social problems should do such work in some other way than through the church and should not deceive themselves into thinking that such work is the work of the gospel preacher.

Mr. Cogdill is referring to preachers who arbitrate in counseling sessions *above and beyond* that of ministering to the congregation. His definition of preachers doing this work "in some other way than through the church," means "on church property, on church time, and on church payroll." In other words, counseling is not "the work of the gospel preacher."

First of all, everyone, at one time or another, has domestic problems. It's the duty of any Christian (not just the preacher) to minister to the needs of other troubled Christians. (Galatians 6:1, 2) I agree that the local church should not be a marital counseling center

for non-Christians. However, to suggest this cannot be part of a minister's agenda, is shortsighted and legalistic.

The term "gospel preacher" is also misleading. All Christians should preach the gospel, not just those who have been through seminary school. An unfortunate condition existing today is that the gospel is preached to the saved, in the worship service, instead of to the unsaved outside of the worship service. Consuming the congregation's time on "elementary principles" will not build up Christians. (Heb 6:1-3)

The whole concept of hiring a man to teach and preach while the others sit by and absorb it is wholly unscriptural. This is called "institutionalizing" the preacher. The logic goes like this: I give every Sunday. This money is supposed to support the preacher, among other things. Since I've done my "duty" by giving, I expect him to feed my family spiritually. Such thinking justifies fathers and husbands to avoid the duty of providing spiritual guidance to their family. It is not the preacher's job.

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The terms "approved example" and "necessary inference" are peculiar to the Church of Christ. Biblical examples form the guidelines on many issues. However, I wrestle with the words "approved" and "necessary." Who approved them? Who said they are necessary? More to the point, for what reason?

In referring to when Christians are to take the Lord's Supper, Mr. Cogdill states, "The first day of the week *excludes* every other day." (p. 16) (emphasis added). However, the apostle Paul stated, "*For as often* as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (1 Cor 11:26) Early church literature suggests that the Christians did it every time they came together. Christ and His apostles took it on Thursday or Friday, and He rose that following "first day of the week." (Matt 28:1)

To take the singular example of Acts 20:7, and say that this example "excludes every other day" is making a law where there is no law. If the church wants to use the verse to establish a day for everyone to abide by, there's no problem. Forbiddance under any circumstance because of the presumption of "necessary inference," "apostolic example," or other such legalism seeks to remove the freedom we enjoy in Christ.

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Mr. Cogdill writes that 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 "teach that expediency must come within the realm of that which is lawful." Let's examine those texts to see if this is true.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Cor 6:12)

All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. (1 Cor 10:23)

Both of these verses deal with doing things that could offend a weaker brother or sister. They do not regulate general guidelines on any and all spiritual affairs. In the context of Corinthians, Paul is saying, “Don’t do things that edify only you, but also do what is good for others.”

Mr. Cogdill then writes, “That which is unauthorized is unlawful—prohibited—by divine authority and is, therefore, sinful.” He should consider Paul, who wrote, “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” (Rom 5:13) “The Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.” (Rom 4:15)

He cites several OT examples to support his claim: Cain’s sacrifice (1 John 3:12), Nadab & Abihu’s illegal incense offering (Numbers 3:4), and Uzzah’s death (2 Samuel 6:3ff). However, God did have definite laws concerning tabernacle rules, which Nadab & Abihu chose to ignore. Uzzah was killed because he was not a Levite, under rules established in Numbers 1-3. Abel seemed to be aware of God’s requirements for a blood sacrifice, which Cain alternately disregarded (Hebrews 11:4).

Two of these incidents had clear guidance, while Cain and Abel’s situation agrees perfectly with the rest of scripture concerning atonement requirements and faith. Pertaining to the Lord’s Supper, Mr. Cogdill uses the same logic. Note:

*If (the early church) established the right to observe the Lord’s Supper upon the first day, it also established that it can be observed **only** upon the first day, for we have neither precept, example or inference of observing it any other day. Therefore, every other day is excluded. (P. 23)*

In other words, since *the early church*—acting without scriptural authority—decided to take the Lord’s Supper on “the first day of the week,” we sin if we decide to take it on a different day. Here lies the core of the problem with such thinking: *It is a religion of legalism, seeking to turn the New Testament into a New Ten Commandments.*

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith *apart from works of the Law*. (Emphasis mine) (Rom 3:28)

For the promise to Abraham...was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Rom 4:13)

...you are not under law, but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom 10:4)

Legalists generally fall back on what Jesus said: “If you love Me, you’ll keep My commandments.” What they fail to realize is, following Christ’s commandments is not following a set of rules and regulations based on example and inference, it is this: *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.* (Rom 13:10)

In other words, a Christian’s love for God and his fellow humans constitute obeying the law. You do what is in their interest instead of your own. In serving your neighbor, you are obeying God. (Matt 25:31ff)

God is not going to say, “Enter, good and faithful servant, because you took the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week.” He’s going to welcome you because you took care of the less fortunate, not because you adhered to a legal precept. (Matthew 25:31ff) This type of legalistic thinking is the reason why so many churches today are spiritually dead and full of Pharisees.

Legalism was the bane of the early church, and the New Testament letters are replete with warnings against it. *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?* (Galations 3:3)

Fortunately (and sadly) Roy Cogdill’s generation is nearly gone. Along with them, legalism has lost its ground in many churches today. The current generations are quick to spot it, having no desire to shackle themselves with rules and regulations. Unfortunately, I fear that they are going too far the other way, leaving their bibles at home while going to church.

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