

## The Use of Religious Herbicides

*Matthew 13: <sup>24</sup>Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup>But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup>When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

*<sup>27</sup>"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'*

*<sup>28</sup>" 'An enemy did this,' he replied.*

*"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'*

*<sup>29</sup>" 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "*

The teaching of Jesus is clear enough. However, it seems that there has always been a persistent desire among the religious to try to pull out the weeds in our churches so that only the true (which would include them, of course) remain.

It is troubling to see problems in the church. This creates a desire to want to remove the instigators. Even as the farmer was troubled by the weeds and wanting to remove them, many in the churches through the ages have wanted to remove the false from (what they saw as) the true.

For many modern Evangelicals, the method is to exclude from church membership anyone who hasn't had a conscious conversion experience that they can remember and testify to. Others use "a personal relationship with Christ" as the means to weed out the true from the false. These methods probably grew from a desire to separate themselves from the "dead church". Unfortunately, these methods will often uproot the true children of God: those who have a sense of their own sinfulness before God. This sense will make them question whether they have truly had these experiences. However, the true child of God will often question his own life, but come to the assurance that, through underserved forgiveness offered through the cross, he is forgiven and a true child of heaven.

Even among Lutherans, methods are sometimes suggested to weed out the insincere, through restrictions on confirmation or other church practices. These attempts often kill the true faith by cutting people with small, but true faith off from exposure to the gospel and also create a sense of pride among the faithful (those that are not the targets) that can lead to their spiritual death, also.

While open defiance or gross sin (sin that disrupts the church; not necessarily because it is any worse than non-gross sins) must be separated from the church to allow it to function, in the new testament times even those involved in these practices were not evaluated as to whether there was true faith present or not. The goal was to bring them

back to the church.

Correct doctrine should form the basis for fellowship with other believers who unite to form a church. No matter how inviting, we cannot try to differentiate based upon methods to detect sincerity of the heart, lest we disobey the direct teaching of Jesus.