

## Remodeling or New Construction

Good (Morning/Afternoon/Evening) Brethren,

I am a handyman by trade. A handyman is different from a contractor in some important ways: A contractor can request building permits from the city building department; he coordinates the work of many other workers and sub-contractors; he is a supervisor. A handyman, on the other hand, at least in our city, cannot pull work permits. Most handymen work alone. Usually their work is confined to minor repairs and remodeling, and some new construction or subcontracting on an ongoing project. Also, they are “Jacks of all trades and masters of none.” As a general rule they have no specific licenses such as a plumber’s or electrician’s license.

Excuse me, do I have the right notes, or are these the notes for the Building Trades Convention. Oh, well, they are the only notes I have so please bear with me.

Several years ago I was offered work on two churches under construction, and I want to share with you the reasons I chose to work on the church I did.

The one church which was offered for me to work on was an old church which was being remodeled; the other was a church under construction, but which had been worked on for many years. Both churches were very large, but the one being remodeled was much larger. My skills as a handyman could be useful, even though there were a great many laborers for each church.

Acknowledging that this work would take many years yet to complete, I carefully considered many aspects of the respective jobs, such as, working conditions and wages. Since I like to do a good job in my work, I also considered the structures themselves, such as the foundation, the building materials, and the work done by former workers. In addition, I also looked at the financing of these projects. Also, considering that these were Christian churches, I examined the building practices for following Scriptural principles and applied Scriptures where I could.

Any building is much more than a set of walls, a floor, and a roof; there are functional systems in a building. In addition to the exterior and interior walls, floors, ceilings, doors, windows, stairs, etc, there are such things as heating /

air conditioning, power and communications, and plumbing; and in most commercial buildings of more than one floor, a method of conveying people and equipment between floors - usually an elevator.

It is a usual practice to give a working name or project name to buildings under construction - not necessarily the final name which the building will be called. The project name for the church being remodeled is designated as CINO (church in name only); the project name of the church under new construction is designated as COFB (Church of the First Born).

Now, with all this preliminary discussion out of the way, I would like to share with you the results of my research, resulting in the choice which I made.

I first looked at the financing of the projects. This is important to me to insure that I get paid. And there is the Scriptural admonition, *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? (Luke 14:28 KJV) Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, (Luke 14:29 KJV) Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (Luke 14:30 KJV)* The re-modeled church, CINO, was financed in the expected way, as contributions from the membership, and, as long as the members continued to pay, which they seemed to do, financing did not seem to be a problem. The church under construction, COFB, was financed in a very different manner. The architect was the owner, but the general contractor, who was the architect's son had purchased it with literally everything he had. He had paid for it in full in advance, putting it in something like an escrow account. So, this financing also seemed secure.

Next, I looked at the existing structures as they now are, the work which had been done in the past, and the blueprints for future work. Here I noticed large differences as follows:

Starting with the foundations. As you know, the foundation of any building is the most important part. No matter how fancy or beautiful a building is, if the foundation is not strong, the building will weaken and collapse over time. The most secure foundations are those which go down to bedrock. (Luke 6:48,49 KJV): *He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat*

*vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. So, I examined the bedrock upon which each church was laid. CINO was laid on this rock: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18 KJV), the verses in context were not included. COFB was laid on this rock: And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 8:14 KJV) and, And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:4 KJV)*

I then examined the foundations themselves. Sturdy foundations are laid in either of two ways: a poured foundation of reinforced concrete; or a foundation of large cut stones, starting with a cornerstone which , when laid properly, gives the squareness and levelness to the building . The CINO church claimed to have the poured foundation of concrete reinforced with iron. What I found upon examination was: *His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. (Daniel 2:33 KJV).* The COFB had a foundation of many cut stones, beautiful stones. *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; (Revelation 21:19 KJV)* This foundation also had a very important corner stone upon which the church was built. It was square and level, and had been tested. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (Isaiah 28:16 KJV)* *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (Ephesians 2:20 KJV)* Now, just because a foundation is laid, that does not indicate that the building is completed: *Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. (Ezra 5:16 KJV)* Once the foundation is laid, then the building can start to take shape. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take*

*heed how he buildeth thereupon. (1 Corinthians 3:10 KJV) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11 KJV) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; (1 Corinthians 3:12 KJV) Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. (1 Corinthians 3:13 KJV)*

After the foundation, the next in the construction are the walls and the beams of wood for the floors and ceilings; then the roof. All of these may be constructed of many things, i.e., the walls can be of wood; or stone, or bricks made of dried mud which are mortared together. Beams are usually of cedar or fir; roofs are thatched or shingled if pitched or sloped, or boards covered with a tarred substance if flat. Care must be taken in selecting the materials considering the climate as some materials are more prone to rot or insect infestation. For instance, the beams of cedar are less prone to rot, but the beams of fir are stronger. Mud bricks or a flat roof would not be a good choice in a wet climate as both would disintegrate with much water. I carefully examined the walls, beams, floors, ceilings, and roofs of these two churches.

Walls serve several functions, both external and internal: They set boundaries and provide dimension to the building; they keep things out, and they keep things in. Doors and windows keep the dimension but provide means of entry and exit. The beams provide support and strength to the floors and ceilings and roofs, as well as adding to the boundaries and dimensions of the structure.

Initial inspection of the CINO made it appear that the walls and beams were well built, in fact they were magnificently decorated. There were stained glass windows; there were statues dedicated to former construction workers, saints as they were called. There was rich ornamentation of every sort. But I have learned over the years, that external beauty does not always reveal what is beneath. When I looked carefully, I found crumbling mortar, and mold and mildew on the walls; I found rot in the beams. Now there are two kinds of rot in wood - wet-rot and dry-rot. Wet rot is caused by too much moisture which stagnated on the wood; dry-rot is caused by the absence of moisture. With wet-rot, the beams can be treated and sealed against further damage; but with dry-rot, the only cure is to remove the beam, and adjoining

beams, so that it will not spread. I found both of these conditions in the CINO. In some areas the little water of truth which existed had stagnated and was rotting the beams; and in other areas, there was no water of truth at all and the beams had greatly weakened. God has revealed what to do with such a building in Leviticus 14: 35-46: *And he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house: Then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest go into it to see the plague, that all that is in the house be not made unclean: and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house: And he shall look on the plague, and, behold, if the plague be in the walls of the house with hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall; Then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days: And the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look: and, behold, if the plague be spread in the walls of the house; Then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city: And he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place: And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house. And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered; Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place. Moreover he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even.* In times past, various construction workers, reformers, had come to say that there was a crumbling in the moral mortar, mold on the walls and rot in the beams, and for a time, some of it was cleaned up, but they were not diligent in their watchfulness, and the crumbling and the mold and rot returned.

This concerned me greatly, so I asked to see the reports from the chief building inspector. What I learned shocked me. This beautiful edifice, this elaborate church, this structure which was started about the time of Jesus and had been built upon ever since had been **condemned!** And when had it been condemned? Over a hundred years ago. And yet the work is going on to

build it up even more. Are they repairing the crumbling and molded walls, and rotting beams? NO They are painting over the mold to hide it. They are concealing the rot from view with elaborate decorations, and proclamations that their church is safe. They claim, in fact, that their church is the only safe place to be. It reminds me, in fact of the story of Samson: *Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.* (Judges 16:27-30 KJV) This church has invited in any and all who have interest in God or motive to join. The church has become so full that the rotting beams can not much longer support them. Still, the church officials invite them in, assuring them that here is a safe refuge.

There are two major views concerning the resurgence of power in the church. The one view has it that the church membership is declining, that the churches have lost their power, that there will never again be a strong church. The other view is that there will come a time when the church will join together with the civil governments for a brief period of power. That both of these views are true will assure the total collapse of this church. Many members of this church have seen some of the mold and rot, but instead of leaving the building, the just move to another room. And still the officials proclaim safety to all who enter and stand upon these rotting beams. These officials have bribed the civil inspectors to say that the church is strong, and together they will say, "Come, Join." When the mass of mankind stands upon these rotting beams which are joined to weakened walls, there will be a devastating crash. And at that time, under the Lord's direction, the people will then take the entire edifice to that unclean place and utterly destroy it, and it shall never again be re-built. Our Lord proclaims in Ezekiel 13: 14 & 15: *So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof:*

*and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;*

I then examined the walls and beams of the COFB. These walls were made of stone; but these stone were alive! *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4,5 KJV)* Living stones! And I think that all here can tell me exactly how many of these living stones there are - or will be when completed - How many? (144,000). I contemplated the beams. Floor beams are usually set directly into the foundation, as I found these to be. Beams for upper floors and for the ceiling and roof are normally set into the walls. But this caused me to consider that we would not want these beams of doctrine upon which we stand to be supported merely by the strength of those living stones who uphold them. And in searching the Scriptures I found that this is so, that these beams are not set into the walls. In the construction of Solomon's temple, we are told in 1 Kings chapters 6 and 7 that *"in the wall of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that the beams should **not** be fastened in the walls of the house. (1 Kings 6:6 KJV) He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on forty five pillars, fifteen in a row. (1 Kings 7:2,3 KJV)* So it is not the living stones which support our beams of doctrine, but pillars set upon the foundation - pillars of faith.

We have already described the apparent beauty of the CINO, but the beauty of the COFB so far surpasses it that it cannot be described: *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9 KJV)*

We could expand greatly the other details of the buildings, their doors and windows, the systems in place for conveying power and water and

communication; we could even expand upon the interior furnishings, but you also can do the same.

For me, after reviewing my findings and considering all that I saw and understood, comparing and contrasting these two great churches, the one of man, the other of God, there was no hesitancy in my choice. The CINO's architect had made a copy of the plans but had used poor quality material which insured that the structure would not long stand. The CINO was man-made of earthly materials and earthly doctrines. The Church In Name Only is a condemned structure, full of mold and rot, and with crumbling mortar. The Church Of The Firstborn is an everlasting structure with God Himself as the architect and His Son Jesus as the chief builder as well as the cornerstone - the same cornerstone which had been rejected by the other church: *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Matthew 21:42 KJV)*

I know that you, brethren, have also compared these two structures and made the only reasonable choice. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1 KJV)*