

Articles and Sermons :: Criticistianity by Robert Wurtz

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Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all of us will stand before the judgment seat of God. (Romans 14:10)

When Edward Bernays coined the term 'public relations' and founded it's industry, it is doubtful that many could foresee just how the feedback loops would create an opinion driven culture. Find out what the people want, compare that to what your doing, and make adjustments to please as many people as possible. Think about how often in any given day we are afforded opportunities to 'rate' a service, give feedback or cast a vote based upon our personal judgment of something or someone. It's as if the world is conditioning people to become expert faultfinders.

The spirit of American Idol

What happens when this attitude begins to infiltrate the churches of God? Not having a proper definition to describe my answer I created one; Criticistianity. You will notice I simply combined criticize and Christianity; and what a foul mix. What a stench and rottenness in my ears! Yet the behavior is more vile yet. Why? Because we risk losing an essential part of ministry in the body of Christ all together. Christians measure other Christians contributions to the kingdom the same way the three judge panel measures the audition of a would be American idol. If that is not an abomination I don't know what is. The people of God get set up for a worldly criticism from their own piers. It's as if a believer may venture to come forward with their talent and rather than it being measured for its potential ministerial value- it is looked at through the critical eye of America's Got Talent. Strike one! Strike two! Strike three.. your out! Ha ha ha ha ha! Goes the crowd and down goes another potential Peter, Paul, John, Steven or James. Laughed down and mocked by their own piers.

Teaching Pragmatism

At some point in the last 50 years a sinister concept has came in to many circles. It has been fostered, in my view, by Christian television that has sought out the most beautiful singers, choirs and instrumentalists; the most eloquent, refined and articulate speakers to show-off to the world and the churches of God. We started producing performers rather than ministers. We needed to show the world that we had just as 'good of talent' as they do. Pretty soon it didn't matter if you were holy and living right- all that mattered is that you could perform. This is contrary to the church meetings that I remember as a child. I recall a day when men and women got up and preached and sang from the depths of their heart. It was powerful. I had a sense that the preacher believed what he preached and the singer meant what they were singing. Today that don't seem to matter in the least. Its more about your stage presence and mannerisms. Strangely its often about how cool your hair looks or how high of notes a man can hit during the song. This, in my view, can project a false and even soulless since of sincerity and power. It all 'sounds' powerful to those that never had a front row seat to the real thing. But I'm not fooled by the proverbial banana in the tailpipe.

Coolness or Holiness?

The all too often results? Sadly, some of the most lauded and popular, as has also happened from time to time in the Christian music world, the singer is found to have been in adultery or some scandal. They lose their contract and it becomes a huge scandal. Their singing was said to be 'powerful', but now there is chaos and confusion. I don't want to be critical, but whatever happened to just being sincere and meaning what you sing? What ever happened to being moved by the spirit rather than feeling coerced into the singer 'performing' and then the crowd into 'participating'? I don't remember a crowd having to be prodded to worship God in the old days. Why? Because the singers had a way of making folk feel what they felt when they sang. They meant it and the crowd believed them. There was no performance or pretense. The pe

people tried to live holy lives and it reflected in all that they did. I have to ask, what is more important- holiness or coolness?

Judging the Ministry?

Do we have a right to sit back and judge a minister or a singer based on their proficiency in their genre? Do we worship the aesthetics of music? Does it have to sound perfect and pretty or we can't enter in? Does the speaker have to sound slick and refined for the people to listen? What happened to the days when folk stumbled over their words, but yet we recognized the voice of God in their speech? Does this generation even know how to listen for an unction from God? Have they been so cultured that they would probably walk out on Paul the Apostle because his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible? Would an old timey country preacher even have a prayer today? Would we cast off a Dwight L. Moody because he used words like 'aint' in a sermon? Would David be told to 'sit down' with his 5 stones and a sling in preference of some modern Rambo figure? Have the masses cast off the truth that little is much if God is in it? Do we despise the day of small things? God has chosen the weak thing to confound the mighty.

Have a generation of critics been raised up? Just asking. A person is known as a critic when they have become proficient at judging. Granted, some things must be judged. This is common sense and we will not waste time exploring it. This is not what I am referring to. Criticistianity is that mode of behavior in which an individual has exalted themselves as an expert in a subject so as to critique others that move among them in that area. There is an 'armchair quarterbacking' that goes on today that surely cannot please the Lord. "God, were sending this one back because they're not refined enough." God help us.

Is it really the world to blame?

Can we rightly blame Eddie Bernays? Not completely. Christians know better than to entertain a critical spirit. Yet the behavior has so reached the mainstream that almost everything and everyone has to be critiqued, even in the churches of God. It seems that everyone and everything has to 'perform' these days to a certain expectation and we are being asked to give our opinions. The opinion gets used in a feedback loop to keep altering everything and everyone until it (or they) suit the highest number of peoples' desires. What do you get? A ministry that is performance based and pandering to the masses. Again, what happened to the days when folk were just REAL. Has hollywood infiltrated modern christendom through all these talent shows until there is no hope for anything? Just asking. Did we not read Romans 12:1,2. This is not supposed to be how the churches of God treat their ministers. Selah.

Performance or Ministry?

I may be starting to get a little up in years, but does anyone remember when this was still about ministry? Who still believes in the fact that God can use anyone for his purposes? Why in the world would we fight against God to try to teach people that they have to perform at a certain level in order to be acceptable in the churches of God when God called the churches out of that very mindset in the first place. We can't possibly be so ill-advised that we don't understand that most basic fact? Peter, John and Andrew were fishermen; they were not conference style motivational speakers. Does a man have to sing like Sinatra before he is worthy to 'minister'? Seriously. What message are we sending people? I've been backstage in the performances. I've seen the confident groups mock the ones that sought to pray for the touch of God. But who do you think gets the high marks and praise?

Rejected among your peers?

We have answered to some degree Paul's first question, Why, then, do you criticize your brother? Because this is the 21st century and we live in the three strike/three person panel era. The funny thing is that the three man judgment panel is trying to trump the Three Person panel of the Godhead (if you will) that is calling a generation to serve. Its lunacy. Its not

working either. Look around. We have almost no-one stepping up in ministry. And why should they? Do you like being criticized? Neither do they. I believe it is sin. The problem is that it has now gone on for so long and so many are used to texting in the favorite pick to their phone, that the sting of the transgression for that behavior in the churches of God is no longer felt. Many are becoming past feeling. That is to say, it used to sting the conscience, but not any more. There used to be a check in the Spirit, but not now. It's not only acceptable in our times, its almost demanded. Should we as Christians succumb to moving in this mindset?

Ministry in an Era of Criticistianity

The results of this age? Ministry now has to cope with a new catch phrase, "your not good enough." And if its not ministry why are we doing it? Why are we wasting precious time to do it on any level? Were supposed to be shepherding the flock of God. We are to come along side and encourage a generation to step into what God has for them. Not with an invitation in one hand and a stick in the other. God have mercy on this critical generation. Not with a checklist to critique how they preach or sing. We need to get out of God's business and let Him start using whom He will.

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