

FREE

PLACID



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Have you ever looked out over a pond or lake in the still of the early morning? The other morning, I was standing on the dock near my home looking out over the nearly mile-wide river. I was struck by how very still the surface of the water was — it was nearly as smooth as a sheet of glass. Only an occasional ripple broke its placid surface.

Placid? *Placid* means not easily upset or excited, calm and peaceful, with little movement or activity. It is synonymous with quiet, calm, tranquil, still, peaceful, undisturbed, equable, unexcitable, serene, mild, steady, and unperturbed.

Mainstream Christianity today easily meets the definition of *placid*. Not wanting to make any waves, not wishing to rock the boat, its

centrist members comfortably and easily integrate into the society around them. Each wants to establish and protect his own little kingdom. If you were to rock the boat then you stand to lose what you have, or not advance in rank or position — so tolerance and compromise are tacitly¹ promoted.

Christianity today is a favored world religion. Christians make good soldiers,

politicians, rich executives and entrepreneurs, senators and statesmen, movie stars, and even evangelists who hobnob with presidents and kings. All of this taken together has produced a docile² religion promising blessing, fame, and success under the guise of being “a good witness for Christ.”

How much has changed from the time of Acts, where it was said of the early church,

¹ *tacit* — implied or understood without being stated. ² *docile* — ready to accept control or instruction; submissive.

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.”
(Acts 17:6)

What a sharp contrast! Where’s the radical religion that was supposed to upset the world order of the day? Did the early believers have a mandate to shake up the world, or integrate into it? What happened to the electric gospel message that shocked all of Jerusalem after the day of Pentecost, producing the most

radical life of a community of believers where all property was held in common, shared by all? You can read about it in Acts 2 and 4 — some of the most exciting chapters in the New Testament. Contrast that with nominal Christianity of today, where most are content to sit in their pews an hour a week and go about their individualistic lives for the rest of the week, contentedly carving out a living for themselves.³ The mandate

now seems to be to “cause no stir.”

Where did that paradigm⁴ shift occur? How did we arrive at this point? Even the most casual look back into church history points most clearly to the beginning of the fourth century, when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Due to Constantine’s flattering words and maneuvering, Christians became fully integrated into Roman government as he

surrounded himself with Christian advisors. Where once the church had been persecuted for its marked stand against the pagan society around them, they had become undisturbed and even favored. There were no upheavals in the national peace as they smoothly and easily mixed in without any kind of adverse waves about them. Rather than radical, they had become docile — a pet state religion

known as *Christianity*.

To what can this be attributed? They had drifted away from the apostles' teaching, to which they had formerly devoted themselves.⁵ In form, there was nothing to attract anyone who had aspirations of worldly success,⁶ for one had to give up all he

possessed in order to become a part of the new community of believers. According to the

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Savior's own words, the only way to be saved is to completely

come out of this world:

"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves

³ Matthew 6:24 ⁴ *paradigm* — an example that serves as a model or pattern; template; archetype ⁵ Acts 2:42 ⁶ Isaiah 53:2-3

Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” (John 12:25-26)

Yet worldly success and prosperity are readily acceptable to and attainable to Christians today. Within the church's ranks, one no longer has to hate his former life in this world. The apostles' foundational understanding of following Christ in Mark 10: 26-30 is in marked contrast

to the way the church has now become, where nothing need be given up and life in the world no longer need be hated or forsaken.

Even long before the time of Constantine, James saw this trend creeping in and wrote a reprimand in the sternest of terms:

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the

world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

He used such direct, clear language in an effort to wake up those drifting away from the original foundation of love and devotion to the original teachings of Christ and of the apostles, and community life according to the pattern of the church laid forth in Acts 2 and 4.⁷ James 4:4 is a sobering warning against the church attaining friendly relations

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 2:14

with the world, and yet by A.D. 325, it had already fully happened. Christianity had become fully and comfortably a part of the world.

Where once she had turned the world upside down, now she sits — a radical life no more — placidly causing no stir.☪

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The Mystery of the Black Box

In this publication available online, we compare the demise of the vibrant life and faith of the early first century church to the crash of an airplane, with the Bible as the “black box” that holds the secrets as to what caused its demise.

From this premise, we step through many notable chapters of history which illustrate the fact that the Christianity of those centuries is not the same “airplane” that originally took off in the first century, but instead has an entirely different nature.

We hope you will find this documentary fascinating, and welcome you to write to us with any questions or comments you may have as you read it.

Visit the web site:

www.TheBlackBoxSpeaks.org