

One Small Hiccup:

Chip Brogden's *The Church in the Wilderness*

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Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from *The Church in the Wilderness*,
Chip Brogden, The School of Christ, 2011.

Picture yourself on a 200 mile journey. The car you are driving is a beauty with a smooth and powerful engine and a well-lubricated and well-maintained chassis and drive-train. The road is scenic and the weather is superb. But near the end of the journey, about 20 miles from your destination, the engine “hiccups” and the car lurches. It lasts only a moment but the rest of your journey is spent anxiously listening for odd sounds from the motor as you try to recall if there had been any other clues you might have missed and wonder if the last few miles of your journey might turn into a hike.

The Church in the Wilderness is just such an experience. It is by any measure one of the best and clearest written books containing the revelations the Lord has been giving to His people who have exited the “church.” Anyone who is experiencing this exodus or the trek through the wilderness that follows it will find much clarity, confirmation and edification.

But near the end of the book, there is suddenly a “hiccup” and the smooth ride momentarily turns bumpy. The ride smoothes out and no further bumps are encountered but the journey is marred nonetheless.

This “hiccup” occurs on page 182 – any writer tackling this subject who can get to page 182 without any spiritual “hiccups” at all and who then finishes the book without any further mishap has done an excellent work! Nor should it be overlooked that a “hiccup,” when recognized and corrected, is only a minor deficiency. Only when left undiagnosed and unaddressed can it develop into a serious malfunction. It is certainly no reason to not get or not read the book – the book, apart from this one short “hiccup,” is well worth the read!

Brogden writes:

“There are some good things about church. I’m not going to take the extreme position that there is *nothing* good about it. If it were that bad no one would want to be a part of it. But the majority of people still get something out of church, and I have come to the conclusion that spiritual babies still need a safe place to play and drink their milk and get their dirty diapers changed. You find that most people who have left the church do not *hate* everything about their former church. Most of them say they still love the people, and are concerned for the people. They miss something of the fellowship they once thought they had. And sometimes they miss it so much that they go and visit other churches, trying to fit in, trying to find a place. But try as they might, something in them just cannot go along with it any more.” (p. 182-183 – emphasis in original)

The “Hiccup”

Perhaps what is most out of place about this “hiccup” paragraph is that it is so physically or naturally oriented in contrast to the rest of this book which is of such a visibly high caliber of spiritual insights that are the results of receiving divine revelation. What facts that are presented

here are done so from the people's point of view and no spiritual explanation of these statements is offered. Let us consider these statements one at a time.

- “There are some good things about church.” (p. 182)

Jesus asked the rich young ruler, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good – except God alone.” (Mk. 10:18) Brogden relies heavily (and rightly so) on the truth “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15:5) Yet here he attributes *goodness* to the “church”! The goodness belongs to God alone and the only reason any goodness can be found in a “church” is because God meets people where they are at and rewards those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) “Church” – Organized Religion (to use Brogden's phrase) – is virtually synonymous with Mystery Babylon – the great *prostitute*. (Rev. 17:1, 5) The “church,” in pursuit of money, pleasure and power, mimics the role of the bride of Christ. What might seem “good” to men is still abomination in the eyes of God.

- “...the extreme position [is] that there is *nothing* good about it.” (p. 182-183 – emphasis in original)

To attribute the goodness of God to the works of Organized Religion is an error of colossal proportions. It is failing to rightly discern and righteously judge the thing that is before our eyes. Brogden recognizes and preaches the truth “I know that no good thing dwells in me” (Rom. 7:18) but to say that no good thing dwells in the “church” is somehow an “extreme position.” It is probable that Brogden's soft “heart for pastors” (p. 185) is causing him confusion and rendering him unable to see that one either does things Christ's way or one's own way, the latter being something the New Testament calls “lawlessness,” doing what is right in one's own eyes, which achieves nothing of eternal value (again see Jn. 15:5) and will perhaps earn one an eternal dismissal from Christ. (Mt. 7:23, 1 Cor. 3:17) It's all well and good to have agape love for “pastors” but what about agape love for the sheep who have been so irreparably damaged by these “pastors” refusal to seek and walk in the will of God. “Pastors” should not be punished for their sins – they're as entitled to repentance and redemption as anyone else is – but the sheep ought not be deprived of their life and liberty just to give Diotrephes the preeminence. (3 Jn. 9)

- “If it were that bad no one would want to be a part of it.” (p. 183)

The “church” is like America – both operate under a façade and imitation of God's ways. To the extent that people seek and honor the God of all goodness (Jas. 1:17), to that extent will He bless and reward the people. (Jas. 4:8) It is also to be noted that it does not take great intelligence to devise a worldly system of pleasure that entices immature people to partake of the pleasures of this world – but it does take an extremely sophisticated scam to cause people who have been touched by Christ Jesus to drift away from Him and to partake of pleasures that are just as carnal as what they've come from but which have the appearance of godliness. (see 2 Tim. 3:5) Satan has devised just such a scheme in the “church” and those who underestimate it's lethal power are those who go back under its deceptive sway. This is what makes Brogden's “hiccup” – assigning the transcendence and goodness of God to the work of the “church” – such a dangerous error if it is left uncorrected.

- “But the majority of people still get something out of church...” (p. 183)

Why is this so? Because the “church” holds its people in a state of perpetual infancy and a pabulum dose of truth keeps the baby alive, barely or perhaps not at all – it doesn’t really matter because spiritual life, being on a “spiritual journey,” within a “church” is an inconvenience and downright bad for “church” business. But this is not how it should be. “By this time you ought to be teachers but you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk [God’s truths delivered through someone else] not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk [routine sermonizing], being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food [the words that proceed directly from God’s mouth – see Mt. 4:4] is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb. 5:12-14) Spiritually immature, infantile believers still get something from “church” because they don’t get anything directly from God – and they are warned and trained not to and even forbidden to do so *by the “church”!*

- “...spiritual babies still need a safe place to play and drink their milk and get their dirty diapers changed.” (p. 183)

The “church” is a *safe* place for babies? In whose opinion? Thousands come forward at “church” altar calls every week around the world but often these fail to continue even to attend “church” and most abandon any real life with God. No person who manages to survive their time at “church” comes away unscarred or whole – every ex-“church”-ite still carries some form of leftover Babylonian “church” baggage into the wilderness and most often finds some way to inflict damage on someone else with it before Christ reveals to that one what that baggage really is. No, it is more accurate to call the “church” a spiritual abortion clinic and a spiritual baby-mutilation factory than to think of it as a safe and adequate day-care center! I would wager that Brogden would not consider twice about sending his own children to a government-sponsored day-care but he doesn’t mind sending the children of the Most High God into a system tainted, corrupted and sometimes dominated by the Spirit of Darkness and Death who hates the Lord of Life and Light and *all* of His true children. That any of us survived the “church” (and very, very few “pastors” make it out alive) is testimony of God’s faithfulness and transcendence in His promise that the prison gates of Hell would not prevail against His people. (Mt. 16:18) The “church” remains a primary pillar in those gates, the primary scheme and device the devil has constructed to separate men from God.

We need to explore this further. Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven [that realm where Christ is King]. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!” (Mt. 18:3, 6-7) This is the kind of threats the mafia makes – and Jesus here says that’s better than what He will do! Jesus *promises* woe to any man – including (even especially) “pastors” – who stumble and harm His “little ones.” He promises woe to those who would permanently scar, maim and mutilate His little children, those who serve them tainted, soured and even poisoned milk (whether from their own opinions and philosophies or from demonic leadings and teachings – see 1 Tim. 4:1) and who prevent them from truly turning to the One who truly “changes their dirty diapers” (see 1 Jn. 1:9 as to Who is

faithful to cleanse them from all unrighteousness – it's not the “pastor” or the professional staff!), and who stand between them and the One who would, if they would but turn to Him, take them all the way through “potty training” so that they might go on and attain to the *whole* measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13) No, the “church” is not a safe place to raise babies – it is the primary kill zone of the enemy of our souls. The only *safe* place for babies (and adults!) is in the shadow of the Almighty God! (Psa. 91:1, etc.)

- “You find that most people who have left the church do not *hate* everything about their former church.” (p. 183 – emphasis in original)

Again, this is an oversimplification. There is truth that we should remember, love and treasure every moment God interacted and led us toward a purer, more mature relationship with Him – even the moments that occurred at a “church.” But it is also true that most people making their exodus from the “church,” having been kept in spiritual immaturity and unable to make righteous judgments, cannot but fail to hate the things that Christ hates. (see Rev. 2:6 – a reference to “pastors” and Organized Religion if ever there was one!)

- “Most of them say they still love the people, and are concerned for the people.” (p. 183)

This is simply the evidence that God has truly touched the people who have exited the “church” – the agape love of God is in them (to whatever degree) and it reaches out to others, particularly those they believe to be their brothers and sisters in Christ. (1 Jn. 4:16, etc.) It is only later, when these people find out they were disobediently “fellowshipping” (a deception in its own right) with sexually immoral, greedy, idolaters, swindlers and drunkards (see 1 Cor. 5:9-11) and ignorantly partaking of the cup and table of the demonic (1 Cor. 10:21), that “church” is recognized for what it is and they are overwhelmed by the grace of God that delivered them from such a clever and well-laid snare. And yet again, Brogden’s attributing the presence of God’s love in a person’s heart to some work of a religious system is a mistake of colossal proportions.

- “They miss something of the fellowship they once thought they had.” (p. 183)

“What fellowship does light have with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another [that is, with both God and His children]...” (1 Jn. 1:7) And Paul also wrote, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Eph. 5:11) The lives of most “church”-ites are shrouded in darkness of one form or another and perhaps the greatest source of our disillusionment is when we realize that while we walked in light trying to overcome the darkness, most of the others, including the “pastor” and staff, walked in very great darknesses. “Fellowship” and “love” at a “church” – which routinely ceases when one stops attending and supporting the system, a tendency Brogden also recognizes – is just another lie. (see 1 Jn. 2:21), another nail in the coffin of Organized Religion. When one recognizes the “church’s” counterfeit “fellowship” for what it is, a lie, one knows the futility of seeking the living in the place of the dead (Lk. 24:5) and we really don’t miss the deception practiced upon us they called “fellowship” because the assembly

was not purely Christ's ekklesia but is and, if the "church" has anything to say about it, always will be a *mixed multitude*.

- "And sometimes they miss it so much that they go and visit other churches, trying to fit in, trying to find a place." (p. 183)

This is only evidence of how deep and far-reaching the deceptive teachings go in deceiving people to believe that what they do and receive at "church" are the things of God. People really do keep going back to "church" because they still mistakenly believe, at very deep levels, that it's His house and that what they receive really is genuine love and fellowship. Evidence of how deeply deceived we are ought not be used as evidence that "church" really is, after all, "okay."

- "But try as they might, something in them just cannot go along with it any more." (p. 183)

"Church" is almost entirely about forsaking the commandments of God so as to walk under the traditions, precepts and commandments of men. "Church" is the place where dogs are *expected* to return to their vomit and pigs to wallow again in their mud (so long as it doesn't leave any stains on the "church" carpet, of course – see 2 Pet. 2:22) One gets tired of being a pig and a dog rather quickly once one has seen anything of the reality of Christ.

The Source of the "Hiccup"

So where does this "hiccup" come from? Brogden says it rather clearly in this paragraph:

"I'm not going to take the extreme position..." (p. 182)

This is a *willful* choice on his part. He has *chosen* to believe something that, as we have seen above, simply does not line up with the truths revealed in the Bible.

Brogden also says:

"I have come to the conclusion..." (p. 183)

Here he admits that this is his own rational and reasoned *conclusion*. Brogden himself recognizes the fallacy of relying solely on reason in contrast to divine revelation yet here he commits the very same error.

There is yet a deeper aspect to this "hiccup" that we need to consider. Paul wrote, "That day [of Christ's return and reign] will not come until the falling away [apostasy] comes first..." (2 Ths. 2:3) Other prophecies show that the falling away involves *many* (not a few) who are deceived because they do not love the truth. (Mt. 24:10-11, 2 Ths. 2:11-12) These will "heap up" teachers ("pastors," "prophets," "apostles," whatever titles these pulpiteers and talking heads take to themselves) that soothe and stimulate the listeners' ears – but the message will be myths, fables, lies. (2 Tim. 4:3-4) These false teachers secretly and stealthily introduce destructive divisions that takes away the headship of Christ - *many* will follow them and the real way of truth is maligned. (2 Pet. 2:1-2) This *is* the "church"!

In all of Brogden's book, the idea of the falling away from the faith as a prophesied event is not even mentioned just as the role of Babylon as the great prostitute is not mentioned. Nowhere in the book is the idea put forth that all these deeply subtle deceptions are the result of Satan's war against the Most High God. We are left to believe that these things just happened because men just did all these things all by themselves.

Brogden's background in churchianity was the Charismatic movement (p. 46) which indeed suffers from an over-emphasis on the work of the demonic. Though Brogden says "It is true that we cannot afford to be ignorant of satan's devices..." (p. 48 – see 2 Cor. 2:11), to write such a book as this without even mentioning the source of all the deceptions that abound at "church," combined with his apparent refusal to capitalize "satan" hints at why Brogden doesn't recognize the "church" for what it is – the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith that God has allowed to come to be so that men would have to choose to follow either Christ and God or to follow whatever is right in their own eyes. It is the same choice that Adam had – to eat of the Tree of Life or of the Tree of the (independent) Knowledge of Good and Evil. (see Gen. 2:17, 3:22)

The Adjustment

It is to be hoped that, should *The Church in the Wilderness* ever be sent to reprint or e-publishing in the future, that this "hiccup" paragraph would be replaced with something like the following:

It will be a great day in the Lord when we can recognize that in the church there is no good thing – just as there is no good thing in us. (see Rom. 7:18) Any good thing we have encountered in churchianity we must certainly attribute to God's gracious presence in our carnal, "mixed multitude" assemblies, assemblies most often gathered in misunderstanding, error or even enmity against God's purposes. The small foretastes of love and fellowship we gleaned there, though often tainted with deception and hidden ulterior motives, were indeed heavenly and we need to recognize that they were designed, not to confirm us in where we were at but rather to call us on to still purer expressions of love and fellowship, both toward God and one another. When we are no longer desiring to be "fed" but instead desire to share our life in Christ with others younger in the faith, the babies and children will no longer need to be sent off to the churches as if those were safe day-care centers. Babies and children can be – as they ought to be – sheltered and instructed by each of us who have Christ's life within us in an environment of genuine love and compassion. We need not look back in misplaced nostalgia to the days of our time in churchianity – indeed many who have escaped or fled labor long and hard to be certain we're not dragged back into yet another version of it. Rather, we must look back in gratitude to God for every instance of goodness we've experienced and press on ahead to the fuller, more mature expressions of goodness that can come through cleansed, purified and mature yielded vessels. This is what we were all called to all along and it is necessary, now more than ever, to shake off every façade and deception of churchianity.

After the “hiccup” paragraph, Brogden goes on to an excellent conclusion – pointing out the differences between reformation, revival and repudiation. (p. 200-205) When one recognizes that the “church” is the visible expression in our time of Babylon, the great prostitute, it is easy to see that seeking reformation of the “church” is futile. When one recognizes that the “church” is a corpse that has been dead for centuries, it is easy to see that revival (resuscitation) is futile. Indeed, all that is left is to repudiate or reject *all* that is of “church,” flee “out of the camp” of men’s religious counterfeits (Heb. 13:13) and keep ourselves pure and follow the Lamb wherever He leads us. (Rev. 14:4) Brogden’s “hiccup” is quite contradictory to his own instruction to repudiate the things of “church.”

Brogden’s “hiccup” paragraph, being the product of his own choices, understanding and reasoning, mars an otherwise nearly flawless work of spiritual insights and wisdom. As with all books written about our life in Christ, we must “eat the meat and spit out the bones.” With *The Church in the Wilderness* there seems to be only this one missed bone. (Brogden’s other excellent book suffers in a similar but far lesser way for the same reasons – see *Embrace the Cross*, p. 160-161)

Brogden wrote,

“Other men and women of God have seen these things in the past, but many would not speak of them openly and freely. They would only go so far and in many cases they were still very much a part of the religious system, still trying to reform it or calling it to repent. Someone like A.W. Tozer, who was a prophetic voice to his generation, yet still operated as a pastor within the religious system. That may have been acceptable in that generation, and in that season.

“But we are in a different season now. The spirit of Religion is worse, darker, and more deceptive than ever. The days when you could be a part of that system and try to speak against it are over.” (p. 209)

Brogden is absolutely correct – this is the word of the Lord for this season. The cry to “Come out and meet the Bridegroom!” (Mt. 25:6), the call to come out from all forms of “Christian” idolatry and idolaters (2 Cor. 6:17, 1 Cor. 5:11) and the call to come out of Babylon lest we share in the consequences of her sins (Rev. 18:4) are more persistent now than ever. The spirit of false religion *is* worse, darker and more deceptive than ever. Whole “churches” practice blatant and open abominable sin but still proclaim to experience the spiritual presence and blessing of “God.” “Pastors” and ex-“pastors” preach and write books under the guidance of spirits who take them into “enlightenment” and spiritual experiences that have nothing to do with Christ and which contradict the Bible. “Deacons” frankly express their hatred for various people groups and wish that God would annihilate them and send them all to hell. “Spiritual fathers” call themselves God’s “set man” (the one God has set in authority over other believers – see Mk. 10:42-43) and parade themselves as “super-apostles” set in place around the globe to usher in a new apostolic order and season and demand special treatment and respect whenever they bring their “word of the Lord” to town. All this and much, much more is done in the name of the Lord at “church.”

The Light too is much brighter now. The things Brogden writes of are becoming common knowledge among those who have come out and who have ears to hear and eyes to see and a heart that yearns after God. These revelations and insights will become even more

widespread among those who have fled from the apostasy, the “church,” and still even more so among those whom these faithful ones and twos will disciple.

This is precisely why Brogden’s “hiccup” – his personal opinion and conclusion – is not acceptable either. There is nothing good about “church” except for the wonderfully miraculous fact that God met us there, often in spite of its flaws and even enmity against God. Apart from the covering and protection of God, which is extended only to those who obey Him or who are too immature to be anything but ignorant, the “church” is a minefield designed to maim, cripple and even kill the spirit and soul of all those who come through the doors. There is no reason – apart from a direct leading of God – to ever attend a “church” and even then God’s purpose will never be to reform or revive or support that which is abominable or dead. His will be a call to “come out” of the wicked, abominable and demonic practices and be separate, different, holy unto God. Any refusal to come fully out and any excusing of the sins, errors and wickedness of the “church” will only act as a snare to draw us back under one or more of its subtle deceptions.

The time in which we may remove all traces of the tares from our own lives is short – soon “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who practice lawlessness [what is right in their own eyes].” (Mt. 13:41) The word of the Lord in this season is: “Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” (Rev. 22:11) The Spirit of the Lord will not contend with man endlessly for man is corrupted. (see Gen. 6:3) Fill up then the measure of your judgment or reward and know that the consequences of your choice are yours alone. Chose this day whether you will be a tare, a son of the devil, or a wheat, a son of Christ’s kingdom. (see Mt. 13:38) But don’t ever believe that *God* doesn’t know which you really and truly are and be certain that He will be faithful to judge you according to what you have done. (Rev. 20:13, etc.)

Let he who has ears hear.

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