

“NONCONFORMING TRANSFORMERS”

Jay Lockhart

Rocky Mountain Christian is a newspaper published in Eastlake, Colorado. It's Editor/Publisher is Ron Carter and its stated mission is to serve “congregations of the Church of Christ throughout the world with news and thought provoking columns.” I read each issue of the paper and believe it accomplishes its mission. In the May 2006 issue Jack Carter wrote a provocative article entitled, “*Is It Better Now?*” As he compared the growth, the unity and the trends of the church of the 40's, 50's and 60's with today's lack of growth, divided congregations, and the influence of Postmodernism, he asked the question, “Is It Better Now?” His answer was in the negative. His solution was for us to again become the church that loves the truth. Jack Carter's article opened up a vast area of thought for me. This year marks my 50th year of preaching for me and during this half century I have observed a few things. I have observed efforts to “quick-fix” the growth of the church as many have presented their ideas about how to make a church grow ... right now. Most of these ideas didn't provide a permanent solution and have been abandoned. In more recent times we have seen efforts at church growth that include “meeting felt needs,” coffee pots and entertainment, but the church remains stagnant. So along comes Mr. Postmodern with his solution: little emphasis upon doctrine, move into the community church arena, give up our identity and view the Bible as a culture-bound book of suggestions about life. It is interesting that some of these churches will seem to grow because they are built around a strong personality or draw from a wide area, but many

become unhappy, divided and smaller. Without being overly simplistic, I wonder what a difference would be made if all of us would again declare our allegiance to the authority of Christ and Scripture, to the appeal to be Christians only and members of the church for which Christ died, to the principle that the culture is not to change us, but we are to change the culture, to a recognition that the world is to accept the grace of God by obedience to the gospel, to a renewed emphasis upon evangelism and to the spiritual nature of worship as opposed to entertaining ourselves. It seems to me that if we are to make any real difference in this world we must never conform to it, we must allow Christ to be formed in us and we must be “transformed by the renewing” of our minds. Wouldn’t that be the better and more effective way to do church?