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June 2017 Edition

Theme: Where are the voices of Concern?

## Where Are the Voices of Concern? Dr. Luis R. Lugo, Sr.

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*This article was submitted to the Christian Courier subsequent to the June 2017 Edition which had been previously sent to press. However, because of the gravity of this analysis, it is needful to provide this review as an important insert.*

*The goal and objective of this assessment is to see what the Bible says about evangelistic authority, who is the delegated functional authority in the local congregation, what constitutes local Church autonomy, the nature of authority, the purpose of the Church, the usurpation of authority, the nature of conflict along with biblical examples on how to solve congregational disputes; and ultimately what is the purpose or results of spiritual arbitration?*

### Introduction: Misconceptions of Christianity

**W**e are living in an age today that is affected by what is called the postmodern age or postmodernism. When we seek to comprehend postmodernism we run into an extreme difficult definition of what it is.

What started in the 1950s in architecture as a reaction to modernist thought was soon adopted by the art and literary world in the 1970s and 1980s.

The religious world did not feel the impact until the 1990s. This reaction was a dismissal of "cold hard facts" in favor of "warm, fuzzy subjectivity."

Postmodern Christianity falls in line with basic post-modernistic

thinking. It is about experience and reason; subjectivity over objectivity, spirituality over religion, images over words and the outward over the inward.

Are these things good? Yes! Are they bad? Yes! It depends upon how far from biblical truth each reaction against modernity takes on first. But when scriptural truths are replaced with intellectualism, doctrine tends to lean more towards liberalism. For example, because experience is valued more highly than reason, truth becomes relative.

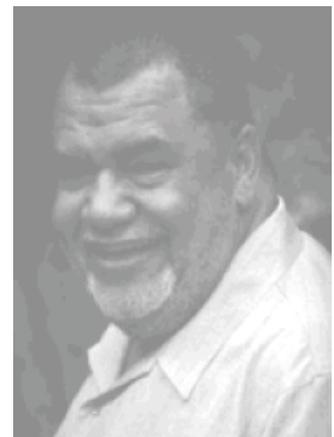
This type of reasoning opens up all kinds of problems in regard to the Bible containing absolute truth and it even disqualifies

biblical truth as being absolute in many cases.

If the Bible is not our source of absolute truth and personal experience is allowed to define and interpret what truth actually is, a saving faith in Jesus Christ is useless, meaningless, and void of any real hope!

There will always be paradigm shifts in thinking as long as humanity inhabits this present earth, because humanity constantly seeks to better itself in knowledge and in substance. This is the principle of Romans 12:2 regarding our minds being transformed.

Yet, we need to be mindful of Acts 17:11 and become like the Bereans, weighing every new teaching and every new thought against Scripture.



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**“One Lord.... One Faith... One Baptism”**

We should never let our experiences interpret Scripture for us, but as we change and conform ourselves to Christ, we must interpret our experiences according to Scripture.

Unfortunately, this is not happening in circles espousing postmodern Christianity. Thus, the misconception of Christianity leads to too many fallacies, dangerous doctrines and methods of Christianity such as the following:

1. **Cultural Christianity:** That which identifies itself as “Christianity” superficially, but does not truly adhere to “the” faith. This notion is based solely on family and social standing.
2. **Denominational Christianity:** This has produced schisms that have divided the body of Christ and praises God for the disunity that He expressly forbids.
3. **Heretical Christianity:** This idea is based on agreement with some distinctive facet of support for non-essential matters.
4. **Inventive Christianity:** Ours is an age of technological invention. Many are inventing their own method of Christianity that is inclusive of what they believe regardless of what the Bible has to say as long as someone on the television, internet, or some form of communiqué teaches it.

Therefore, when we look at the impact of postmodernism on Christianity we can see the devastation it has had on biblical authority, the nature of sin, the theology of the Church and the abuse that falls on the gifts of God.

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*Is there a passage of Scripture that authorizes deacons to override and supersede the role and decision of the Evangelist?*

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When I speak of the impact of this philosophical issue on biblical authority, I am speaking of the fact that we have been called to keep “the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). The concept of sound words deals with that which is healthy, healthful and life giving power. Paul says that it is a “pattern.”

The word pattern is from the Greek word *tupos* which describes a “mold, “example,” or as the KJV “pattern.” In other words, that which can be copied emulated and reproduced exactly. In the world of a tailor, a “pattern” will reproduce the same dress repeatedly as long as no additions or alterations occur to the original form.

The word pattern is equated with doctrine (Rom. 6:17-18) the lifestyle and example of the Evangelist (1 Tim. 4:12-16) and also of the Word and will of God (2 Tim. 1:13). In each instance, there is the concept of reproducing the same thing.

Thus, when we look at the scriptures, the scriptures are a pattern to emulate copy and follow.

Today, this has been violated by individuals whose lust for power, preeminence and prestige, surpass their understanding of God’s divine authority and who seek to satisfy some misconcept-

ion of their egos and desire to be more than God has given unto them!

Consequently, as we look at the impact of postmodernism on biblical authority, we see within our fellowship the warning words of the apostle Paul to the elders of the Church at Ephesus about the apostasy of faith, how the apostasy of faith would come through leaders in the Church and how apostasy would affect the nature of our faith (Acts 20:20-28).

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*By what right does an outsider, unemployed non-biblical “theological misfit” have to go into congregations, mess up the congregation and the brotherhood act as if that was biblical, authorized and in the best interest of the body?*

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First of all, it would lead to ecumenical concepts. By this, I mean the exclusivity of the church’s theology would come into question. Is the one Church one? On the other hand, is it composed of 300 some odd major denominations with their various teaching on division?

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*Thus, when we look at the scriptures, the scriptures are a pattern to emulate copy and follow.*

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Do local congregations have the right to practice congregational autonomy or would the Evangelist and elders form a congregation of dictatorial order under their oversight?

In addition, would a local congregation have the right of self-determination without the fear and infringement from an outside Evangelist, elders, or brotherhood mono-bishops’?

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*Why do we allow egotistical maniacal individuals who do not the difference between antinodes and an adverb to have prestige and honor as a National anything while destroying local congregations and scarring young men duly called by independent local congregations to serve them?*

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Would someone be allowed to interpose their own concept of authority into the local congregation? By this I mean where there is a duly ordained Evangelist and no elders or deacons, will the Evangelist be allowed to “set the church in order” according to the pattern without outside interference by supposedly brotherhood watchdogs?

If the congregation has a duly ordained Evangelist, without elders but deacons, would the deacons constitute the spiritual leadership of the congregation? Is there a passage of Scripture that authorizes deacons to override and supersede the role and decision of the Evangelist?

Why are “bus boys” [deacons] allowed to bring someone in without the consent of the Evangelist and desires of the congregation to arbitrate on the misconception and self-entitlement to be “a national arbitrator” on the basis that they have developed the office for themselves?

Can that person tell a congregation that they should terminate the Evangelist and work with the “bus boys” to set up severance

packages, destroy the harmony of the congregation, cause division, and then have the audacity and the unmitigated gall to preach for that congregation?

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*Why are “bus boys” [deacons] allowed to bring someone in without the consent of the Evangelist and desires of the congregation to arbitrate on the misconception and self-entitlement to be “a national arbitrator” on the basis that they have developed the office for themselves?*

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By what right does an outsider, unemployed non-biblical “theological misfit” have to go into congregations, mess up the congregation and the brotherhood act as if that was biblical, authorized and in the best interest of the body?

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*Beloved, these pseudo scholars must have their mouths stopped, their teaching and practices denounced and marked as false teachers, heretics, Judaizers and idiots.*

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Where are the voices of concern when elders make a decision to fire an Evangelist on the basis that it was “a business decision and not a scriptural decision?” Where are the voices of concern when we allow the grandsons of Gamaliel to attack local congregations as liberals

and unsound for following biblical principles?

Where are the voices of concern when we allow liberals to indoctrinate and practice questionable doctrines that have no authority invested in the Scripture?

Where are the voices of concern when we allow “Trumpism” to infiltrate fellowship? Why do we allow egotistical maniacal individuals who do not the difference between antinodes and an adverb to have prestige and honor as a National anything while destroying local congregations and scarring young men duly called by independent local congregations to serve them?

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*Will we recognize the authority of the Bible, the Evangelist and the local congregation?*

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Beloved, these pseudo scholars must have their mouths stopped, their teaching and practices denounced and marked as false teachers, heretics, Judaizers and idiots.

We have hoped to show the devastation that postmodernism has on the Church. The Church must not lose sight of the fact that in spite of a culture that wants to be inclusive and acceptable they are in reality exclusive.

The Church by being one body and accepting the Bible as its only authoritative guide can’t be anything but exclusive. This does not mean we cannot be progressive but can we change the plan? No.

Beloved, the Evangelist and pastor teacher are a gift from God to the Church (Eph. 4:11-12). If the gift goes bad, becomes non-productive and loses the ability to function, you seek to help them get back on track. If they are sinful, they should be given the opportunity to repent and regain their influence.

If he refuses, the Church then should institute the type of discipline that they

would practice on any brother or sister who refuses to repent.

Yet, to terminate the gift God has given to the Church and causing him to become the Evangelist of another congregation without holding the perpetrator(s) accountable is unscriptural and unethical.

We see far too much of this going on in our fellowship to the degree that there is a discombobulation as to the role and function of the Evangelist and elders as to who is over who and who has the final say so. Is it the Evangelist or the elders? Is it not ludicrous to think that these supportive usurpers of authority can be allowed to traverse our national fellowship because they can put a sermon together or because their daddies built the building?

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The Church today is under attack by unhealthy elderships that have become a “board of

directors” with unchecked power, splitting congregations by terminating a beloved Evangelist because of their influence and tenure.

The attitude of boss or bust, rule or ruin is here. This is an unhealthy attitude and teaching that elders whom the Scripture do not teach to act as a corporate board with this unlimited power and authority have gone unchecked. Where are the voices of concern to meet this challenge of usurping this authority?

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*What we are witnessing is the murder of the local Church and the one doing the murders committing suicide. Where are the voices of concern?*

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I am not pleading for dictatorial Evangelist. What I am pleading for is that the Church is God’s answer to a decadent world and if we act like the world how will we attract the world? It is in the difference that we attract.

The real issue with this philosophical tyrant is will the real Church of Christ stand up? Will we recognize the authority of the Bible, the Evangelist and the local congregation? Will we stand for the truth or will we

allow unscrupulous individuals to commit congregational murder and evangelistic assassination due to our ignorance of biblical authority, exclusiveness and new denominational attitude that seemingly is gaining a footing in the body?

This issue is too large to deal with in one review. Therefore, it requires a follow up article which will be forthcoming. But before we translate out of this installment I want to share with you the misconception of usurping of authority that is being so blatantly manifested in many congregations today by unscrupulous evangelists as well as elders and deacons.

My beloved brethren, to usurp authority emanates from the idea of exercising authority on one’s own account in order to dominate over and have dominion over another. In the earlier usage of the word it signified one who with his own hand killed either others or himself.

Later it came to denote one who acts on his own authority without caring about the consequences as to the damage inflicted by his neurosis; hence, to exercise dominion.

What we are witnessing is the murder of the local Church and the one doing the murders committing suicide. Where are the voices of concern? We are living in lawless times and those who are suppose to be the light of the world have allowed these despots to commit murderous atrocities on local congregations as well as themselves. (To be continued)

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Dr. Luis R. Lugo is a recognized Bible expositor and gospel preacher among African American churches of Christ. He has served congregations in the cities of Chattanooga, Tennessee; Valdosta, Georgia; Tampa, Florida; Kansas City, Kansas; Chicago, Illinois; and Jacksonville, North Carolina. Dr. Lugo attended Sunset School of Religious Study, International Seminary, Trinity Seminary, Kansas City Community College, and American Theological Seminary. He has received both a Masters degree and a Doctorate in Theology. His published works are *The Five-Fold Work of the Evangelist*; *The Five-Fold Work of the Elder*; and *The Blessed Life*. Dr. Lugo is also a staff writer for the *Christian Courier* and a member of the National Lectureship Advisory Committee.