

What Is A “Mainstream” Church Of Christ

Introduction:

- A. “The approximately 50 Churches of Christ in Birmingham and its suburbs are divided between mainstream churches — such as Homewood, Roebuck Parkway and Hoover — and conservative churches, such as Seventy-Seventh Street, Hueytown, Sun Valley and Valleydale, [Ed] Harrel said.” (*The Birmingham News*, 9/1/89, page 2B).
 - 1. Reporter looking at it from his secular viewpoint.
 - 2. Harrel, unfortunately, looking at it from sociological viewpoint.
 - 3. From this vantage point, we would be conservative, Homewood, mainstream and Cahaba Valley, liberal.
- B. Article left the impression with many that the “mainstream” churches remained in the “mainstream” while “conservatives” isolated themselves.
 - 1. If by “mainstream” one means the most popular and numerous, then yes those churches are mainstream.
 - 2. If by “mainstream” one means apostolic tradition expressed in the New Testament and generally followed by churches of Christ until about 1950, then we are in the “mainstream”.
- C. This lesson proposes to look at the “mainstream” of apostolic tradition:
 - 1. As followed by most churches in New Testament days.
 - 2. As followed by most churches of Christ until about 1950.

Discussion:

I. THE “MAINSTREAM” DURING THE DAYS OF THE APOSTLES.

- A. The “mainstream” of teaching about Bible authority.
 - 1. Scriptures furnish us unto every good work. (1 Tim. 3:16,17).
 - 2. Given all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3)
 - 3. All must be done by authority of Christ. (Col. 3:17).
 - 4. Must abide in the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9-11).
 - 5. Must not add to nor take from word. (Rev. 22:18,19).
 - 6. Summary: We can do only those things that word of God authorizes us to do.
- B. The “mainstream” of church organization.
 - 1. Congregations treated and spoken of as independent units.
 - 2. Church organization in the N.T. was local.
 - a. Elders in various churches. (Acts 14:23; 20:17).
 - b. Elders oversight limited to local church. (1 Pet. 5:1-5).
 - c. No organization larger, smaller or other than local church to do work of church.
- C. The “mainstream” of church activity.
 - 1. Done within the framework of local church.
 - 2. Worship.
 - 3. Work in community and world.
 - a. Teaching-preaching. (Phil. 4:15,16; Eph. 4:11-16).
 - b. Caring for needy saints. (1 Cor. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).
 - 4. Not same as individual work or “home” work. (1 Tim. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:22,34).

II. THE “MAINSTREAM” BEFORE DIVISION OF THE 50'S.

- A. **May 14, 1931 Gospel Advocate Editorial page:** (Read from copy on file).
- B. **1946 Annual Lesson Commentary of Gospel Advocate:** “The self-sufficiency of the church in organization, work, worship and every function required of it by the Lord should be emphasized. . . The church is the *only* organization authorized to discharge the responsibilities of the Lord's people. (Guy N. Woods, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons 1946*, Gospel Advocate Company).
- C. **1951 Annual Lesson Commentary of Gospel Advocate:** “Building recreation rooms and providing and supervising recreational activities at the expense of the church is a departure from the simple gospel as revealed in the New Testament. The church might as well relieve the parents of feeding and discipline all the young people at church expense as to take over the job of entertaining and supervising their recreation at church expense.” (*Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons 1951*, p. 229)

Conclusion:

What is a “mainstream” church of Christ? It depends on your vantage point. If from sociologist's or reporter's view,

then most numerous would be “mainstream”. If looking at it from Biblical and historical then “conservatives” are right in the mainstream.