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## 1988: Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures - Full Text

ACU Press

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**MISSIONS  
IN CRISIS:  
CHALLENGE  
AND  
OPPORTUNITY**



# MISSIONS IN CRISIS: CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

*being the*

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Abilene Christian University  
Annual Bible Lectures

**1988**

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## PREFACE

The lectures and Biblical Forum presentations contained in this volume are those which are given at the 70th Annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian University on the theme: "Missions in Crisis: Challenge and Opportunity."

Christ died for all the people of the whole world. No matter what the color of skin or social standing, the gospel is for every creature. But present popular missionary methods will never evangelize the world. We cannot hire enough men and raise enough money to supply all the church needs of the whole world. Until missions becomes every Christian's task, the goal of world evangelism will never be realistic.

The primary purpose of the Annual Bible Lectureship is to further the cause of Christ in the world. The Lectureship Committee seeks each year to bring outstanding men and women of God to the campus to speak on the most relevant and helpful subjects facing the people of God. It is hoped that these lectures will be helpful not only to those who were able to attend in person, but also, through this volume, to thousands of others for years to come.

CARL BRECHEEN  
Lectureship Director



**THEME  
SPEECHES**

## JUAN ANTONIO MONROY

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# MISSIONS IN CRISIS

by Juan A. Monroy

Yale and Harvard Universities have just published a study of people's tendency to live alone in the United States. One out of every nine grown-up citizens does not share his or her home with anyone else. A sixth part of house owners, either men or women, do not have company other than pets. Since 1960 the number of "solitary people" has tripled in this country. In 1986 there were twenty-one million American adults living alone. Every day there are more widowers, more divorcees, and more women who have given up marriage in order to achieve their professional aims. Some live alone because they are in the habit and some do so because they have no alternative; but the tendency to live alone is increasingly high in the States.

I cannot find a better simile than this to illustrate the enormous crisis the Church of Christ's missionary program is going through.

Is the Church of Christ in America forgetting the notion of universality the New Testament Church had? "America is for Americans!" claimed James Monroe in the middle of the last century. Isn't the Church in America saying today: "Christ is for us?" Be careful! America is only a drop of 300 million people in an ocean of five billion.

This is Christ's commandment: "Open your eyes and look at the fields" (John 4:35).

*Look at the Bible's fields.*  
*Look at geography's fields.*  
*Look at history's fields.*  
*Look in the history of mankind.*

## I. MISSIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God is not an individual. He is a three-member family. God wants neither individual, nor family, nor national ghettos. God looks at and sets his heart on the world.

### 1 — From Adam to Abraham

The first eleven chapters of Genesis, from Adam to Abraham, talk about a constant communication between God and all human beings.

With Adam He had a personal communication. God spoke to an individual who represented mankind.

With Noah He had a universal communication. God saved a family and condemned the rest of humanity.

The Tower of Babel represented a transcultural communication, which was the first linguistic need.

### 2 — Israel's People

With Abraham's call, the formation of Israel's people began.

God made it clear that the choosing of Israel was not the aim itself but the means to reach the world. He said so to Abraham: "All people on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3).

Some centuries later, through the prophet Isaiah, God reminded Israel of the purpose of His choice: "I will also

make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

### **3 — Jonah’s Book**

Jonah’s book confirms the thesis of God’s universality according to the Old Testament.

Jehovah is Lord of the universe and is interested in all mankind’s salvation.

He commanded Jonah to preach the message of repentance in Nineveh, which was more than 620 miles away from Palestine. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah tried to flee from the Lord to Tarshish, which is on the Atlantic coast of Spain.

God’s missionary notion is clear and transparent in the Old Testament.

## **II. MISSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **1 — Jesus Christ, the Great Missionary**

Jesus Christ covered the huge distance between heaven and earth in order to confirm God’s love for the world, according to John 3:16.

Being the supreme standard for missionary work, Christ acted consistently: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18).

Christ did not think of the world as a cosmos, as a terrestrial head, but as a space where millions of human beings dwell.

Before returning to the heavenly place where he came from, Jesus commissioned His disciples so that they were able to spread His doctrine all over the known world.

World evangelization was not a child's game for Christ. He regarded it to be so important that His commandment appears persistently and with different nuances in the four Gospels and also in Acts.

According to Acts 1:8, Christ wants Christians to go even to the ends of the earth.

## **2 — Missionary Vision of the Early Church**

The Christian Church in the first century is an example of responsibility and dynamism for missionary work.

After Stephen's death, the disciples "preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4).

Some newly converted Christians, who became notorious missionaries, joined the first disciples; they were Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Mark, Apollos, and, above all of them, Paul.

Paul's missionary activity was so powerful that he said to the Romans in his letter: "From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the Gospel of Christ. . . But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions. . . when I go to Spain. . . I hope to visit you while passing through" (Romans 15:19-24).

The enormous missionary impulse which was developed in the second half of the first century was not only due to individual initiatives but congregational efforts were also essential. The Church in Antioch is a good example and a model of the missionary Church.

## **III. MISSIONS IN HISTORY**

In our religious vocabulary, "mission" means an organized effort within the local congregation in order to

expand the Christian faith.

The early Churches wanted the number of Christians on earth to be as high as the stars in the sky or the sands of the sea. And to this task they devoted their physical energy and also their spiritual potentiality.

### **1 — The Roman Empire (1st to 6th Centuries)**

In its early years, Christianity spread mainly among Jewish communities.

Peter was the first to break these barriers, and Paul proclaimed Christ's message to the ends of the earth.

In the reign of Constantine (306 to 337), nearly all the Roman Empire had been converted to the Gospel.

By the end of the 6th century, Christian missionaries had already crossed the Roman Empire's frontiers and were seeking proselytes in other parts of the world.

### **2 — The Moslem Invasion (6th to 9th Centuries)**

In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Moslem invasion took place. Christian missions weakened, and Islam settled in half the territory that had been conquered by Christians. During this period, however, Celtic and British missionaries spread the Gospel in Northern and Western Europe. At the same time, the Greek Church in Constantinople sent missionaries to Eastern Europe and Russia.

### **3 — Europe's Conversion (10th to 16th Centuries)**

From the 10th to the 13th centuries, Christianity focused its missionary efforts on Europe.

Between 950 and 1350, Europe was completely

Christianized. A powerful missionary work was carried out in those centuries. Russia was completely won by the Gospel. Christianity came to China.

The Crusades, which took place between the 11th and the 13th centuries, tried to snatch people that were Christian from Islam. This was the age of successful missions sent to the places which had been invaded by Mahomet's Koran.

#### **4 — Christianity in America and Asia (16th to 19th Centuries)**

The Catholic Church, once it had recovered from the hard knock of the Reformation, launched a missionary offensive from the 16th century on.

Three Catholic Empires—Spain, Portugal, and France—sent some missionaries to America. The republics which were beginning to form in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean regions officially adopted the Catholic religion.

At the same time, many Jesuit missionaries settled in Japan, the Philippines, China, India, and other Asian countries.

#### **5 — Protestant Missions**

The Protestant Churches which turned up after the Reformation showed very little interest in missionary work. They were too busy trying to become stronger in Europe.

In the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, Protestantism's expansion outside Europe was mainly carried out by emigrants arriving in North America either looking for



new chances for living or attracted to the atmosphere of religious freedom prevailing in the New World.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, big missionary societies were established in England, Germany, France, and the United States.

The different denominations which now make up Protestantism established missionary societies and sent men and women all over the world.

### 6 — Scarce Results

Despite all the efforts made by Christianity to proclaim Christ's faith on earth, success has been rather poor.

At the moment, only 1,443 million people out of a population of 5 billion profess some kind of Christianity.

While in Africa, Christianity grows at the rate of 4,000 members per day, in Europe it loses 6,750 people per day.

In 1900 atheists were only 2 percent of the world population. Nowadays they are 20 percent.

From 1981 onward, whites have no longer been a majority in Christianity. By the year 2000, 60 percent of Christians will be either African, Asian, or Latin American.

The above mentioned details are quoted in a volume which has become very popular and has been published by Oxford University in England: *The World Christian Encyclopedia*.

## IV. MISSIONS IN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

The founders of the Restoration Movement in the United States had a common passion: to effect the

disappearance of sects and to bring about the unity of all Christians in one definite Church, similar to the New Testament Church.

But at the same time, those men of God felt the Macedonian call; that is to say, the scream of the world which needed Christ's Gospel.

### **1 — Thomas Campbell**

When Thomas Campbell founded the Christian Association of Washington on August 17, 1809, he did not think of the world's evangelization.

The first point of its Statutes says: "That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men."

But the final paragraph of his "Declaration and Address" is a call to missionary work, to the world's evangelization: "To this may the God of mercy speedily restore us, both for your sakes and our own, that his way may be known upon earth, and this saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Amen, and amen."

### **2 — Alexander Campbell**

Alexander Campbell felt the need to evangelize the world as strongly, or even more strongly, than his father did.

In 1841 he published a series of articles advocating cooperation between Churches in order to send

missionaries to foreign lands. These articles, which affected the whole brotherhood, resulted in the creation of the American Christian Missionary Society. The foundation of this Society took place in Cincinnati, Ohio, on October 23, 1849.

In the prologue to its Constitution, Alexander Campbell says that the creation of the Missionary Society means "an effort to convert the world." And in item 2 of this Constitution he insists: "The object of this Society shall be to promote the spread of the Gospel in destitute places of our own and foreign lands."

Alexander Campbell was the President for this Missionary Society until he died on March 4, 1866.

### **3 — Isaac Errett**

After Alexander Campbell's death, the missionary impulse of the Restoration Movement got into new dimensions.

In 1875 another outstanding movement's leader, Isaac Errett, founded the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. This Society sent some missionaries to England, Denmark, France, Turkey, India, Japan, China, Africa, the Philippines, and other parts of the world.

### **4 — 1906's Split**

Unfortunately, what had been started, meaning to be for the cooperation of the Churches, ended by becoming a superstructure aside from them. And not only this. Shortly, other organizations with similar intentions came up, and between them a clear rivalry to get financial support from local congregations began to show. By 1900

the movement had, amongst others of less importance, the following missionary Societies: Foreign Christian Missionary Society, Christian Women Missionary Committee, National Charity Association, Ministerial Aid Committee, Committee of Extention, National Moderation Committee, etc.

The movement Campbell, Stone, and others had founded split up in two groups at the beginning of the 20th century. The definite split happened in 1906. That year the United States Religious Census registered the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ separately.

The main causes of such a split were three: the consequences of the war, the use of musical instruments in the services, and missionary societies.

As someone wrote, the Disciples took their musical instruments and their missionary societies and set out on a different track.

Did they do like Abraham, or like Lot? Did they keep the best part of the land, or did they give it up?

The answer depends on who writes and on how he writes the history of those events.

## 5 — Missionary Efforts

According to the above mentioned *World Christian Encyclopedia*, in 1978 the Disciples of Christ had 1,600,000 members in the States, and the Christian Churches had 1,500,000. It also says the Churches of Christ had 4 million members; that is to say, nearly one more million than the Disciples and the Christian Churches together.

However, in that very year these two groups (Disciples of Christ and Christian Churches) had 3,843 missionary

families all over the world. This means that the Disciples of Christ and the Christian Churches, which came from the Restoration Movement, have always been very coherent with the Great Commission given by Christ to his apostles and with the missionary spirit of the Restoration Movement's great leaders.

The Churches of Christ, instead, did like some Israelite tribes: they remained in their lands to take care of their homes and their harvests while their brothers fought in foreign lands.

## **V. CHURCHES OF CHRIST'S MISSIONS**

After the 1906's split, the Churches of Christ neglected the world's evangelization.

The Disciples were organized into missionary Societies, had a structure, had centralized offices, and controlled and directed many missionary families who worked outside the States.

The Church of Christ, because of their own principles, lacked all this. Their opposition to missionary societies made them forget for a while that the Gospel is for all creatures on earth.

### **1 — The Second World War**

Although there always were missionaries of the Churches of Christ in some parts of the world, the experts in missions of our Colleges and Universities agree that our Churches woke up to the world's spiritual needs after the Second World War.

Showing a truly generous spirit, the Churches of Christ in the States sent their first missionaries to the defeated

nations which had been their enemies: Japan, Germany, and Italy.

From the fifties on, local Churches started becoming aware of the missionary pressure, and many families left for different parts of the world.

## 2 — The Present Situation

What is the real present contribution of the Churches of Christ in the States to the world's evangelization? How many missionary families are working outside this huge territory?

We have a horror of statistics! We are not very fond of mathematics! We always remember God's punishment to David, and we abstain from numbering off our people (2 Chronicles 21)!

According to an article published in the "Christian Chronicle" in August, 1983, in 1975 there were 800 Churches of Christ missionary families outside the United States. That article said that in 1982 we only had 374 families. That is to say, there were 426 fewer families than in 1975, in a seven-year period.

Let us suppose that the "Christian Chronicle" is wrong, that instead of 374 missionary families in the world we have twice the amount, 748. What can we do with that insignificant number of missionaries when faced with the world's demands?

## 3 — The Ten Biggest Cities in the World

By the year 2000, in 12 years time, the world's population will have reached six billion and a half inhabitants.

How are we going to evangelize six billion and a half

people either with 748 or 1,000 missionary families?

When I hear some brothers speak about the world's evangelization, I think of three possibilities: either they are tremendously ignorant, or they are as simply as babies, or they are lying deliberately.

By the year 2000, these will be the ten biggest cities in the world:

- 1) Mexico City — 31 million
- 2) Sao Paulo — 25 million
- 3) Shanghai — 23 million
- 4) Tokyo-Yokohama — 23 million
- 5) New York — 22 million
- 6) Peking — 20 million
- 7) Rio de Janeiro — 19 million
- 8) Bombay — 16 million
- 9) Calcutta — 16 million
- 10) Jakarta — 15 million

These ten cities together will have 210 million inhabitants. The Churches of Christ's members who live right now in these cities do not even amount to 5,000.

How do we expect to evangelize the world?

#### 4 — Missionary Crisis

We are right when we talk about a missionary crisis.

This is not the first time the ACU Lectureship has dealt with these topics.

At the 1968 Lectureship, a 478-page book which collected the main speeches of that year was published. It dealt with missions. This book ought to be in all the Churches' libraries. It is entitled, *Crowning Fifty Years*.

In its introduction Jack Pope says that "evangelism

means the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church” (page 6). Dewayne Davenport adds that this is true, but also explains that “the Churches of Christ are about 100 years behind in the field of foreign missions” (page 166). Are they only 100 years behind? Dewayne is an optimist!

I think V.P. Black’s cry is an anxious one. Trying to awaken the sleeping conscience of the Churches of Christ in this country, Black says with tears in his heart: “The church would cease to exist in a generation if it were not for missions. We, ourselves, whether we admit it and thank God for it or deny it, are the fruit of missions. Our forebears were naked savages. The gospel of Christ has made us what we are tonight. Christianity is essentially a missionary system. Missions inhere in the gospel just as heat does in fire or cold in ice or as light in the sun.”

## VI. WEAKNESS OF MISSIONS

John A. Williams, in his book, *Life of the Elder John Smith*, says that one Sunday, while preaching, John Smith surprised the congregation with these words: “Brethren, something is wrong. I am in darkness; all of us are in darkness. Before God I tell you I cannot drive you to light because I don’t have it myself.”

We must examine our consciences in order to face the missionary problem. We must admit we are in darkness. We must admit something is wrong with us.

What is really happening to us is that we do not know what is happening.

A few months ago the “New York Times” told the story of a 25-year-old woman. She was a heroin addict.



Her physical situation was depressing. She was too thin, almost skinny. She was 9-months pregnant but had to suffer a Caesarean operation. She was so weak that she did not have the strength to give birth.

Is this not the situation of the Church in the United States?

In Isaiah 37:3 the prophet wails over the spiritual conditions of the Jewish people: "Children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them."

We do not have more spiritual children because the mother of Church in the States is a weak Church. Like Samson it has lost its strength at the hands of the Philistines.

One of the best-known novels by the American writer Glenway Scott is *Family Portrait*, where she recounts her forebear's life and presents the first colonists as they were. Scott Fitzgerald also does this in *The Great Gatsby*. This author describes the demolition of values and the way it affects the following generation.

What have we done with the traditional values of Christianity? Why is the Church so weak in promoting its missionary program?

Let us not hide our problems in the cellars of our buildings, like ostriches hide their heads under the ground!

Let us be bold!

Let us admit, like John Smith, that we are living in darkness!

Let us make a family portrait, although the picture might be misshapen!

Let us admit that the weakness of our missionary program is the result of the weakness of our local

congregations!

Let us take the camera! Let us point at the right objective! Let us shoot! This is the resultant picture!

### 1 — Mistake

God has greatly blessed the United States of America.

But the big mistake the Churches in this country may make is to believe that God's blessings is an aim itself and not the means to reach a higher goal.

Israel's choice was the means to get the world's blessing. God said so to Abraham: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).

The great politicians who made this nation's laws were fully aware of their spiritual debt to the world. George Washington declared: "We have been blessed by God and this country will always look at God."

And Abraham Lincoln, speaking in the House of Representatives in 1848, added: "The human world is our aim; the nation is the means to reach that aim."

The well-known speaker of the American Congress, old democrat Tip O'Neill, has recently said about Ronald Reagan: "God has given him a nice face but he has not been generous to anybody."

The Church in the States has got a nice face but must be generous to the world.

As American Christians you may either choose to cut yourselves off from the world and enjoy your material comfort or accept the evangelization responsibilities God and history have assigned to you.

## **2 — Incoherence**

There is no coherence between the doctrinal principles we profess and the ministry work we do.

We say we are the only Christians in the world; the only ones who possess the whole Truth of God; the only ones who follow the New Testament's doctrine with absolute loyalty.

Well, the present world has already got five billion inhabitants. We, the Church of Christ's members in all the countries on earth, are fewer than 5 million.

If Christ appeared right now in heaven and the world were destroyed tomorrow, we would have to choose one of these two alternatives: Either believing, as Rubel Shelly says, we are Christians but not the only Christians, or believing 4 billion and 995 million people will go to hell and 5 million people will go to heaven.

## **3 — Depersonalization**

We are weak in the missionary field because we do not have strong men in the local Churches' pulpits.

We have divided the local Church into a number of committees and put the preacher in its center, like one more part of the structural organization of the Church.

We have turned the preacher into a worker of an enterprise called Church, and his gifts are buried in the bureaucratic cemetery.

We are afraid that the Church of Christ's preacher might be changed into a Protestant pastor. But we have gone to the other extreme: we have put a collar around his neck and tied him up to the legs of our Councils and Committees. We have reduced him to being an obedient

servant who lacks initiative.

Scott Fitzgerald said once: "Give me a hero and I will write a tragedy."

There is no dramatic sense in the Churches because there are no heroes in the pulpits. There only are non-entities.

Neither Old Testament prophets, nor Christ's disciples, nor the early Church's leaders were subordinated to any Committee's orders. On the contrary, they were men of fire with their own initiative and an individual capacity of decision.

If we wish to have more missionaries in the world, we must arouse more leaders in America—men, as Thomas Campbell wrote, willing to hear their conscience's voice over the masses' voices and men, like Paul, who can say to their Churches: "I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven."

#### 4 — Discrimination

Women are needed in the missionary field!

Children cannot be born without men, but neither can they be born without women. We are discriminating against women in our local congregations and also in the missionary work. We use women to teach our male children at the Bible School until they are 14 years old. But when they are older we strictly forbid women to explain a single verse of the Bible to those males.

We brandish three or four verses out of their context and neglect the essential role women play in the 66 books of the Bible. We even forget that the Church, in the New Testament, is the Wife; that is to say, it has a womanly image, not a manly one.

In our missionary program we restrict the women's role.

In some local congregations women are allowed to sit down together with men to attend the Missions Committee's meetings on condition that they do not think very much and speak much less.

We send a woman abroad as the missionary's wife so that she can cook, take care of their children, and give the missionary love; and she might also be sent as a secretary to write the letters the missionary dicates. But she always carries out tasks of lesser importance.

Just a few Churches are willing to support either single women or couples of women in the missionary work. There are some jobs women can do better than men. And there are some jobs only women can do. But only mentioning it may be regarded as a sacrilege.

We are forgetting, as Stannard Barret says, that women "were the last ones by the cross and the first ones by the tomb."

Reuel Lemmons has just published an article in "Image" entitled, "Help Those Good Women." Among other things, he says: "I believe it is time to look again at the role of women in the church without the bias of nineteenth-century thinking. Woman is not, nor has she ever been, a second-class citizen in either the world or the church. We look back with chagrin on the fact that she was not allowed to vote in this land of the free until a relatively few years ago. Some day I hope to see her allowed to attend the business meetings of the church. After all, taxation without representation is reprehensible."

## 5 — Bureaucratization

We reject Missionary Societies, and we are right, because there was nothing similar in the early Church.

But since we need a body of relationships, we have created Missions Committees within the local Churches.

How do these Committees work? In some Churches they are useful and constructive, but in most of them they are disastrous.

I have seen young men between the ages of 16 and 22 as members of some Missions Committees. I have been told they are there to learn. Is the world's evangelization, by any chance, a task for apprentices? What kind of decisions can those youngsters make if they know neither their own town nor the country they belong to?

In many Churches the Missions Committee has been reduced to an office for the administration of funds. Members simply are administrators of others' money.

Putting a check into an envelope, which is wrapped up in plain paper, with no words on it, putting a stamp on the envelope, and then sending it to the Post Office is just a cool bureaucratic job.

It is heartless!

It is inhuman!

The missionary has got other needs in his job in addition to the material ones.

Missions Committees must cause the Church to pray for missionaries and encourage members to offer for them and to keep a regular correspondence with all the men and women who work outside their countries.

## 6 — Protection

The Church of Christ's missionary program is far too weak outside the United States because the national Church is weak.

This weakness shows in the persistent need of protection. A weak baby seeks protection at his mother's breast, in his father's arms, in his cradle's bars, and in other children who are stronger than he.

Local Churches build expensive buildings just to feel safe. Congregations join together because they think that the more they are the stronger they will become. Millions of dollars are spent on new buildings and on family life centers. Giant screen to show slides are bought. Also computers, like in any secular company and videos to reflect our own faces are bought. We use the same technical instruments as an insurance or a car-sale agency. We do this because technology makes us feel safe.

On the other hand, we find it hard to promote a special offering for missions in our congregations. We leave our inheritances to build gymnasiums, but we do not leave them to send missionaries to the world.

A weak and insecure Church cannot transmit strength and safety to the world's inhabitants.

If we want elements to calm down and fear to be wiped out from hearts, we must walk on the water steadily and firmly while we repeat with powerful and mighty voices Christ's words: "Don't be afraid!"

## 7 — Fear

We are living in the age of fear. William Golding, Nobel Prize winner in 1983, said a short while ago: "We

are living moments of fear as never before since Prehistory.”

When ABC Television broadcast the film, “The Day After,” on November 20, 1983, the *New York Times* said: “American people live in a state of fear.”

This fear has gained access to the Church. The Church of Christ lives enslaved, paralyzed with fright, with the market of fear western society has spread all over the world.

Adam was not hiding behind a tree; he was hiding behind his own fear. Cain was not running away from God; he was running away from his own fear. Elijah was not afraid of Jezebel; he was afraid of fear’s consequences. The disciples on the boat were not terrified of the rough waves. They feared fear.

These Bible images can be applied to today’s Church. Like Adam, it is afraid because it feels itself guilty of disobedience; like Cain, it is afraid of its own actions; like Elijah, it is afraid of the international political convulsions; like Jesus’ disciples, it is afraid of social waves.

What is really happening to the Church is that it lives paralyzed with fright.

According to the parable of talents in Matthew 25, one of the servants was given five talents, another two, and another one. He who had received the one talent “went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money” (Matthew 25:18). When his master asked him why he had done so, the servant answered: “I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground” (Matthew 25:25).

The Church has hidden its gifts because it is afraid of the world. And fear immobilizes.



## 8 — Knowing our Weaknesses

I have mentioned seven points in which I think the Church in the States is showing its weakness. There might be 70 or 700 points; I do not know. I have only referred to the main ones.

Nevertheless, I have not talked about them as a negative criticism but to make us reflect on them and to take positive action.

In the above mentioned book, *Crowning Fifty Years* from the Abilene Christian University Bible Lectureships, Hardeman Nichols says: "Knowing our weaknesses keeps us faithful to God. . . Our recognized weaknesses cause us to concentrate our energies on answering our needs. . . Our own weaknesses can make us sympathetic in dealing with the weaknesses of others."

## VII. MISSIONS' STRENGTH

In 1 Kings, chapter 20, the story of a battle King Ahab had against the Syrians is told. After Israel's initial victory, God's prophet advised the King to strengthen the city because the Syrian King would return to attack the following spring.

These were the prophet's words: "Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again" (1 Kings 20:22).

In the face of an external danger, people have to strengthen their internal structures. It always happens in time of war.

The Church is at war against the world. To win battles beyond its frontiers, in the missionary field, the Church must strengthen itself in the United States.

How?

It would be easy to quote some verses from Paul's epistles which deal with these topics. But I am going to appeal to an Old Testament book which has nothing to do with the Church. The Song of Songs, verses 1 to 5 of chapter 6, says: "Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you? My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies. You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, majestic as troops with banners. Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Gilead."

What do these verses have to do with the strengthening of the Church?

Nothing!

Nothing, and very much!

The Song of Songs is a parable that explains itself in 8 chapters. It is a love parable. In this book the name of God is not mentioned a single time.

And yet Paul says: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. . . ." (Romans 15:4).

In the Song of Songs' images we find enough illustrations to speak about the strengthening of the Church. In this passage five elements show up:

### 1 — Testimony

The girl who is locked in Solomon's palace constantly speaks of her lover—of the man she loves who remains on the Lebanese mountains in charge of his flock.

She insists so much on her beloved's figure that her

friends are forced to ask her: "Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?" (verse 1)

This is the first formula to strengthen the Church: testimony.

After we leave our worship places on Sundays at twelve, we do not think of Christ again until the following Sunday at nine.

If, from Monday to Saturday, we spoke to people about our soul's Beloved as persistently as the Song of Songs' girl did, they would end up by asking us where to find him. And that would be the time to lead them to the place where the Church meets.

The American journalist, Robert Lipsute, has recently published a book entitled, "The Sports World as Symbol of the American Dream." According to Lipsute, sports—especially football—are stronger than religion in this country. If our Churches' members spoke of Christ in the week as much as they speak of football, there would be no empty seats in our temples.

After all, testifying to Christ is but saying what Christ has done in our lives. This is the way John describes it: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life. . . We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1 and 3).

## 2 — Worship

When asked by the chorus of maidens, the girl of the

Song answers: “My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies” (verse 2).

The spiritual interpretation of the Song of Songs says that the lover’s garden is a figure of the Church and the lilies are its members when they gather to worship.

At that sublime moment of the service on the Sunday morning the Lover is present at the Church’s worship. But the worship services may be either a mount Sinai or a mount Calvary. There are spiritually weak Churches because worship services are weak. Hymns are monotonous and boring. Prayers are long and no sense can be made of them. Preaching is unsubstantial and lacks enthusiasm. People weave to and fro on their seats. They come in and out, looking at their watches several times.

This kind of worship is like a mount Calvary; that is to say, it is suffering. People who first come to our Churches do not come back again.

Mount Sinai means communication.

The people of Israel were at the foot of the mountain and Moses was up on the top. God spoke, and Moses listened to him. In other words, there was communication between his soul and God. And this must happen in our worship service. God’s presence must be felt within the place and within His worshippers’ lives.

When Mary, Lazarus’ sister, poured the perfume on Jesus’ feet, “the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3).

A Church is strengthened spiritually when its worship service is filled with the fragrance of Christ’s presence.

### 3 — Union with God

It is admirable—the incorruptible passionate love the Song's girl feels!

In that age, when polygamy was allowed by the law and practiced by all the social classes with no scandal, she proudly says: "I am my lover's and my lover is mine" (verse 3). It is a perfect, complete, splendid union between her and her lover. They are two hearts which have been tied by love without a single rift.

It should be the same between a Christian and his God, his Lover.

The Methodist author, Ralph Washington, writes about loving God: "Our love for God is tested by the question of whether we seek Him or His gifts."

Every day we thank God for His material gifts.

Let us be careful! A Church is not strong because of the buildings it owns but because of the stage its union and its relationship with God have reached.

In the United States and in other western countries many million children live in luxurious houses, have TV sets, videos, swimming-pools, gymnasiums, etc. But they do not have a father! They only see their fathers just a few minutes a day or some hours at week-ends. Christians can meet together at luxurious buildings and lack their Father's presence.

Catholic priests teach the faithful how to repeat the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father in heaven. . ." Heaven is too high, too far away. We do not live in heaven. We are here on earth. We need God here, with us, beside us, walking our own way like the Emmaus' disciples walked along with Christ.

The Church strengthens when its members, intimately

united with God, say like the Song of Songs' girl: "I am my lover's and my lover is mine."

#### 4 — Ideal

Feeling proud and happy because of the statement of faithfulness made by the women he loves, the male character of the Song answers in his turn: "You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem" (verse 4).

In his passionate delirium, the lover praises the girl's physical attributes and explains metaphorically the desire he feels for her. And he speaks of two cities which were well-known in those days: Tirzah and Jerusalem. Tirzah was inhabited by Canaanite kings. It had formerly been the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. As is well known, Jerusalem was the city par excellence; it was loved and desired by all the Israelites. According to the Song's allegory, Jerusalem represents the human ideal.

Christ knew his life's itinerary started from Bethlehem and ended in Jerusalem. Thus, when some Pharisees asked him to run away in order to avoid Herod's persecution Jesus answers: "Go and tell that fox. . . I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (Luke 13:31-33) And "as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

If we want to have a strong, hard-working local congregation, its members must understand Christian faith as an ideal for their lives and not as a religion for death.

Religion is enormously discredited in this country.

A survey made in 1987 by Audits and Surveys for

“People” magazine, which has 24 million readers in America, shows that among the important persons whom people dislike most in this country are two Protestant preachers: Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart.

We must live Christianity as a captivating ideal and not as a petrified religion.

In September, 1987, the USA Constitution was 200 years old. It is the oldest constitutional document still in force in the world. Those 39 men who signed that document were great idealists. They always hoped for a better future.

The American journalist and politician, Carl Schurz, said at the beginning of this century: “Ideals are like stars: we never reach them, but as mariners on the sea, we chart our course by them.”

Any local Church may become strong with idealistic men and women.

## 5 — Prayer

The girl looks at her lover tenderly, with love. It is a silent, pleading gaze which is loaded with many love questions. Her look is so strong and her contemplation is so vehement that her lover, with a rendered heart, implores: “Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me” (verse 5).

The strength of the look!

The power of prayer!

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth,” says God in Isaiah 45:22. In the ends of the earth there are not more saved people, because we Christians have given up looking at God with a pleading gaze of prayer.

The Church is weak because it has neglected prayer. Christians get together to discuss, to plan, to breakfast, to

lunch, but we do not get together to pray. Our Wednesday meeting used to be called prayer and study meeting. Prayer has vanished. At our Bible Studies we devote ourselves to talking to each other, but we do not talk to God.

The great religious revival which took place in the United States between 1800 and 1860 was God's answer to his children's prayers.

Describing the revival's effects, McGready says: "In Kentucky masses would meet in the open air in summer and indoors in winter and stay for several days and nights praying and listening to the Word of God. Men either would kneel for endless hours or would fall to the ground confessing their sins and begging for God's forgiveness."

Stone, in his autobiography, adds: "I have seen many believers fall to the ground in a deep spiritual agony, begging for mercy for their unbelieving children, their brothers, their parents, and their friends. I have seen them cry and scream, imploring God to save them from the world's condemnation."

"Ask of me, . . .and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalms 2:8).

The strength of our missionary program depends on the local Church. And the strength of the local church depends on its capability of prayer.

## CONCLUSION

The prophet Isaiah says the arm of God is not too short to save the world (Isaiah 59:1).



But the Church's arm is far too short. And this arm must always be open to the world.

One of the most important American writers, Archibald McLeish, with degrees from the prestigious Universities of Harvard and Yale, has written a dramatic work based upon Job, the suffering man of the Bible. The title of the work is just "J.B." It is made up with the two letters from Job, and the great figure in the Bible that for thousands of years has been symbolic of a just man's sufferings.

In his work, Job's wife, whom he calls Sarah, is a principal character. When the last messenger announces to the couple the death of their children and the loss of all their goods, Job turns to his wife and says: "Listen to me, Sarah! Although we are in despair we cannot permit our fingers to be loose. . .to sink numbly in this mute silence. . .to sink our feet in this cold loneliness. . . God is also there, even in despair. I do not know why God has to strike, but God is also stricken: Life is what despairs of death, and to despair is still to live. . . Sarah! Don't leave my hand!"

All the countries in the world need American Christians to give them a hand. And they absolutely must do it.

Apocalyptic writers have been telling us in the last years that in the year 2020 the apostle Peter's prophecy will be fulfilled (2 Peter 3:10-12) that the earth will be removed by a nuclear fire and destroyed by its own elements. I do not think so.

I think, as Alvin Toffler says in *The Third Wave*, that society is going through a transformation process, and that from the present crisis a new and different mankind will arise.

But even if some major holocaust should destroy a great portion of the population of the earth, those of who are still living should keep on praying and working so that, in such an event, there might remain a Christian couple on the top of ACU's highest building willing to take on the world's reconstruction and to go on sending missionaries to the ends of the earth.



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# THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND OF MAN

by Howard W. Norton

Deciding to evangelize the world is a decision to go to war. Jesus promised in the Great Commission to be with his disciples “always, to the very end of the age” because he knew they would need his presence in order to withstand the rigors of doing spiritual warfare. When he commanded them to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” he knew full well that he was sending most of them to a violent death on the battlefield. Their consolation was in knowing that Jesus would accompany them everywhere they went to preach and that he would be with them also in the hour of their death.

Somehow we have forgotten that world evangelism means that God’s people are at war. Paul never forgot it, though, and his missionary books are full of the language of battle. Notice some of his statements to Timothy: “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). When he was nearing the end of his life, he reviewed that life as a war and said, “I have fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7). He spoke with calm assurance about the ultimate victory he expected by saying, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely

to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18). Paul never forgot that he was a soldier of Christ and that evangelism (warfare) was his assignment.

Warfare is also our assignment. Specifically, when we set our face to evangelize the world, we become a part of a battle for the mind of man. God has always viewed His redemptive work with mankind as a battle for the mind. We see this fact in His work with Abraham. It was when a childless and aged Abraham *believed* the promise of God that said He would give Abraham descendents as difficult to number as the stars of heaven, that God won the battle for the mind of Abraham, and Abraham gained victory over sin. Moses, therefore, said, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

God also wanted Abraham to do spiritual battle for the mind of his family. We remember that God debated with Himself as to whether he should tell Abraham about the plan to destroy Sodom. In the course of that decision, God reveals Abraham’s sacred mission: “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19). God’s great plan for Abraham, the father of the faithful and the one through whose seed the Messiah would come into the world, was to struggle to win the mind of his own children and his household after him. So deeply did Abraham influence the thought of those within his charge that nearly four thousand years later, we still feel the power of his faith in our own lives.

### **Purpose of the Battle**

When we battle for the mind of men and women, we are seeking to change the way they think. Paul says it this way 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Notice these two expressions: “we demolish arguments” and “we take captive every thought.” These are powerful affirmations—the language of war. They describe our mission in the world.

Some people believe they can do evangelistic work and never cross swords with anyone. Paul had no such illusions about the work of preaching the gospel. He knew that his job was to turn men’s hearts to Christ and help them develop into maturity, “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4). To accomplish this task, he further knew that nothing short of changing their ideas, their thoughts, their conclusions about reality would move them to become like Jesus Christ.

Our society often looks down on people who try to change others into the image of Christ. We approve advertising that changes people’s minds about certain products, or media coverage that blurs the difference between right and wrong, or movies that change ideas from traditional moral values to a viewpoint of moral relativity.

To change a person's thinking in such a way that he wants to imitate the attitudes and actions of Jesus Christ, however, often appears to our hostile culture as a narrow and bigoted approach to life.

In this attitude, American society in 1988 is little different from some societies that flourished in Bible times. Doing battle to change a person's spiritual values was, perhaps, as out of favor in the first century as it is today. Paul, however, did not let this cultural mind-set deter him from "demolishing arguments" and taking "captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." He knew that world evangelism had to take place at the rational level, or it did not take place at all.

The purpose of evangelism is to announce the good news to the end that it captures the thoughts of men and women and moves them to honor and follow Christ in all that they do and say. This is not an easy task to perform. First, we who evangelize do not like to do the tough thinking that must be done in order to capture erroneous thinking and make it obedient to Christ. I believe it was the late and beloved Dr. LeMoine Lewis who once told me that wherever I went as a missionary, I would find the brightest minds in the nation preaching and defending false doctrine. He reasoned, therefore, that I needed to be as well prepared mentally and spiritually as I could possibly be in order to preach the word of God convincingly enough that people would change their minds and accept Jesus Christ and His plan. He knew that the battle over spiritual ideas would be a tough one, especially when the nation's intelligentsia proclaimed and defended false doctrine. Dr. Lewis was exactly right. I now know from experience that the brightest people are almost always the



most effective false prophets. In order to change their minds or the minds of their disciples, we must do painstaking mental and spiritual work in order to demolish their arguments and take “captive every thought” through the preaching of God’s word.

Let us never underestimate the intelligence of a Shirley MacLaine, a Jim Bakker, a Johnny Carson, an Alan Alda, a Jane Fonda, a Dolly Parton, a John Lennon, a Hugh Hefner, a Jim Jones, or an Adolph Hitler. All of these whom I mentioned are (or have been in the past) notorious for proclaiming ideas that undermine the moral and/or spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ. Our own people often fall prey to their teachings. Our warfare is to evangelize and teach God’s word so powerfully that the true message of Jesus takes captive false concepts and makes them submit to Jesus Christ.

Second, it is difficult to do battle for the mind of man because we have neglected the battle so long that unbelievable changes have taken place in the thought pattern and value system of many Americans. We know how false teachings have changed basic concepts concerning marriage and the home. We are fully aware of the havoc wreaked by the Sexual Revolution, and we have all suffered the pain of drunkenness and drug addiction either in our own persons or in those around us. We know what it is to live in fear of AIDS, and we know the fear of being out on the street late at night. Because we have neglected evangelism and failed to teach the thoughts of Jesus, the thinking of evil men and women has gradually pervaded and almost overcome our nation.

Witchcraft, Marxism, secular humanism, satanism, spiritism, Liberation Theology, communism, denomi-

nationalism, New Age religion, atheism, Eastern religions, cults, radical feminism, and pure hedonism have changed the way this nation and the world think. The longer we neglect the battle for the mind of men, the more difficult it becomes to “demolish arguments” and “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

### **Nature of the Enemy**

It is vital that we recognize the nature of the enemy we face in the battle for the mind of man. Paul, the great spiritual warrior, knew exactly who the enemy was. “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:11-12).

We are always tempted to think of the enemy in human terms. Some of our brethren believe that other brethren are the enemy. Well, that may indeed be the case in certain situations, but Satan must surely laugh when he sees us exhausting our energies doing battle with one another. Splitting hairs, writing hate letters, and publishing yellow journalism may make us feel like warriors, but these things will win us no praise from God since He knows who the real enemy is. The real enemy is Satan and his hosts. It is the invisible world that must concern us in our battle for the mind of man. Satan is the real enemy and is behind every evil change in our society. Human beings who join him are nothing but pawns in his hand.

It is precisely because the real enemy is the invisible Satan that the weapons of our spiritual warfare are not

made by men.

### **Nature of Our Weapons**

Paul says, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

One of the reasons we have been losing so many spiritual battles in America and throughout the world is that we have been using the wrong weapons.

Politics is the wrong weapon for fighting spiritual battles. I am not saying that we should stay out of politics when moral and spiritual issues are involved, but I am saying that any victory won through political action can vanish by popular vote or pressure as quickly as it was won. While I greatly admire the people who fight pornography in whatever legitimate way they can, we will not win lasting victory over smut until we demolish the arguments and capture the thoughts of the publishers and sellers and make their thoughts obedient to Jesus Christ. Our task is to evangelize the pornographers. We have abandoned evangelism as the means for changing society and depended on the ballot which lately has failed us again and again.

Courts and judges are the wrong weapon for fighting spiritual battles. I cannot fault people who seek to protect our values through court decisions, but I do not believe we will find ultimate moral and spiritual solutions to society’s ills by relying on judges—even Supreme Court judges. I wish that the Supreme Court had never decided in favor of abortion, but it did. It is highly unlikely that it will ever reverse that decision. Instead of wringing our hands or throwing in the towel, however, we must get busy teaching

and preaching to this nation that abortion is a sin against God and against humanity. If the church had been doing its teaching job effectively, there is a strong possibility that the Supreme Court would never have given a favorable opinion on this issue and, if it had, people who had been touched with the message of Jesus would not have availed themselves of such a solution for unwanted pregnancy. It is preaching and teaching that will recapture the hearts of men and women and turn them to God.

Public schools are the wrong weapon for fighting spiritual battles. It infuriates me that we can teach almost anything we choose in the public schools except basic, fundamental, Judeo-Christian morality. I long for the days when Christian teachers helped shape the moral and spiritual values of the students in their classrooms. I am almost sure, however, that those days are over and that it will take a miracle to turn the clock back to the mood of earlier times.

Christians are not powerless, however. There is still the body of Christ. There is still evangelism. There is still proclamation. There is still the battle for the mind of man. There is still the possibility that fearless preaching of God's word will make a difference. When Christians carry out this mission effectively, a world that is sick of its own sin and degradation will have the chance to learn, and hopefully, turn its heart to God.

We Christians are in a battle for the mind of man.



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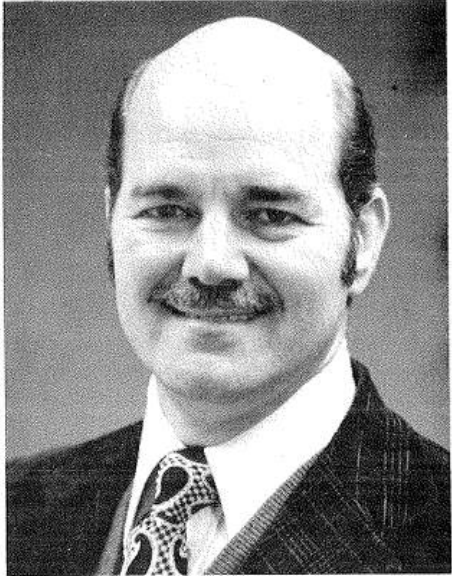
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# WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

by C. Philip Slate

Odd as it may seem, I feel compelled to begin with a disclaimer so people will not misunderstand or be unnecessarily offended at the title of this lecture. Some churches and individuals have never begun to think, pray, or do anything else about worldwide evangelization; and for them the question “Where do we begin?” is appropriate. But some of our churches have given as much as half of their contributions toward evangelizing outside their own area, so I do not wish to offend them by implying that they need to begin.

In Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice asks the cat, “Which way do we go from here?” That may be a more appropriate question for several of our churches which have been busy but not satisfied with their evangelistic efforts. The cat’s answer was typical Carroll vintage: “That *all depends* on where you want to go.” The four directives I now propose are designed to help churches and individuals to move from where they are to more effective and God-honoring efforts in covering the earth with the knowledge of God.

## I. Rehearsal: Raise an Ebenezer

In spite of the broad feeling that history is dull and unrewarding, I am on good biblical ground when I suggest the need to be aware of what we have already done in world evangelism. When pious men of Israel wanted to

make an important point or move Israel on to better actions, they commonly rehearsed what God had already done for and through them. Joshua did it at the end of his life as a prelude to his plea for loyalty to the Lord (Joshua 24:1-15). Rehearsal is scattered throughout Solomon's speech and prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8). Stephen used it as a means of confronting the Jews with their own behavior before God (Acts 7). Rehearsal was a serious way of creating divine prospective on life and responsibility.

I want to contend that God continues to work through his people. In my office I have in one frame the pictures of eighty-four people associated with world evangelism in about 1933. There is a youthful George Benson, an already mature J.M. McCaleb, the Merritts and Lawyers of Africa, and others. Several biographies need to be written on the lives represented by those pictures. Unfortunately, many in our brotherhood know very little of the work done by our brothers in the early decades in this century, and in many cases they know little of the evangelization by contemporaries. They have hardly heard of the McCalebs, Merritts, and Shoemakers, who for a half a century gave themselves to other cultures for the sake of the gospel. They know almost nothing of Hattie Ewing, Elizabeth Barnard, and Sara Andrews, women who gave decades of their lives to serve others in the gospel.

In 19th century Britain it was fairly common to write two biographies on missionaries: a full version, and a version for children. The reading public knew about the work of Livingston, Carey, and others. Those rehearsals of work done by others created visions in people's minds and planted seeds in children's hearts. That can and should be



repeated among us, perhaps with videos as well as books.

Often our brotherhood is ignorant of what has been accomplished through our workers. For example, most people seem to be ignorant of those hundreds and hundreds of churches in Nigeria, of what has been done in Western Europe since World War II, of churches in Japan that survived the Second World War, of the good evangelists that have been developed in various countries, and of the godly character found in people who have come out of paganism to serve the true and living God. That information can be found in the various versions of *The Harvest Field*, or in *World Radio News*, *Christian Chronicle*, and other papers; or one may read Bessie Chenault's "*Give Me this Mountain*" or Dow Merritt's *The Dewbreakers*. The information is available but it has not been communicated from pulpits and classrooms.

There are, of course, dangers in rehearsing the past. We can idealize far from ideal situations. It is possible to make a tradition or norm out of a method which worked well in one area but not in others. Israel's rehearsal often called attention to people's inadequate responses to God as well as to God's faithfulness. Looking back can identify blunders as well as show results, so it is possible to learn from it as well as to rejoice in it.

It is often in mission situations that one is impressed afresh with the genius of the plea for biblical Christianity without the albatross of the Reformation or even the 19th century Anglo-American Restoration Movement. The commitment to operate out of Scripture as one deals with the various cultures of the world gives great facility for meaningful evangelization. In California I met a Japanese gentleman who was planning to return to Japan in an ef-

fort to get people to become Cumberland Presbyterians. I did not envy him in that task; I would hate to be charged with the responsibility of making Japanese people Cumberland anything! A Moody Press book, *The Indigenous* (1960), records the problem Northern Brazilians had when told they should be Southern Baptists. Indigenous protestants at Pan-Indian meetings have joked about whether they were Scandinavian or Missouri Synod Lutherans. I am glad our ideal rises above some of those ecclesiastical blunders. We need not, but we have at times, invented scandals in addition to those already found in the Gospel. The offense of the cross must remain, but we are not called upon to add to that offense. But with our idealism we need not do so, and in that I rejoice.

In spite of our blunders, God has somehow used us. We have something to show for our efforts. It may be nothing to brag about since God deserves infinitely more than we have given, but we have much more to show for our efforts in many areas than various protestant groups which have been there longer and invested more money than we. For the God-glorifying efforts today we should be both grateful and encouraged. Like Samuel, we should raise our Ebenezer, something to celebrate the fact that "Hither to the Lord has helped" (1 Samuel 7:12). I challenge teachers and preachers to become familiar with some of what has been done, and then pass it on to others. Invite a missionary simply to tell about his, her, or their work. Christians deserve to know some of the effects of the praying, giving, and preaching, teaching, and serving in the past. Rehearse it as a prelude to moving on from here.

## II. To See As God Sees

When the prophet Samuel was in Bethlehem to anoint Israel's new king, Jesse's sons were to walk before him. When Samuel saw Eliab he thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But in response to that feeling the Lord made a statement which has profound significance for people's understanding the gap which exists between themselves and God. "Do not look upon his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). When people become Christians ideally they begin a lifelong process of trying to see as God sees. It is one of the purposes of revelation to make known to people God's perspective on the world and its contents.

It is a common metaphor in John's writings to describe people without God as walking in darkness. Paul declared that the God of this world "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Paul's own goals were to preach to the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things" (Ephesians 3:8-9). Those of us who have been Christians understand this with reference to our salvation from the guilt of sins. But very often we can fail as churches and individuals because in our personal ethics and group responsibilities we fail to see as God sees.

It is very easy and very common for people to be too preoccupied with their own little zip code and to use life there as the yardstick for measuring everything else. The

Greeks regarded everything outside Hellas as barbarian. Sir Floping Flutter in the restoration play declared that “beyond Hyde Park all is desert.” J.S. Whale tells of an amusing exchange in the smoking room of an Atlantic liner several years ago. A few Americans were extolling the virtues of their country, when an Englishman remarked naively, “Yes,, but it’s so far away.” At that the New Yorker replied with equal naivete “Where from?” Both men were expressing the same ethnocentric approach to life. Their experiences were the norms for everyone else.

We can chuckle at such narrow vision, but it is very serious when it expresses itself in the worldview of the local church or individual Christians. In Leconte de Nouy’s *Human Destiny*, he explains that a microbe which lives in a crack in the skin of an elephant can have little concept of the elephant itself. Its perspective is too limited. So it is for Christians. The kind of perspective we have on self, the world, and God, influence both our own ability and our service. The Philippian Christians were to do more than see themselves as saved from sins individually. Rather, while living out their faith in the specificity of the streets of Philippi, their zip code, they were also to see themselves as citizens of heaven, from which their savior would come and transfer their bodies (Philippians 3:20-21). Life and service in your town, as in Philippi, will be different when you see your place in an universe and in relationship to the future. Oh, for the people of God to see as God sees!

The story line of the entire Bible makes it very clear that God’s “scheme of redemption” involves efforts to bring to himself the nations of the world. It was promised to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be

blessed (Genesis 12:3). The Psalms are full of the longing for all the nations to know the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalms 68:31-33; 72:8-11; 86:8-10; 96:1-9; 102:12-22; etc.) The writers of the psalms rise above the Jewish provincialism and ethnocentricity rebuked in the book of Jonah. The prophets point out that Israel at best was to be a light to the nations, the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6,7; 60:1-3). It is unlikely that many people today realize what a bombshell it was in the discerning Jewish mind when Jesus directed his apostles to disciple the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). That meant that the time had finally come when the prophetic longing for the salvation of the nations was finally to be realized.

At one point in my education, members of the junior class wrote the prophecy for the senior class. Several students in our school who were leaders in neither academics nor sports were pictured as being missionaries in Africa. They made good progress, the prophecy ran, until they tried to teach a group of plate-lipped natives how to say "Zerubbabel!" That jesting prophecy was really a revelation of how little the juniors saw as God saw. What a tremendous thing takes place, in heaven's view, when people from the nations turn from idols to the true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

What a priority it should be, this evangelizing of the nations, the Gentiles. Some people with limited vision view world evangelization as supporting a preaching point about three Stuckey's stops down the interstate. That is far from the way God wants us to view the world. Our hearts should ache because there are tribes and peoples who evidently know more about Coca Cola than they do about Jesus Christ. If Jesus were to walk among the

churches today and speak to them, what would he say to your congregation about its priorities?

In the great throne scene of Revelation 4 and 5 the question was raised, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" The answer came that it was Jesus, the Lamb of God. But note the reason for that worthiness:

*Worthy art thou to take the scroll  
and open its seals,  
for thou wast slain and by thy blood  
didst ransom men for God  
from every tribe and tongue and  
people and nation,  
and hast made them a kingdom and  
priest to our God,  
and they shall reign on earth  
(Revelation 5:9-10).*

As surely as I value what Jesus did for me, I must acknowledge that his death was for every tribe and nation. As surely as I believe that it was God's will for others to take the gospel to my family in the East Tennessee hills, I must also believe that it is his will for the gospel to be taken to all for whom Christ died.

I call on preachers and teachers to help fellow Christians see as God sees in terms of a hurting world that believes in many gods but does not know the "maker of heaven and earth." We will not take his world seriously until we do.

### **III. Send Prepared People**

In the aftermath of the Biafran War in Nigeria, I asked a former missionary in that country whether anyone had

taught the Nigerian Christians anything about carnal warfare. His judgment was that it had not crossed their minds to do so. Conceivably fellow Christians from different sections of the country could have been killing each other. Evangelizing in Nigeria was and is more than bringing individuals to Christ. In a growing and developing continent, a new Christian may face a bloodbath, as in Uganda, or be in high political office, in a few years, as in Zambia. They will need the tutelage of competent and mature people.

I raise this issue only as an illustration of the way in which people who cross cultural lines to communicate the gospel will be fanning out into a complex world. It cannot be assumed that conditions are similar to those "back home." Apart from the usual necessity of learning a new language, there is the need to enter into the very mindset of the people if one is going to make sense of the gospel. Approaches will be made to peoples of the world who are idolaters with no sense of sin. Where does one begin with the message? Their assumptions are different about marriage, property rights, use of space, killing, unclean foods, and scores of other things. It can be tough enough to bring some people to faith in Christ, but it is being done. It can be even harder to help them live victorious and holy lives in their culture. But more is involved than winning individuals to Christ. Viable churches must be established so that people can be nurtured in holiness and fortified against the darkness which surrounds them. That can be done—it has been done.

All of this means that we do not need to send incompetent and unproven people to virgin territory. The stakes are too high for us to do so. Rather, we need to send

people, young or old, who have specific training for the tasks they undertake. I am willing to set down a single list of credentials since we need to send different types of people to other cultures. For fifteen years I have taught missions at the graduate level at the Harding Graduate School, and I feel good about what our graduates have done. But I also teach in a paramissionary training program at the Highland Street church in Memphis. There we try to prepare people with other skills (education, agriculture, automobile mechanics, carpentry, medicine, etc.) to go and work with missionary teams. I feel good about what some of those people have done also. There is room for both types as well as variations between them. But if we are to move forward from where we are now, the question supporting churches must ask is, “Are these workers prepared for the work they are going to undertake?” If not, their going should be delayed until they are prepared.

I am glad that at times we have sent out men and women who could have filled about any suitable position of responsibility in their homeland—teaching, preaching, administration, writing, counseling, or whatever. I am reminded of what Stephen Neil said of Thomas Valpy French, mid-19th century missionary to India and then, shortly to Arabia: he “would have been distinguished in any career that he chose to follow.” He was competent. We need more of that!

The largest number of churches of Christ in the world is located in the U.S.A., the wealthiest country in the world. Currently, we have the best training programs in missions we have ever had, many of the best books on missiology are available, if not in print; and we know more now than



ever before about how to screen people for cross-cultural work. What remains to be done is for the church to insist that these facilities be used so that we send dedicated and competent workers to the peoples of the world. The task is too important in God's sight for us to send less than some of our best.

This reminds me of an incident that happened in the time of Charlemagne. There was a famous teacher of his era, named Alquin, who on one occasion was telling Charlemagne about the Apostle Paul. Charlemagne said that he wanted twelve such men as secretaries! Alquin replied, "But sir, the Lord Jesus had but one, and would you have twelve?" I would answer his question in the affirmative, but not to have twelve Paul's serve as secretaries. If we have Pauls today, then why not use them in the same way in which Jesus used his Paul? There is nothing about the passage of time which means the kind of work Paul did in the first century is any less important today. If we want to move on from here, we will increase the number of competent, mature workers.

#### IV. Deepen the Spiritual Life

When one studies the history of Christian missions, it seems possible to make at least one generalization, viz., when people go to different cultures, sophisticated or lowly, and give years of sacrificial service to them, they are usually people of keen dedication and deep devotion to the Lord. A modern case of it may be seen in Elizabeth Elliott's *Shadow of the Almighty*, in which the inner life of Jim Elliott is shown. Over and over it can be observed in the lives of people like William Carey, J. Hudson

Taylor, and John Paton, among the protestants. It may be seen in our own brothers and sisters like J.D. Merritt, J.M. McCaleb, and Sara Andrews. People with shallow faith tend to fail and have little impact on those with whom they work. But devoted people are the ones to be counted on for substantial work.

If we are to move on from where we are in evangelizing the world, it is imperative that local churches deepen the spiritual tone of their life. Worship must be enriched so that people prostrate their spirits before God. Classes and sermons must more and more help people relate to Christ at a deeper level so that he is Lord of life. Christians must be challenged to get a handle on the materialism of our day. Historically, churches that have not kept up their guard have done little more than mirror their culture to a disturbing degree. When the national posture has been one of reaching out by colonizing, trading, or even waging war, the churches have tended to reach out also, perhaps even imperialistically. When the countries have been isolationists, churches have tended to be withdrawn, focusing on themselves. Here in the U.S.A. the churches may well be influenced by a period of national isolation following the Vietnam War; the churches may be mirroring the societal focus on self as described in a now popular book, *Habits of the Heart*. But Jesus is not functioning as head of his church when his people are shaped by the culture in which they exist rather than by Christ himself. This must cease if the church is to move on to higher planes of world evangelism.

George Peters has argued that one reason many of the early protestants did little-to-no foreign evangelism was that churches themselves lacked the spiritual vitality re-

quired for it. Individuals who became interested in world evangelism were supported by missionary societies rather than by churches. That is not an option for us, so it means that the churches themselves will need to have greater spiritual integrity and greater emphasis on godliness and serious discipleship. It is of interest to me that with few exceptions our largest churches produce a disproportionately small number of missionaries and preachers. That seems to be more a problem of lifestyle than of size, because small churches may be spiritually dead. But where people are spectators rather than servants, focusing more on "our church" than on outsiders, the chances are slim to none that missionaries will emerge from the mire.

Who then will produce the workers? It cannot be left to the schools because it is a part of the church's business to produce disciplined godliness, people who care little for shallow praise of the weak but care much for the approval of God: people who will, if necessary, plant their bones in countries where they give themselves to others for the sake of the gospel. People who do not know how to teach the gospel at home do not automatically learn to do so by getting an airline ticket to another country. They need to learn that at home. There are people sitting in our pews who can start churches, but the local church has not trained and motivated them to do so. We need more gray hair in the evangelistic efforts throughout the world, both because their judgment is often better than that of younger people and because they will be respected in most cultures of the world. Younger and older people need to have world evangelism held out as an option for them, and that needs to be done primarily at the congregational level. When such people do emerge, encourage them and

support them.

All of this is related to the business of deepening our perception of God and his will for the world, of deepening our commitment to our heavenly Father and his purposes. I know one missionary whose strategy involved an encouragement of greater spirituality in the home churches so they could be assured of a steady supply of quality missionaries. I see no real way of moving on meaningfully from where we are in the task of world evangelization unless there is this increase in the spiritual dimension of what we are and what we do.

### Conclusion

Churches of Christ stand as good a chance as any group—better than most groups—to preach an unfettered bedrock gospel throughout the world. I am not referring merely to U.S. and Canadian churches, but to churches of Christ in many countries. We have an idealism that is biblically based; we have the money and training facilities. We seem mostly to falter, or do less than our best, at the perception and spiritual levels. But these situations are correctable if we will gratefully rehearse what has been done, strive more and more to see as God sees his world, send prepared people, and deepen our relationships with God himself.

*Rise up, O men of God!  
Have done with lesser things;  
Give heart and mind and soul and strength  
To serve the king of kings.*

*Rise up, O men of God!  
The church for you doth wait,  
Her strength unequalled to her task;  
Rise up, and make her great.*

*Life high the cross of Christ!  
Tread where his feet have trod;  
As brothers of the Son of Man,  
Rise up, O men of God.*

*William P. Merrill*

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# COMPASSION IN AN APATHETIC WORLD

by Dan Coker

The ministry of Jesus is the most dynamic example of compassion in recorded history. The fact that He wept for individuals, cities, and the entire world is an obvious manifestation of an obvious concern—the welfare of all those who bear God’s creating image. In the hands of fellow-sojourners the question of compassion has been dealt with in peculiar ways: generally institutionalized and depersonalized, the business of caring one for another has evolved into a syndrome that is controlled by the will of the benefactor, not the need of the recipient. But the potential benefactors are now being challenged by a vocal, even militant poor whose voice cannot be stilled with the slamming of a door or an eviction notice. More and more the disenfranchised are daring to take their plight to the rich and the secure of this world. The message is coming in the form of protest, violence, and every imaginable expression of anger and hatred. These headline-making exploits weight heavily on society when the plight of the infirm and starving does not. What will be the end result? Will a more compassionate man emerge, or will his conscience be seared even more, creating an even less caring person than before? In order to attempt a reasonable answer to this question, we shall examine ourselves and our attitudes person by person: First, we’ll consider the third person and then take our analysis to the second and

the first. The third person is not just a grammatical he/she relationship; such folk have been stereotyped and molded into a large block of humanity known as the “third world.”

### **Compassion and The Third Person**

A consciousness of the distress in the third world is growing and, although intentionally ignored by some, this sector of humanity will not be quiet. The awareness has come because of the media, because of the growing numbers in the third world, and because of the increasing concern of those of us to whom their plea is addressed. I, like many of you, have grown up in the land of plenty. I’ve always enjoyed very much, always wanted more, have been surrounded by people of like conviction, of like socio-economic abilities, and I find myself also laden with the very same attitudes that characterize the world of the plenty. Some travel a great deal and this helps to dispel “First World Innocence”—not innocence in the tradition of Adam and Eve, but the innocence of thinking that things in the world are really better than they appear in the media. Really they’re much worse than is generally thought. They’re much worse than one is able to relate with words. They’re much worse than one can demonstrate with photos, movies, brilliant articles, or eloquent speeches. The world out there is a mess, and the “—innocence of staying at home” is not a satisfactory response. Some are convinced that if they don’t go to see it, they have no responsibility to do anything about it.

Perhaps I lost my innocence earlier than others because I grew up near the Mexican border. When I was a small



child, I attended a school where a great portion of the children were Mexican-American. There were many who spoke English very very poorly, if at all, and they were a curious people to those of us who mistakingly thought of our Anglo culture was superior. Although sometimes a minority, we Anglos were a superordinate minority—those who called the shots, who owned the farms, who owned the stores, who had the good jobs. Nonetheless, the great institution of our public school system brought Anglo and Hispanic together, thus creating a semblance of oneness and awareness. One of the earliest memories I have of schooling among those folk is the sad occasion of the death of the little sister of one of my Hispanic schoolmates. She had died of dehydration because of extreme diarrhea. The family had no money to take her to a physician. There were very few doctors who would even have received her, I suppose, as I think back on the situation now. The family just hoped that through their folk medicine and their prayers things would be better and the little girl would pull through. . . but she did not! Such an experience is disturbing for anyone, but for a young person such as I, it was especially so. It seemed to me that someone could have done something to prevent this. If someone had offered a kind hand and taken that little girl to the doctor, paying for the medicine and paying the doctor bill, what a wonderfully different story could be told! I went to my teacher and I asked, “Teacher, why didn’t someone help the little girl and why weren’t they able to go to the doctor?” The teacher seemed very uncomfortable in answering all those questions, but finally said to me “Danny, you’ve got to understand that those people are used to losing their babies.” Can you believe such a

thing? I didn't accept it then; and now, as a father, I know it was a cruel lie. It was a lie to justify an irrational fear of involvement—somewhat understandable when one studies the strange phenomenon of xenophobia, but nonetheless repulsive. To think that anyone would say such a thing about a fellow human being! “Those people are accustomed to losing their babies.” That absurdity seemed to be the only defense that the teacher had for the Anglo community. You see it didn't *really* matter what happened to the Hispanic community. There were too many Hispanics already in the minds of many. There was a real fear that they, like the Israelites of old, would grow too numerous and become a threat to the established rulers. Even now some Anglos see the growing Hispanic community as a threat to Anglo security in the future. No matter what you think of their numbers and intentions, just think now on the implications of the teacher's statement: “They're accustomed to losing their children!” As if the mother could think “Oh well, another one died. Not to worry, we'll have another one in nine months.” What an absurdity! What a travesty! What an absolute calamity! And what a testimony of the absence of compassion in the person who made such a statement, and the society that thinks the same way. Does this story and experience call to mind anything that we read in the word of God? Do we remember the story that Jesus told about a Samaritan? And what about that Samaritan? The Samaritan who was a foreigner—not just a foreigner, but a hated foreigner! He took a great risk in reaching down and lifting up the beaten and bruised man in order to give him the treatment that he needed. He ran the risk of being the object of ridicule, even from that person whom he had

saved from death. You see, the Jew could have come out of his coma and recognized that his benefactor was a Samaritan—a despised person in that land! He could have said, “Listen, Samaritan, listen, nigger—just get away from me. I don’t want anything from you.”

Isn’t it amazing what the mind does to a person when he irrationally considers the culture and personality of the third world? Xenophobia is the disease that makes one suspicious of “them.” “They” do things we don’t understand, things that are foreign, things that we don’t *want* to understand. As one person said after I invited him to go to Latin American with me: “I’ve never lost anything down there.” True, he never lost anything down there, but the greater tragedy is this: he’ll never *find* anything down there! This misguided isolationism leads to mistrust. . . mistrust for everyone, and everything foreign, especially the foreigner’s motives.

As a lad I was taught that anyone who had any *gumption*, as my grandfather used to say, would be able to make himself a good living. Those who didn’t have the good living obviously had no “gumption.” Such judgmental attitudes lead one to even more consequential conclusions, blinding one to reality and objective thinking. The resulting confusion makes it almost impossible for one to have the influence among these people that most of us expect or even demand. Some folk often ask me: “Why do not the people of the third world appreciate us more? Haven’t we demonstrated great compassion toward them? Haven’t we given them many things? And don’t we send them money all the time? Now they want to be Communists and fight us: they burn Uncle Sam in effigy, and they say ‘Yankee, go home.’ Why do they do all these

things?”

The answers to the above are available, but they are lengthy and complicated. So, one must zero-in on one thing at a time, and the subject before us is compassion. The third world responds as it does in part because of the following: The people there have seen *generosity* without *compassion*. They see the things we toss their way but they also see the lack of desire on our part to become involved with them. We've given help from this guarded position: “Hey, don't bother me; I've given you something, now leave me alone. I don't want to be involved with you; I just want you to leave me alone; if you will, I'll give you something else.”

A few true stories from the third world should suffice to illustrate this point. One time I went to see a former student who lived in a Latin American country. He picked me up in his new automobile—very shiny, very nice. As we drove back to where I would be staying, we pulled into a parking lot frequented by several street children; these vie for the few cents paid by owners to have their cars shined. On this occasion several ran toward us screaming, “I want to wash your car! I want to wash your car!” My host steered the car right for them. My heart went up in my throat, and I literally hollered “What are you doing?” Just by the grace of God—I tell you there must have been a guardian angel there—he missed them all. Although he managed to avoid disaster and park the car, he scared them terribly and frightened and angered me. I turned to him and said, “What in the world are you doing? You nearly ran over some of those children.” His insipid reply was, “Well, I don't want those people around my car. They're always wanting to touch it.” I couldn't believe my

ears as I contemplated his words: “ALWAYS WANTING TO TOUCH MY CAR—GET FINGERPRINTS ON MY PRECIOUS CAR!” I nearly exploded right then and there as I told him: “Look, if you think more of that car than you do these people then go home and take your car with you.”

On another occasion something I did still haunts me. I confessed the sin of my student; I shall confess mine. In Guatemala, I had a dear friend by the name of Jose Toledo. One day he was in my neighborhood (he lived far away on the poor side of town, of course) and decided to stop by to say hello. At that time there were two people from the United States visiting me and at that moment were preparing to return home. While we were talking of going to the airport, the doorbell rang and the hired girl went to see about it; she returned with the message: “Jose is here to see you.” I met him at the door; he greeted me with his wide smile and I greeted him with concern on my face. I said “I’m sorry, I can’t really receive you right now. I’ve got these two people to get to the airport. Is there anything that can’t wait?” He said, “Oh, no, no, I was just going to say hello.” Then he got on his bicycle and went away. I could tell later on that he was very hurt, and I talked with him about it. He revealed his feelings with these words: “Brother Dan, were you ashamed of me; didn’t you want me to meet your friends? Was there not room for me in the car? Couldn’t I have gone along to help carry the bags for the people and hurried the process along? I would be very proud to present you to any of my friends. Were you ashamed to present me to your friends?” I said, “Oh, no, no, no, that’s not it. I was just trying to expedite things. My friends speak no Spanish so I

knew that I would have to translate back and forth.” Then he said, “In other words, I was a bother for you.” I answered “Well, no, no.” But, the more I denied it, the more dramatically the truth emerged; yes, it was a bother for me, and I didn’t want him around at that particular time. After I realized and admitted this selfishness, I told him I was sorry and begged his forgiveness. He said, “Brother Dan, forgive me, but you are a typical American.” “How’s that?” I asked. He said, “You Americans know how to extend hospitality, but only on your terms.” I’ve thought about that a lot. We extend hospitality, but *on our terms*, at our convenience. We’re not ready for the improvised moment of hospitality—not a very good testimony for the elder’s qualification of being *given to hospitality*.

What are we going to do about our attitudes? Our attitude towards others? Our attitude toward those who do not live as well as we do or speak the same language we do or have the same ideals that we do? What are we going to do about them? If the questions seem difficult, then you’ll join me in thanking God for His gospel and His little children; in them we find dynamic and spiritual answers. My daughters have taught me more about this subject than anyone else with whom I’ve been associated. When we would pass by a beggar on the streets of Guatemala or Honduras or Mexico—especially a beggar lady with a baby—my children would look at me expectantly knowing that their daddy, a compassionate man, would help. But I didn’t always live up to their expectations: One time I was with my eldest daughter walking down a crowded street in Mexico. I had become accustomed to seeing the poverty; my heart had become

hardened. (At this point I remember my teacher and the baby; I had fallen into the same trap. It is not *they* who become accustomed to death and poverty; it is *we* who become accustomed to their plight.) But Danise brought me back to compassion with the following words: “Daddy, aren’t you going to help this poor lady and her baby?” I said, “Honey, there are just so many of them.” She said, “Yes, but we’ve seen this one.” Then she added, “Give me my *domingo* (that is, my allowance) please, and I’ll give it to her; I’ll just do without my allowance next week.” Really my daughter was asking me the basic questions about my consideration toward others. She was asking me, “Daddy, do you think it’s right to do right: do you appreciate the opportunities to do good, or do you shun them?”

### Compassion and The Second Person

The second person is the one with whom I have contact. The relationship becomes a little more personal now, doesn’t it? It’s no longer “those people out there. . . the ones that are accustomed to this and that.” They are not a bunch of nameless faces; they’re the people with whom I talk; the people with whom I walk life’s paths. Remember something that Jesus said: “You heard that it was said to the men of old ‘you shall not kill’ and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.” (I certainly understand that and I have no desire to kill anyone with whom I come in contact). But Jesus continues: “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.” (Well, I can certainly understand that; you shouldn’t go around being angry with your brother, or at least you

should get over it before the sun goes down. I agree with all that.) But then He says: “Whosoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council.” (I suppose that’s a good rule also; we ought not go around insulting one another, saying things that would be inflammatory.) But then this last saying really disturbs me: “And whoever says ‘you fool’ shall be liable to the hell of fire,” Matthew 5:21,22. Now *that* saying seriously affects my relationship with the second person. At time we talk in a loose way about that “old fool,” or in terms even more severe. Does that mean that everyone calling another “fool” is bound for hell? Hardly! The English language is quite inadequate in rendering exactly what the word “fool” means here. Personal research has helped, but, as several commentators have stated, it is difficult to come up with an adequate translation; therefore, the English-speaking world lives with the weakness of the word “fool” in that passage. Much more serious than offending some man; more serious than the infamous “Raca”; more serious than anything that is conjured in the insults and harshness that have been used in the first part of the passage, is revealed a complete contempt for one’s fellow man. This absolute disregard for humanity is usually accompanied by violent passion. The bottom line is simply a total lack of concern for the human quality of the person addressed. That’s why the Lord takes it so seriously. Whenever one says to a person, “Ah, you old fool, you old liar, you no account” or whatever it might be, the word itself is not as important as the *intention* behind it. If the thought behind this harshness is the utter disregard for the human quality, the God-likeness of that person, then the speaker has committed a grave offense. The Lord would respond, “How



dare you ever have such contempt for a person!” One servant never has the right to judge another, concluding “you are worthless, you mean nothing to me. It doesn’t matter whether you live or whether you die, it doesn’t matter what your status is. You are not worthy of my consideration.”

Such a lack of compassion for the one whom God has created is at obvious cross-purposes with the message of the good news. In fact, one should think very very seriously on the second person responses and challenges given in the 25th chapter of Matthew when Jesus said to those on the left hand: “You didn’t feed me, you didn’t clothe me, you didn’t tend my needs, you didn’t receive me.” Their response is typical: “Why, Lord, when did we deny you these things? We would have received you. You’re an important person. You *mean* something to us. We would have given you the best bedroom and the best clothes, the best food.” The Lord said, “When you denied involvement with that person whom you considered to be the least.” (Note that expression “the least among you” is not one whom the Lord considers “least,” but the one whom man considers to be of least importance.) Jesus made it very clear that he will take our dealings with “the least” in a very personal way. Man’s refusal to become involved with “the least” equals his refusal to become involved with Christ. Man is so contradictory; he rejects the need of his fellow and, at the same time, glibly says, “Lord, we love you.” The paradox is that it’s easy to love God; and at the same time, it’s very, very difficult. It’s easy to love Him on the one hand, but John says, if we hate our brother, we’re found to be liars, not really loving God. How can one even think that he loves God but has no

compassion for those round about him? There is a practical answer—not Biblical but very pragmatic. It's easy to love God because He never bothers us. He never calls us in the middle of the night and tells us he's broken down in Interstate 20 needing immediate help. He never borrows money to see Him through difficult times. He doesn't come and stay as a house guest, invading our privacy. He doesn't ask us to co-sign a note for Him that we might have to pay later on. He doesn't do any of those things. He doesn't bother us one bit so we just love Him to pieces! Who wouldn't love Him!

Our ability to differentiate between God and His people was succinctly stated by my Dad who was an elder of the church for a long time. He came home one night very tired from a difficult church business meeting. At that time I was a young Bible student here at ACU, so I chided him somewhat, saying, "Ah, Dad, you just don't love the church." His answer: "Son, I love the church; it's just the members I can't stand." That tongue-in-cheek humor contains more truth than we'd like to admit. Oh yes, it's easy to love the church. It's easy to love God. It's easy to love anything that's abstract or far away or in the past. What's frightening, what's difficult, is our daily contact with those who are in the here and now; who *are* and just won't go away!

### **Compassion and The First Person**

Let us speak now of compassion in the first person. The first person, of course, is I. Compassion and my own person! Do I see myself as a compassionate person? *Should* I see myself as a compassionate person? Would that be a

virtue in our society? Unfortunately not; Southwestern U.S. culture militates against it in many ways. Our culture says “look out for number one; take care of number one. If you have to step on someone else, don’t do it unless you just have to, but *do* it if you have to.” Our culture has taught us to be selfmade men, to stand on our own two feet, to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps, to stand up and let no one make a fool out of us. But those folk out there that need my help might make a fool out of me. They might be shamelessly living and leaching off me, laughing about how successfully they have fooled me. How should I react? Usually we do protect ourselves first; “no one makes a fool out of Dan Coker!” Unfortunately, such thinking often makes us very foolish indeed—we become so convinced by our own logic that we ignore Christ’s example; by the way, people took advantage of Him and He *knew* it! Reluctance to be compassionate, holding in feelings and being reserved are the end results of our selfmade, selfish stance. Then we feel less manly if we’re ever “burned” by being compassionate, or considerate, or trusting. Then comes the real clincher: We conclude that we’ll help no one because someone took advantage of us. It’s amazing how these thought patterns are transferred into church life and affect our decisions about the kingdom.

Quite often in meeting with elders, I hear: “Yes, Brother Dan, we tried foreign missions one time and we got burned.” The last time that happened I looked at them and smiled broadly as I said “Well, congratulations, that’s wonderful.” Quickly they retorted, “You don’t understand, Brother Dan, we got *burned*.” I said, “Oh, I understand, congratulations!” They said, “why would

you congratulate us about a thing like that?” My answer: “I want to congratulate you for being close enough to the fire to be burned. Most people avoid the fire altogether. Thank God that you got close enough to be burned.” Then I added: “Let me ask you something else, Dear Brothers. Were you ever burned by a pulpit preacher?” Silence. “Perhaps you didn’t hear me, Dear Brethren, were you ever burned by a pulpit preacher?” “Well, yes.” “Probably more than once?” I continued. “Yes, more than once; we had one that ran off with a secretary.” “Obviously, then you don’t have a pulpit preacher anymore,” I concluded. “Yes we do, why would you say that?” “Because you’ve been *burned*, dear brethren” was my reply. “Don’t ever hire a pulpit man; you might get burned again.” The truth is that in our selective reluctance we can rid ourselves of any program we don’t like.

Another reason we often are reluctant to be compassionate is simply that we are accustomed to major decisions being made by someone else. Most of us lead rather ordinary lives. We grow up in our community and function predictably on our jobs, in the church, and in our family. We rarely assume a risky position in any of those endeavors because things are pretty cut and dried concerning the expectations of others and our own performance. Few of us ever have the occasion to really step out into something that is perilous, imaginative, and life-changing; and that’s unfortunate! God has called us to be a very special people and has told us that we really can be like the Gideons, the Joshuas, the Moseses, the Pauls, and others of old. We understand this point, but we’re reluctant to act because we’re used to someone else performing while we observe. We ask, “Why don’t the elders do

something; why doesn't the mayor do something; why doesn't the council do something; why doesn't the president do something?" We hope that someone will do something constructive as long as it doesn't affect us or take anything away from us. "Give us a quick fix with someone's genius and hard work, but don't put us through any inconvenience while you're doing it" seems to be the philosophy of the day. This most disastrous attitude is accompanied by laziness and eventual total unbelief in our own ability. More seriously, we become exceedingly reluctant to take chances—the insistence on walking by sight, not by faith.

From the above attitudes, both foreign and domestic missions suffer today. The lack of confidence in ourselves and the Lord's calling has put us far behind in the battle for man's salvation. Mission has become nothing more than a luxury we enjoy when times are prosperous. However, missions do enjoy first place on some church programs—*they are the first* to be cancelled when financial reversals hit us. Evangelism ("Good-Newsing"), the very fulfillment of the Great Commission, and the very reason for the church's existence is the first to suffer. Some even ask me to help cut back, to trim mission spending. But I refuse to participate in announcing to God and the world that our priorities are wrong. "We'll take care of us first, and then we'll help them" is not what the Bible teaches. How many verses of scripture will it take to produce action on what we already know and do not obey? Shall we talk about considering others better than ourselves? Shall we speak about seeking first the kingdom of God? Shall we mention looking upon our brother and desiring his good, in honor preferring him? Or, shall we

talk about some of the escape hatches that we create for ourselves: “Brother, we’ve got things to take care of here.” “There’s a lot of work to do right here.” Who denies it? Why are we arguing this? Doesn’t what we really mean go like this: “When we get everything done for our own comfort, then we’re going to show compassion out there—on our own terms.” What would happen to children if parents took that same attitude?

Two or three preachers have told me lately that the Great Commission is no longer applicable to us. That’s quite a revelation! They reason that it was given only to the apostles. The apostles—not us—were supposed to preach to the entire world, and they did it; therefore everyone’s had a chance! That would be true if their parents were diligent in keeping the faith and handing it down from generation to generation.

With the same logic, one could say that the command to multiply and replenish the earth was given only to Adam and Eve. We are children of that covenant but are not responsible for perpetuating the human race. Besides one shouldn’t have children because it’s a perilous enterprise. There are a lot of logical things to say against having children in this day’s world. They might turn out to be drug addicts. They might turn out to be crooks. Worst of all, they might live in such a way as to lose their souls and condemn both themselves and others whom they influence. A lot of human logic can be gathered against having children, but you know it’s just natural, if we have compassion and love in our hearts, to *want* children. And, it’s just that natural for the church to *want* to bring sons into glory! The people who say that it’s “unnatural,” that it’s “not even our responsibility,” have missed the entire

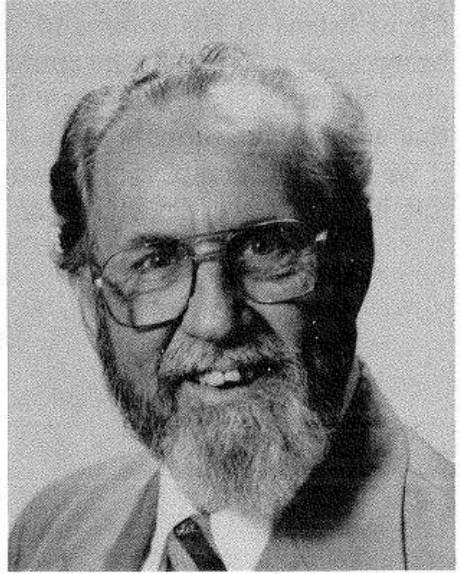
essence of what the church is all about. The church of Christ listens to His command, and the church of Christ brings sons into glory. The church of Christ goes out and gives all men a chance to repent because God is not willing that any of them should perish. If we lose that perspective, if we lose that compassion, I would suggest that we have lost it all—our very purpose for being. God help us!

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# WORLD CHRISTIANS

by W. Broom

“Let my heart be broken with everything that breaks the heart of God.” Such were the words of a recent servant of Jesus Christ, and such is the fundamental meaning of the concept of being a World Christian. Being a World Christian might also be compared to this sequence. Let us suppose that a man is born in Abilene, grows up, becomes a Christian, lives faithfully, and dies without ever leaving Abilene. Let’s call him an Abilene Christian, because he has the perspectives and outlooks of a citizen of Abilene. Christian? Definitely. Saved? Definitely. Gone to heaven? Surely. Anything wrong with that? Not at all. But let’s think now what happens if this Abilene man travels in his Christian life into East Texas, the Rio Grande valley, the Panhandle, and other Texas areas. We can now call him a Texas Christian because he has concerns and interests wider than Abilene. Should he range farther over the whole United States we call him an American Christian. Add Canada to his field of information and interests, and he will be a North American Christian. If we continue to enlarge this believer until his information and concerns include all the continents, islands, and oceans of Earth, then we have a **WORLD CHRISTIAN**.

This does not mean that our experimental friend must be a world traveller, or a foreign missionary, of highly educated, or multi-lingual, or wealthy, or any other such difficult achievement. Any of those activities or qualities might be useful, or convenient, or enjoyable, but not

prerequisite for being a WORLD CHRISTIAN.

Stated positively, being a World Christian DOES mean that one must be aware of global information, have concerns about global needs, have compassion for global suffering, grieve over global sin, have dreams and visions about global repentance, and have strategies for using global options in this spiritual warfare. The key term in all this is GLOBAL: GLOBAL conditions, needs, suffering, sin, repentance, and strategic options—but GLOBAL in all cases.

The opposite of this World Christian viewpoint, of course, would be a Christian mind-set which is parochial, provincial, isolationist, secluded, or reclusive. Let me repeat and emphasize that Christians who are parochial, provincial, isolationists, and reclusive can be saved, go to heaven, and be with God. In the same way, a retarded child can be born into a family and be loved, cared for, protected, and be fully a son of his father, but with very definite limitations. Or to state it differently, a child can be born deformed, with a withered limb, or a missing body member, or deaf, or blind, and still be a living child, capable of living, loving, and surviving. But we all seek for normally formed children, with all their potential for growth and development and the full exercise of their parental heritage and capabilities. So it is with God and his offspring.

### **World Christians See World Lostness**

A recent on-campus survey showed that 49% of our students believed that if people have never heard the gospel of Christ they will not be lost. Those students prob-

ably learned that from their home churches, parents, or their secular American cultural environment. But wherever they came from, the result is the same: a failure to understand God's view of His World. Our world—God's world—is lost — LOST — L O S T.

Lostness in the Third World is dramatic. There are so many tangible needs and so much visible hopelessness: life expectancy is 38 years. Three out of ten infants die before two years of age. Eighty percent are illiterate. Ninety-five percent of the people toil in agriculture to feed themselves and the other five percent. Most of the people get by on 80% or less of the minimum caloric needs per day. Most have only 50% of the minimum protein requirement for good nutrition. Deaths occur from diseases of poverty (such as malaria, intestinal worms, tuberculosis, and malnutrition). This is to say that the life quality is much more serious than the fact that they have very few telephones, newspapers, automobiles, televisions, and refrigerators. And this does not mention the invisible spiritual realities of life. How can one see the hopelessness of the soul or the fears of the nameless gods before whom they cower? It becomes visible only in the eyes of the damned. Talk to those who have looked into their eyes and have seen LOSTNESS.

Lostness in the industrial western world is very deceptive. On the surface, things look marvelous. Our life expectancy is over seventy-two years, which is almost double the life gift God gives to the Third World. Over ninety percent of our infants can be expected to live beyond two years of age. We have more telephones, autos, bathrooms, and television sets than the number of people living in each house. Ninety-five percent of our people are literate.

Our economy requires only three percent of the population to produce the necessary food for the other ninety-seven percent, which means the bulk of our people are free to labor at other callings or to enjoy leisure time. The enemy of the western industrial world is obesity, not hunger. We, like the Third World, suffer from disease, but we suffer from diseases of affluence, not the diseases of poverty and hunger. The rich man whom Jesus called a fool had all this, but he did not see his lostness. Our affluence deceives us into feeling that lostness is not a problem. But watch the eyes of the Western World to see the loneliness of selfishness, the alienation of broken families, the aimlessness of too many choices, the greed of the sweepstakes and the game shows, the “inside traders” who have never set a ceiling on their wealth, the lust of our soap operas, and the hate of our society that simmers beneath the legal limits of oppression—here in the eyes of the high-tech world is visible the lostness of our people.

But we must also cope with the emotional weight of the number of the lost in our world. Stand on the corners of Mexico City, or New York, or Sao Paulo, or Tokyo and realize the tragedy of the millions of lost people in our world. Some have yielded to the temptation to escape this pain by changing their faith into universalism. Others have watered down the nature of the Deity to the vicinity of Santa Claus. To be a World Christian is to cope with the emotional weight of the lost, while holding to the truth of biblical revelation about the lost. And that involves pain.

The Word of Divinity still says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and “There is none righteous, no not one,” and “If we say we have no sin we

deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,” and “There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,” and “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

World Christians who struggle with this devastating lostness of our world are faced with the agony of the lost world. What we World Christians realize is that a far greater agony than ours was borne by our Lord in Gesthsemane, and was measured by sweat as of blood when He realized that Golgotha was the only—the ONLY way that lostness could be removed from the human race. The PLACE OF THE SKULL has never been pretty, and it is not so now.

### **World Christians See A World Message**

Whatever the popularity of cleverness in the pulpit, when the message of the Messiah is translated cross culturally, the cleverness falls off as dirty rags. Many among us have been confronted with lost societies and have had to peel off the popular American homilies and painfully confront the fact that they have no message for the lost. What they have ultimately to get back to is a God who loves the world, a Savior who died for the world, and a Spirit of Holiness who entreats every ethnic group and every individual to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

That is the message. Now if your province, county, or neighborhood believes all that, but is divided by creedalism, you may need to speak of Restoration. If your province has obliterated the sacred by surrendering to the secular, you may need to speak to that. If your province

has confused the nature of Deity with stone and wooden gods, you may have to speak to that. But whatever approach you may need to make, the message still remains “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The temple of God may be entered through the lobby of Restoration, or the lobby of Sacred versus Secular, or the lobby of animism, or the lobby of the Old Testament prophets, or the Unknown God of Mars Hill, or the concept of Honor among Islam—whatever the lobby by which you enter, the Most Holy Place in the Temple is the **WORLD MESSAGE: JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.**

Some of us may say however, that such a message is not unique and that we must have a unique message. But what shall our uniqueness consist of? The color of the cloth on the communion table? The architecture of our assembly place? The cultural shibboleths of our particular birth-place? Such a price paid for uniqueness is too great a price, for our provincialisms become blockades to the lost who are wanting to be saved. If this basic World Christian message is not unique where you are, then go to where it is unique. How dare we add to or take away from that which is written?

### **World Christians See A World Salvation**

We dream and have visions of the day when the curse of sin is exchanged for a new world which is without sin; where the fear of the grave is replaced by a new body immune to death; where the treachery of the gods, the little ones and the big ones, is done away by a Father who is totally faithful; where an uncontrollable fate and the resulting fatalism is replaced by a certain, knowable

destiny; and where victorious evil bleeds to death as Absolute Good conquers.

Can such a salvation ever happen? Historically we, know it can and did. This salvation marched out of dinky little Nazareth into world history and surmounted the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome, and in fact is bringing every culture into the presence of God as men believe. Alexander thought Greek culture would save the world. It could not. The Caesars thought Roman power could save the world. It could not. No culture gospel has ever or will ever save the world. The only way the salvation of this world will ever be accomplished is a salvation that abolishes and exiles sin, that stands over the empty graves and screams "DEATH IS DEAD," that welcomes fellowship with a God who has never lied or been unfaithful, that shows the destiny of both time and eternity to be certain, and that plunges the Sword of Good into the vampire heart of evil.

And this CAN happen. It can happen three in a third world village where people only live 38 years, where three out of ten babies die, where 80% are illiterate, and where many die of intestinal worms. But it can also happen in a city of five, ten, fifteen million where they die of obesity and hypertension. This salvation has happened and it can happen—it MUST happen in every tribe tongue, nation, and people of earth.

### **World Christians See World Change Occurring**

Does this gospel really change anything? Provincial gospels and churches may not, but World Christians did, and do. Roman gladiators stopped entertaining by blood.

Parents stopped killing unwanted children. Women were elevated to enjoy rights as daughters of God. Slavery was outlawed. And even war has been given a moral conscience instead of a hero's crown. Not all this happened overnight but Christian world change across the centuries has been significant.

But not all of this world change is past history. The change continues. Famous entertainers crusade for world hunger. Concerns for world ecology have put gadgets on our autos. World population concerns have mounted massive programs for planned parenthood. Smallpox has gone the way of dinosaurs world wide, and the battle over AIDS is being fought internationally by people with world concerns. The media is now giving world news coverage—including daily temperatures from Accra to Zambezi because we are growing more concerned about our world.

Praise God, we are seeing WORLD change, but it is not enough. We World Christians must not mock the nations with temporal salvation while souls remain damned and without hope for eternity. I still feel stung by the cartoon in which two fisherman are leaving the lake with one of them saying, "No, I didn't catch any but I sure influenced a lot of them."

And we are influencing a lot of them. Over half the nurses in India are trained in a few Christian missions hospitals. Since 1945, the United Nations has admitted dozens of third world countries because of factors directly or indirectly traceable to one hundred years of world missions. Eighty percent of the schools in Africa at the time of their independence were started and/or operated by Christian missions. Thirty-two percent of the world's population professes to believe in Jesus. Christianity is the



world's largest religion. Believers are found in every nation (meaning every political unit) in the world.

But like the fisherman, influencing them is not enough. What we beg our God and His churches for is a network of Christian believers to effect further change among the two billion hidden peoples. Dr. Donald McGavran has said, "The church is the most potent agent for social change in the world." But social changes are not enough. Saving men and women from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, and seeing God's Spirit prepare them for the great wedding supper of the Lamb—only this can fulfill their eternal needs and bring the greatest pleasure to Jehovah God.

### **World Christians See World Involvement**

Thousands of Christians must become involved at the level of world concern, world need, and world change. But how is this to happen?

God has a plan: disciples win disciples who win disciples who win disciples. . . on and on. Churches plant churches that plant churches that plant churches. . . on and on.

This plan must be pursued both corporately and individually. Individually, it means this: never before has God given so many gifts to men. There are many more gifts than technology, but let's look at technology as a case in point. These who are the 90% of our American population who have food grown for them: what shall they do with their time and skills? Turn them to pleasure, leisure, and unlimited luxuries, or give them to effect godly change in the world's sin? Does my job—my profession—contribute directly or indirectly to God's plans for

redeeming the world? If not, then am I ignoring the responsibility of God's gifts to me?

Corporately, what does this mean? Shall churches spend their budgets for polish—and—shine paraphernalia or shall they plant barefoot churches on every mountain and up every valley?

We must shift into a wartime economy for this spiritual warfare. America did this overnight on December 7, 1945. Because we were at war we did without tires, gasoline, meat, sugar—even A.C.C. had no lectureship in some of those years. In those war years, the Queen Elizabeth was changed from a luxury liner carrying 1200 passengers to a troop transport carrying 20,000 soldiers. Luxury state-rooms were converted into barracks bunkhouses, because it was war. The nation of Israel is on a near-war status: every young man serves three years in the army, and every young woman serves two years. Every male serves 35 days per year on active reserve until age 55. Here is a nation that realizes it is on a crisis course, and it behaves like it.

That can happen in the Army of God, the nation of His kingdom. One church in the USA with two thousand members is giving \$50,000 per Sunday, largely on the motivation of evangelism and world missions. How is this possible? Simple. They have a war-time mind set and they live and give, pray and evangelize on the basis of the belief that the spiritual world is at war. People who believe there is peace and ease in Zion cannot understand a church like that, and never will be able to behave like that. Our concept of being World Christians must begin with the realistic acceptance of the New Testament teaching of the apostle Paul that we are in a death-or-life struggle with principalities and powers. Until we as World Christians

believe in this cosmic war, the army of God, and the struggle of the book of Revelation, we shall not be able to get serious about involvement in God's cause upon earth.

### **How Can We Become World Christians?**

Here are a few practical suggestions for beginning.

1. Begin planning your vacations to be spent where the church is all over the world, or where it ought to be. See the people, their religions, their cities, their lostness. It will stretch your mind and enlarge your heart.

2. Send your college students to study where their souls can be stretched while their minds are being trained. We now have available through our American Christian colleges study programs in Vienna, Venice, Heidelberg, London, Florence, Jerusalem, and possibly some others I don't know about. Your children can for a little more money learn something about World Christian concepts that they can never get on this continent. We pray that before long we are going to be able to send our children to Moscow, Beijing, Port Moresby, Ukpom, La Paz, and a lot of others. Send them and watch them grow.

3. Seriously activate a wartime life style for our families in our congregations. Adopt simplified living in our consumer patterns. Do we really need and use the autos, telephones, TVs, and all the other material things that are sold us by American commercial advertising? What could a 30% diversion of funds from luxuries to World Christian war needs do for our God and his purposes?

4. Give a tithe of your professional life to short-term overseas service in missions. That would make five weeks out of fifty-two weeks spent helping in missions some-

where. I know personally dentists, physicians, teachers, agronomists, nurses, builders, printers, lab technicians, and lawyers who have given from two weeks to six months of their time and skills to be World Christians. And I challenge you to ask any one of these people who profited the most from their service overseas. Do it for the glory of God but be prepared to be surprised at what you receive from Him as compared with what you give Him.

5. Inform yourself by subscribing to and reading the journals that tell what is happening in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Oceania. Some thrilling stories are being told monthly in these journals and news reports about what World Christians are concerned about and involved in.

6. Institute in your families, around your dinner tables, and at your children's bedsides the dreams and visions of God's purposes for His world. Generate in your five-year old children the ambitions to give themselves to serve in life-time ministries in the footsteps of John Sheriff, Dow Merritt, Barney Morehead, Otis Gatewood, Roy Palmer, Eldred Echols, Howard Norton—on and on—their name is legion and of these the world is not worthy. Give God your children as Hannah gave Samuel.

7. Move your limits of commitment from VBS 200 miles away from home to lifetime service wherever on earth God calls us.

8. Move your boundaries of self-denial from Weight Watchers to taking up crosses and following the One who went to Golgotha.

9. Learn to take self-denial as seriously as we take weekly communion, to take self-discipline as seriously as we take congregational autonomy, to take loving God with

all the heart, soul, mind and strength as seriously as we take baptism by immersion, to take loving neighbor as ourselves as seriously as we take free-enterprise democracy, and to take missions budgets as seriously as we take high school athletic budgets or church building programs.

**WORLD CHRISTIANS.** It's a big idea that makes little Christians become big Christians. Learn to let your heart be broken by whatever breaks the heart of God—all over the whole world He loves. And when our hearts break with what breaks His heart we shall know that we are his sons and daughters: **WORLD CHRISTIANS.**

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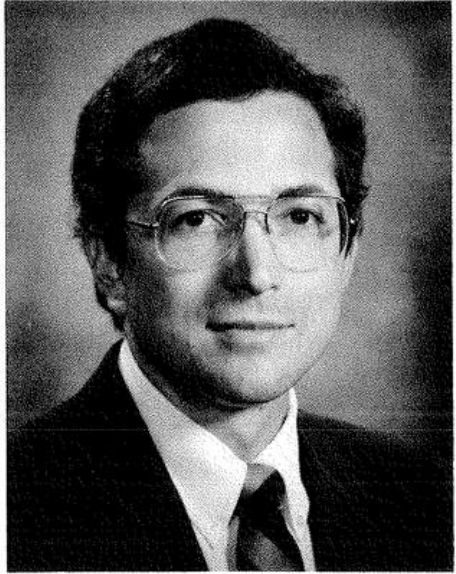
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# THE MADNESS OF OUR MISSIONARY MESSAGE

by Mike Cope

The problems are well known to us. We aren't training and sending enough missionaries. We aren't equipping our people with hearts of ministry to touch people around them. We aren't baptizing many.

But the crisis we face in missions is an extension of a deeper problem: a crisis in mission. One writer imagines a tour of an oil refinery that visits the places where the petroleum is broken down, purified, and processed. At the end of the tour, one visitor asks, "Where is the shipping department?"

"There is no shipping department," answers the guide.

"How can that be? There must be some place from which you export what you produce."

"No, there isn't," the tour guide replies. "All the energy generated and produced in this refinery is used to keep the refinery going."<sup>1</sup>

When the people of God lose their edge of ministry, burning up all their energy just to keep the system going, they become pale and lifeless. The rugged, ruddy appearance that comes from the razor edge of ministry is lost; egocentric "needs-meeting" and intramural squabbling take over.

What kind of changes need to be made so we can recapture the forward thrust of our movement? How can we begin reaching people as we approach a new century?

What message can we preach that will fill us again with missionary hearts? What message can we proclaim that will impact a world that has fallen in love with itself?

The answer—a tough, painful, convicting answer—is tucked away in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians.

### **The Background**

The Aegean was apparently not all that separated Paul from the church in Corinth. Ambassadors had come to him at Ephesus with a list of troubling questions. (He begins answering them in 1 Corinthians 7:1.)

But the formal list was apparently accompanied by some sideline info from Chloe's household. It seems that not everyone in the Corinthian church thought Paul was the one to answer their questions. Some were inclined to ask Apollos or Cephas. The purists held out for Christ himself (1:12). While it sounds like several different groups existed, likely there were two: those in favor of asking Paul for guidance and those who opposed to it.

So before Paul launches into their formal agenda, he spends four chapters reestablishing his authority among them, reminding them that in Christ Jesus he became their "father through the gospel" (4:15).

Paul saw the current conflict over his authority as only a symptom of a deeper problem: their exaltation of teachers. And he saw beneath that an even more fundamental problem: a wrong view of wisdom.

As residents of Corinth, these Achaeans had a long tradition of lifting up teachers who could bring them closer to wisdom. Apparently they held on to their pagan, secular views of wisdom even after becoming Christians. To the Greeks, wisdom was a product of raw human



reasoning. They were proud of their long philosophical tradition.

But it is this secular view of wisdom that is causing the division, according to Paul. So 1:17 is the transition into his main proof that human intellect alone isn't the key to unlocking the mysteries of the world: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

Their ultimate confidence has been in man and man's reasoning. But Paul reminds them that the most basic part of their faith, the cross, is not something human wisdom would ever have imagined. In fact it runs counter to human expectations. We can attain wisdom only by placing our confidence in God (2:6-16).

### **The Ancient Scandal to the Jews**

Paul says that the cross was a stumbling block to Jews. He didn't arrive at that conclusion by dispassionate observation; rather, it came from his missionary experience. Many Jews could not stomach the message of a crucified Messiah.

They had a common expectation of a Suffering Servant, one who would carry the nation by his sorrows (as described in Isaiah 53). And they had a confident hope of a powerful Messiah, one who would lead them victoriously. But apparently these two traditions were never intertwined. Almost by definition—their definition—the Messiah could not be one led to the slaughter. As T.W. Manson put it: "A crucified messiah was a flat contradiction to Jewish hopes and convictions."<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish messianic hope "was a burning conviction

held with fanatical zeal, shaped under pressure of tyranny and persecution, and inspired by deep religious faith.”<sup>3</sup> The Israelites were looking for a deliverer cast in the character of David, or Solomon, or Judas the Maccabean. He would be a leader who could re-establish their nation— God’s nation.

For whatever reason, they had seen little independence. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Rome had taken turns swatting them around like a ping-pong ball.

These messianic expectations made the crucifixion a major stumbling block. Some connected the curse of hanging on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:22-23) with crucifixion. But even beyond this, the Messiah was not supposed to die, whether on a cross or a battlefield. Many Jews, therefore, could not cope with the seeming contradiction of a crucified leader.

### **The Ancient Scandal to the Gentiles**

For different reasons, the message of the cross was a scandal to the Gentile world as well. Today the cross is often mindlessly reduced to a devotional topic, approximately equivalent to love and salvation. But in the Gentile milieu Paul traveled in, a cross was an unspeakable horror reserved for slaves and the worst criminals.

Most of us are familiar with the caricature of the crucifixion that dates from the second century. Scribbled on a wall in Rome was a man with the head of a donkey stretched on a cross. The inscription reads, “Alexamenos adores (his) God.”

Martin Hengel captured the madness of the Christian message in his seminal book on crucifixion: “. . .for men of the ancient world, Greeks, Romans, barbarians and

Jews, the cross was not just a matter of indifference, just any kind of death. It was an utterly offensive affair. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

Paul’s missionary encounters surfaced many who accepted his message. But many others considered it foolishness. The cross was barbaric, a scene of horror, an unspeakable punishment. It was more than they could handle. Again from Hengel:

*When Paul spoke in his mission preaching about the “crucified Christ”. . . every hearer in the Greek-speaking East between Jerusalem and Illyria. . . knew that this “Christ”. . . had suffered a particularly cruel and shameful death, which as a rule was reserved for hardened criminals, rebellious slaves and rebels against the Roman state. That this crucified Jew, Jesus Christ, could truly be a divine being sent on earth, God’s Son, the Lord of all and the coming judge of the world, must inevitably have been thought by any educated man to be utter “madness” and presumptuousness.<sup>5</sup>*

### **The Scandal of the Cross Today**

Many today don’t comprehend the scandalous content of our message. For one thing we don’t commonly see people nailed to crosses as we travel as they did in the first century. Would we view the cross differently if, as we drove from Dallas to Abilene we saw criminals actually hanging by nails?

Another reason some can’t appreciate the ancient aversion to the message is that they have reduced the cross to a functional equivalent of love. It’s quite fashionable to wear a cross. Even Madonna, rock queen of the mid-80’s,

is known for the cross draped around her neck (along with a bare belly-button).

But there is a world of difference between hanging a cross on yourself and hanging yourself on a cross!

Too often the church has down-played the cross, the real cross, in an effort to be popular. We want to have our share of the “market” and someone told us it comes by playing to the cultural games of success and selfishness—not by challenging the games.

So too often we’ve ended up being a reflection of the world rather than of the crucified Jesus. We know all too well how to lip sync humility, service, and faithfulness while living to the tune of selfishness, success, and big numbers.

Our assumptions and our vocabulary betray us. We promote service because “service succeeds.” We’ve let Tom Peters rather than Jesus define our ministry for us!

The old, rugged cross of Jesus must still be preached. In our zeal to restroke the fires of evangelism, we must be faithful to the message. We have to remember that our faith was rocked in the cradle of weakness, scorn, and death.

Only the cross can keep us on target. I’ll mention a few ways it does that.

### **The Message**

First, the cross keeps our message on target. It reminds us that the power for growth comes from God and not from ourselves (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

As careful communicators of the gospel, we need to be relevant. We need to address the issues that plague people’s lives. But our feeble stabs at relevance must never

be at the cost of preaching the cross.

Maybe we can fill our churches faster by telling people what they want to hear. Maybe we can build a full course meal around justifying our narcissistic attachment to success, while adding for dessert a light scoop of religion (to salve our consciences).

But have we then been faithful ministers of God? We bring a message from God, not from Wall Street, PTL, or a popular psychological guru.

Won't some be offended when we challenge their selfish pursuit of things? Won't they be taken aback when we cry against the selfish individualism that characterizes our society? Yes!

But then there are others who will receive our challenge with a painful joy. They need an encounter with God—not with our culture! They want their marriages to work, but they never will without our call for humility, repentance, forgiveness, and covenant loyalty. They have felt the steady rhythm of the beat—“You can, you can have it all”—but they're surrounded by lots of toys and lots of emptiness. They need to hear our message: “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35).

Human wisdom goes about church growth one way. But God opted for another. Let's remember Paul's words:

*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.<sup>6</sup>*

### **The Messenger**

But the message isn't all the cross keeps on target. It also puts the messenger in proper perspective. He is just a jar of clay. His emphasis is on his message rather than himself. He knows the power of the gospel isn't his technique but the Word of God he brings. He dies to himself daily. He confesses sinfulness.

God's minister comes to appreciate weakness, because weakness can be a showcase for God's power. He doesn't mind being hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, for he just wants to "carry around in (his) body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in (his) body" (2 Corinthians 4:10).

In us people must see the cross. When they see only a mirror of culture, the message is blunted. When positions of power prestige, and big bucks drive us, we have become something other than crucified spokesmen for God.

### **The Hearer**

The cross also keeps our hearers on target because it speaks to their fundamental, ultimate needs. In all our attempts at relevance, we can never begin to approach the revolutionary relevance of the Kerygma.

Man's first basic problem is guilt: a problem of the past. Most recognize that something is out of whack; and that something is sin. Not just specific sins. But sin. That force that dominates us. That master that enslaves us. Sin isn't just some Evangelical sledgehammer to make people feel rotten; it's what's wrong with the world.

One reason Jesus died was to save us. He was our substitute on the cross, and that's the only solution to true

guilt. You can never be saved because you believe. You can't be saved because you were baptized. Nor because you go to church or hold orthodox views about worship. The only ground of salvation is Jesus' vicarious death.

The only reason you can stand before God is that in his great love he gave himself through his son to die your death. My salvation comes from being dressed in his righteousness.

*When he shall come with trumpet sound  
O may I then in him be found;  
Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

It would help in proclaiming this message of salvation if more of our own people would quit wallowing in guilt. Our churches are filled with guiltaholics who have an insatiable thirst to atone for their own sins by scourging themselves with depressive guilt. They need to hear the message again: *he* paid the price. They can earn a grade; they can earn a raise; they can earn a living; they can earn a promotion. But they can never add anything to the ground of salvation.

A second major problem man faces is meaninglessness: a problem of the present. As psychologist Ernest Becker has put it: "Man transcends death by finding meaning for his life. . . . It is the burning desire for the creature to count. . . . What man really fears is not so much extinction, but extinction with insignificance."

The lack of purpose can be seen all over today in passionless, bored eyes. People try to overlook their lack of direction by immersing themselves in the big quest for health, wealth, power, and prestige. But inwardly they feel

the pain.

Another reason Jesus died was to offer an example of how to live. His death draws us to the love of God, captures our hearts, and leads us to die to ourselves. We can then commit ourselves to a higher cause.

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I'm looking for myself?" There is no pre-existent self. Your self is waiting to be created by committing yourself to something that's grounded in reality. The cross brings us into the circle of ministry so that our task is ministry, regardless of whether we make a living in teaching, business, social work, preaching, or medicine.

A third real problem for man is hopelessness: a problem of the future. Hope is the tension between suffering and salvation. It is the middle ground between defeatism (which sees only suffering) and triumphalism (which ignores suffering).

So many around us have no answer for the grave. Death still has its sting—a poisonous, all-consuming sting. To them any kind of "hope" is like throwing a party on the deck of the Titanic. It may salve some fears, but it is meaningless.

Again the cross addresses this deep, ultimate need. Jesus also died to deliver us! The book of Colossians develops a view of the atonement many of us are unfamiliar with.<sup>7</sup>

Paul discusses a false approach to ethics that induces fear for "the elemental spirits of the universe." The people in Colossae would know all too well the fears of Animism and would be vulnerable to an ethical system based on fear of spiritual forces.

While Paul wasn't an Animist, his world view did in-



clude powers of darkness.<sup>8</sup> But Jesus won a victory over these forces at the cross. He disarmed them, made a public display of them, and triumphed over them (2:15). He did that by nailing our debt to the cross. We do not need to live in fear of powers and principalities. To Paul our ethic should rather grow out of what we have become in Christ. Our living is a thankful reflection on what God has done, not a fearful attempt to climb up to him.

Since Christ conquered Satan, he took away his arsenal: a false use of the Law, the overwhelming cravings of the flesh, and the sting of death. Of course the ultimate victory is still before us, so we still struggle. As Oscar Cullmann said, we live between D-Day and V-Day.

But this allows us hope. Through Jesus' victory on the cross, we live with confidence that we shall one day fully overcome. And in the meantime God has given us his Spirit to change us from within.

### **Conclusion**

The crisis we face in missions may cause us to re-examine our message. But we must not give in to marketing strategy which "works." God's wisdom and power is in the cross.

The story of our crucified Lord is the story our heritage needs to hear again. . .and again. It drives us to our knees in praise and ushers us out of our Christian ghettos into a world that desperately needs the love of our God.

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

<sup>1</sup>Anthony Campolo, *The Power Delusion* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>T.W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup>1 Corinthians 2:1-2.

<sup>7</sup>See Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

<sup>8</sup>See Ephesians 6:10ff, e.g.

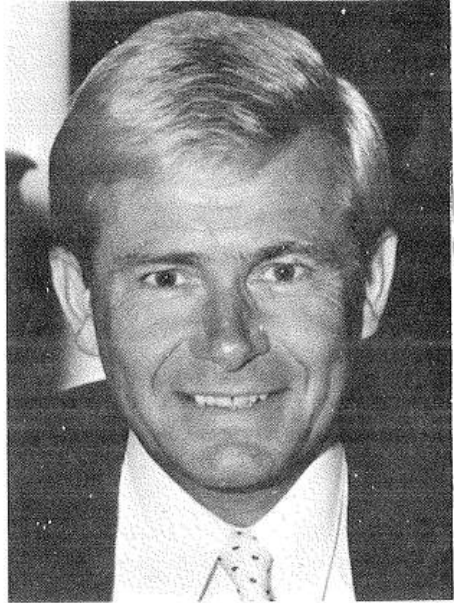


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# THE CRISIS IN MISSIONS

by Lynn Anderson

Recently we have been assailed by a variety of Good News/Bad News options. The Crisis in Missions touches both poles: Some of the news is really bad. But we have incredibly good news too. Bad news first: Then good news!

## The Bad News

The first bad news is our *missionary force is shrinking*.

Beside a park bench today in Beijing, China, a young mother watched her son at play. She pondered what old age might bring him. And death. She wondered if there is a God who knows her name. But she will likely never hear of Jesus. She will die before we tell her—and so will the vast majority of people on most continents of the world.

From a low of 46 missionary families from churches of Christ in 1946, the tide swelled to 229 families in 1953. Numbers soared through the third quarter of the century, till 1975 when over 800 families served on foreign soil. Then came the crash. In three years figures plunged from 800 families in 1975 to 484 families in 1978, finally bottoming out in 1985 at 345 families.<sup>1</sup>

To make bad news worse, while our mission force dwindled *world publication shot off the charts*. A baby was born last August bringing earth's family to 5 billion. Future projections are staggering. Our close neighbors to the south now represent one of the fastest growing population blocks on earth. Seventy-five percent of Latin

Americans will live in cities by the year 2000, 55 million of them in just two centers: Mexico City and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

World Evangelism fails further behind every second. Discouragement is epidemic.

We tell our "horror stories" as well. Churches have sent good people with puny results. Some went too ill-equipped to deal with the crushing loneliness and the cross-cultural complexity of the task. Some missionaries returned defeated for lack of funds. Churches have been hurt by missionaries who defected to the alluring charismatic movement or to other evangelical missions or to the devil.

Economic decline in America has depleted the number and shrunken the size of mission dollars while at the same time inflation has skyrocketed in most foreign countries.

Some of our most financially capable congregations have grown apathetic toward foreign missions. Apathy results in part from erosion of our Spiritual Vitality. This erosion is often masked by "superficial success." Mega-churches, which appear to prosper in this country, in many cases are merely shifting bodies from small churches to large ones.

In the 50's we were militantly evangelistic in America. In the 60's we lost touch. In the 70's we got rich and selfish, but we salved our evangelistic consciences by sending easy money to support "world evangelism." However, by this time, most American Christians did little evangelism themselves. In the 80's we reap the whirlwind. The children of Christians who did not win people across the street will not long send tight money for lost people across the ocean. As one returned missionary was told

when recently financially terminated, "Missions just doesn't sell here these days."

### **Causes of Bad News**

What might be some underlying causes of the bad news?

One major cause behind our faltering vision is *Identity Crisis*. We are no longer sure of our platform, our message, or our target.

Time was when we clearly understood the platform: "We are the New Testament church." We were in; they were out. They preached the doctrines of men; we preached the Bible. We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent. Command. Example. Necessary Inference. Five identifying marks of the Church. Five steps in the plan of Salvation and Five acts of worship. Congregational autonomy. Plurality of elders. No clergy/laity distinctions. Attend. Give. Cut and dried!

We spoke a straight message, too: Hear. Believe. Repent. Be baptized, by immersion, for the remission of sins. "Faithful till death" and "a crown of life."

A solid platform and a plain message made the target obvious: Convert the lost, beginning with those in the denominations most like ourselves, because they are the "closest to the kingdom."

That was then. But now we are not so sure. We've been exposed to other perspectives, devouring books and tapes from everywhere. We are asking, "How can they be so wrong, if they help me so much?" Besides we have done our own primary research into Scripture. Honesty before Scripture raised questions about some of our "proof-

texts," even on some fairly significant issues.

We also learned that we are saved by grace. Now, one would think gratitude for this would overflow in service. But many of us who saw salvation as "How *I* stay out of hell," now see Grace as the good news that "it doesn't matter what I believe," so I don't need to study the Scriptures any more. And, since we are not saved by our works, my life-style is no big deal.

Also, if I am not sure who is in and who is out, why sweat evangelism? Why risk insulting a friend by presuming he/she may need to hear the gospel. The target has become hazy!

Rather than chronically discussing who is in and who is out, for me and my house, the time has come to simply open the word seeking to be more like Jesus, and eagerly share what we learn with *everyone we meet*, treating all people with loving tenderness and human respect whether they be church elders or punk-rockers or Buddhist monks!

One California church follows up the visitors to their assemblies and presents the gospels to *every one*, just in case! Even if an elder of the church from Texas should move to California and visit their assemblies, that week someone would call on that elder and present him the gospel.

Room is needed for diversity within the unity of the body of Christ. But we must get our act together and form enough consensus to affirm each others mission. We know our message is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; our platform is renewal of New Testament Christianity; and the target is *every* son and daughter of Adam's race.

Our plea is not only attractive. It is true! Sure, the



movement occasionally gets sectarianized or legalized or watered down or institutionalized or privatized or fragmented. And yes, such is demoralizing. But let us not be distracted from the ideal. Our message of Restoration must never become *reactionary* (i.e., What is wrong with the church of Christ?) nor *retrenchment* (i.e., We never saw it that way before). The simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified for our sins and risen to be our Lord is still the best news the world will ever hear. Love God above all and neighbors as self are still the greatest commandments. All else is secondary.

*Secularization* of the church also causes bad news. World evangelism is suffering a power crisis. Subtly, yet deeply conditioned by our culture, we attempt God's work on Man's strength. In our churches, we look to those with Looks, Brains, and Talent. We want to be led by superstars with political savvy and administrative skills. We want our leaders Media-smart and Program-slick.

Marketing also looms large in entrepreneurial church life. We do our demographics, then we create some sort of morsel for every appetite. But beware of the gospel according to George Gallop. We cannot discover Divine Revelation by taking a poll, nor discover God's power in this manner.

Our power is overwhelmed when we ponder the immensity of five billion lost souls on the other side of cultural, political and language barriers. The arm of flesh will surely fail us!

I am not opposing space-age methodologies. The gospel must capture every tool available. But we may lose sight of the Gospel. God becomes our "brand name," and prayer which ought to be "the artesian source" of

ministry becomes only the perfunctory starting gun which merely opens the business meeting where the “real stuff” gets done. The Word gets shoved to the margins, sometimes only being pilfered for brief “Quotable Quotes.”

A third cause of bad news is *Selfishness*, which masquerades under three buzz-words of our pluralistic society: Individualism, Value-free Choices, and Self-esteem. The rationale runs like this: God loves *me*. He wants *me* healthy, happy, and prosperous. His unlimited resources are available for *me*. Thus western culture has invaded Evangelical American religion, and our people are buying into it. We don't commit. We keep our options open. The culture commends us for it. But Jesus said, only if “a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, will it bear much fruit.”

A *diminished view of God* also causes bad news. Main Street America locates self at the center of reality. Thus, God becomes our property, not we, His. Consequently, He is not being properly sanctified in His Holy place. As we passed by the traditional site of Uzzah's death, in Israel, I asked our Jewish brother Joseph Shulam, “Tel me why God was so harsh with Uzzah.” Joseph responded, “For the Jews this is an inappropriate question. The question is not, ‘why did Uzzah get zapped?’ but ‘how did the rest of get off.’ ” God is Holy. He will not subject Himself to our sense of fairness. He is the Sovereign Lord to whom all peoples and cultures must adjust or die. He will not be treated as some minor deity to the cult of prosperity. He is Yaweh! We just once again become as fascinated with His *will* as we are with His *Grace*.

*Nor is God impotent. He is passionately involved with us. We are co-workers with God. But His Restoration movement is going on with or without us. The question is, will we participate or become like kids playing tag football on a vacant lot outside Texas Stadium, while the Superbowl is going on inside.*

### **The Good News**

But, enough of the litany of Bad News. The real News is Good; and the Good News is that the *Bad News is not ultimately true!*

Modesto Pellegrini became fatigued following after cults. He looks like a Brazilian version of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his impressive size helped him become a medium in the cult called "Macumba." He held seances to call on the spirit world; exorcised demons; moved untouched coffee cups across table tops; and revelled in alcoholic orgies.

Then one night, Modesto got into a brawl; he took on three men at once. They left him for dead in a vacant lot. Flat on his back, bloody, tired, drunk, and dirty he lifted his eyes into the night, "Oh, God, if you are there, get me out of this!"

From this foot-weary pilgrim, God raised up one of the most eloquent public preachers of the gospel in South America. The last time a large audience of North Americans heard Modesto speak at the Pan-American Lectures. . .they gave him a standing ovation.

Modesto is not alone. Thousands this year on most continents of earth will come to know Jesus and become fully human.

There is abundant Good News. As a movement we are

re-doing our Identity. Positive changes are in the wind.

Mutual trust and communication are bridging gaps between “older” and “younger” leaders. Several cross-generational sessions have been undertaken across the land designed to hammer out consensus for the future agenda of the movement.

While few would want the church to return to the legalism, sectarianism, and combativeness of by-gone years, most are pleased to see the pendulum swing away from “easy believism” toward a more Biblical view of Grace. Noisy voices at both the right wing and left-wing extremities of our fellowship seem much diminished and mostly ignored these days. Healthier decades smile down from the future.

Our “back to the Bible” plea slid to slogan status for a couple of decades of preaching drifted toward the shallows, but all that is changing. Topical preaching has fallen upon hard times. Churches are clamoring for strong textual preaching, and they are getting it. A mere cadre of Biblical expositors has swelled to an army filling most of the pulpits of our pace-setting churches. Some of our younger preachers are leading the way, and the older men love them for it. Our graduate schools are placing fresh emphasis on teaching ever more young men how to do this kind of preaching. Bibles are opened in our pews and on our coffee breaks. *This trend is the hope of the restoration movement.* Our people are once again becoming a people of the book, the whole book and nothing but the book—so help us God! Hallelujah!

More good news: Interest in missions is definitely on the upswing among Churches of Christ. From a low of 345 missionary families on the field in 1985, we are

rebounding. As of October 1987 we have 500 American families on foreign soil with still more on deck. New teams, at this very hour, are making final preparation for several continents of the world.

Student interest in Missions is up as well. At ACU attendance at Mission Outreach this year triples that of last year. TLC (The Lost Cities) Urban Missions Study class has 35-40 this year. AMF (African Mission Fellowship) is drawing 40-70. Is a youth culture which had moved through the 70's from "Hippie" to "Yuppie" now showing signs of renewed interest in humanitarian concerns? Perhaps "me-ism" is losing its luster!

And Good News rolls in daily from far-flung continents. The 200-member church in Communist Sepot, Poland, has a new building on a beautiful property given them by the Polish Communist Government. In exciting Spain, where Juan Monroy has earned international visibility, 36 congregations have sprung up in 26 years. Europe now claims some 200 churches, with over 6,000 members.

In the past 25 years the church of Christ has grown from some 25 congregations in all of Latin America, to some 1,222 Churches, 121 missionary families, and approximately 54,330 active Christians. In Guatemala the church has passed 10,000 and is still growing in the midst of smoldering war and without American missionaries.

Growth continues in Mexico. For example, Liberato Ovalle has planted 20 congregations in 10 years following up Spanish Herald of Truth radio contacts.

Nationals from El Salvador have planted churches in Sandenistan Nicaragua, which now total more than 2,000 members.

Haiti, the poorest country in the western Hemisphere, has 65 congregations and 12,000 members.

In February, 1963, 25 years ago, the Nauve De Julia building was opened in Sao Paulo, Brazil. That church now has elders, supports its own three full-time ministers, and has started eight other congregations in Sao Paulo and 20 more in the rest of the state.

Seven years ago only two American mission teams from Churches of Christ worked in Brazil. Now there are 15 teams, with 75 families in 15 or the 20 capital cities of Brazil. Twenty-five more families are now training, and in five years 100 families will be in *all of the Major cities* of Brazil. The new church in Recife has grown in five years to 300, has a building, and has *already started 10 other congregations*.

In Manaus, on the Amazon River, the church purchased the old Governor's Mansion, on a main thoroughfare, and is adding a 600-seat auditorium. In just six years, there are 300 members with 400 in attendance.

In Irian Jira, Chester Woodall, who one time crawled into a terrorist camp to rescue a stolen jeep, incredibly has established over 1,000 churches and baptized over 18,000 people.

Even China is good news. Church buildings are open there now. Faithful churches exist in China dating back to 1946. World Radio and WCBC (World Christian Broadcasting) broadcast into China. The first Chinese radio convert was baptized last August in Shanghai. Murray and Donna Cottell are Canadians teaching English in China. They teach Christ as well. The Chinese Communist Government sponsors 10 Seminaries and recently told all the Seminary professors in China to drop

denominational differences. The Government also, to unite believers in Christianity, said only one name could be used. The name? Church of Christ!

Other parts of Asia total up to 122,000 members, in over 1,600 congregations.

Growth in India, paced by J.C. Bailey, a Canadian of over 80 winters, has been incredible. Precise figures are not available, but some estimates run as high as 500,000.

So you see, the news is definitely not all bad news.<sup>2</sup> Africa is Good News. The prime minister of Zambia is our brother in Christ, and is part of a growing work there.<sup>3</sup> The church in Kenya, is just 20 years, has grown from two mission families to some 10,000 members!

Malawi is a strong indigenous work with over 75,000 members of the church of Christ. Godwin Makwaka, one of the national leaders, a blind preacher, for the first 15 years he was a Christian averaged baptizing a person every day.

The Nigerian church has some 150,000 members in 1,500 congregations, and is growing daily. All Africa has now reached more than 373,000 members with nearly 5,000 congregations.

Papua New Guinea has grown to 130 churches totaling 3,500 members.

Big good news is that *we don't know all the good news!* God is at work in ways we can't measure. Because we don't count them does not mean that God is not at work in many other groups which are preaching much truth, and who are placing Bibles in the hands of thousands, maybe millions. Could God be creating a Restoration movement with far more massive proportions than anything we have imagined?

Recently I have attended several forums with Ministers of large denominational churches in America. I am discovering that many of these men want what I want: to be just Christian, free before Scripture; to recapture genuine Biblical Christianity; to evangelize the world. Some have paid a much greater price for this than I have, even being rejected from their denominations. Many are fascinated with our mobility in ministry and our freedom before Scripture. We may not agree on all significant specifics, but we do dream the same dream.

People are receptive in many places where Churches of Christ have not yet gone. Evangelical denominations have exploded in Korea. In 1899 Korea had only 74 communicant Protestants. Today there are over 10 million!<sup>4</sup> As many as a million evangelical believers may be scattered throughout Communist China. In Chili, Brazil, and Korea, some denominational congregations have grown as large as 40,000 with one congregation reaching over 400,000, in 25 years. What is to stop this from happening in our fellowship as well?

Brethren, we are part of the work of God, which may be far greater than anything we had imagined.

The ultimate Good news is that “God is a *God of surprises*.” Frequently through history, just when men have sighed, “as things are now, so shall they always be,” something absolutely unpredictable has broken through. The age of enlightenment came as a surprise as did the industrial revolution. The American 50’s were blind-sided by the 60’s. In 1929, and almost in 1987, the stock market crashed in a day.

Huge spiritual surprises should certainly be no surprise either. At every major break-through of the Christian



faith, something radical and massive and unexpected has happened, and will happen again and again. Who knows what astonishing turn of events will bring millions flocking to the Christ tomorrow? Who knows what mother's child among us may be the next Luther, Campbell, or Apostle Paul? What nation will next rise up to flood the earth with soul-winners? What might spiritual awakening may send us singing:

*Give of your sons, to bear the message Glorious  
Give of your wealth to speed them on their way.*

*Pour out your souls for them in prayers Victorious,  
And all that thou spendest, Jesus will repay.*

Let us not lose heart. After all, "we serve a great God, with whom nothing is impossible."

<sup>1</sup>Appendix Stat Sheet.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>(World Digest, Number 5, Oct.-Nov. 1987).

<sup>4</sup>(*Will Success Spoil The South Korean Church?* (Carol Stream, ILL: Christianity Today, Nov. 20, 1987), p. 32.

## WORLD SURVEY

### CHURCHES OF CHRIST — OCTOBER 1987

Number of Countries, Territories	Countries Where Churches of Christ Known To Exist	Number of Churches*	Estimated Members*
52	19	4830	373,870
38	20	1682	122,800
2	2	87	3,500
35	25	200	6,000
2	2	539	21,900
8	8	527	24,650
22	24	235	21,000
13	12	227	10,770
21	11	156	4,800
6	4	7	?
5	2	?	?
1	1	13,363	2,275,574
<b>205</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>22,350</b>	<b>2,877,894</b>

o, Department of Missions, Abilene Christian University. Since there are no official headquarters for recording  
ound the world, these figures are only approximations, based on current reports from various sources.

**STATISTICS ON LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

<b>Region/Country</b>	<b>Population In Million</b>	<b>Active Members</b>	<b>Churches</b>	<b>Missionaries U.S. Other</b>
MEXICO	80.5	25,000	400 + -	6
CENTRAL AMERICA	26.2	15,250	379	37
Belize		250	7	16
Costa Rica	2.6	1,000	15	2
El Salvador	5.5	2,500	120	0
Guatemala	8.4	5,000	140	12
Honduras	4.4	1,500	40	7
Nicaragua	3.2	2,000	19	0
Panama	2.1	3,000	38	0
CARIBBEAN	19.6	4,000 + -	703	10
Antigua			2	
Bahamas			3	
Barbados			1	
British Virgin Is.			4	
Cayman Island			1	
Cuba	10.1	150	7	0
Dominica			6	
Dominican Rep.	6.2	2,500	50	6
Grenada			7	0
Guadeloupe			1	0
Haiti	6	1,200	16	
Jamaica		700	16(?)	0
Montserrat Is.			1	
Netherlands Antilles (Aruba, Curaco, Bonaire, St. Maarten)			4	
Nevis			1	
Puerto Rico	3.3	1,000	40	4
St. Lucia			2	
St. Kitts			1	
St. Vicent			5	
Tortola			1	
Trinidad - Tobago		3,600	33	
Union Island			1	
U.S. Virgin Islands			4	
SOUTH AMERICA	269.4	10,080	221	81
Argentina	30.6	500	16	15
Bolivia	6.2	150	4	2
Brazil	143.0	4,000	104	50
Colombia	29.4	850	22	6
Ecuador	9.4	2,000	15	1

French Guiana		---	---	---
Guyana		650	2	0
Paraguay	3.6	30	2	0
Peru	19.5	600	12	0
Suriname		10	1	0
Uruguay	3.0	200	4	2
Venezuela	17.3	1,500	27	5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>402.7</b>	<b>54,330</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>121</b>



## MAX LUCADO

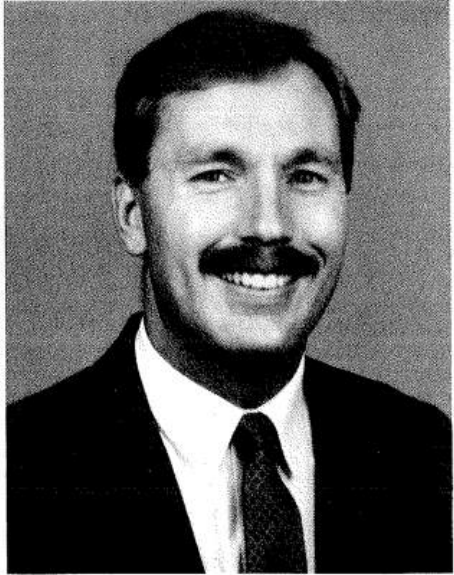
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# CHRIST'S LOVE COMPELS US

by Max Lucado

## I. Behind Locked Doors

*On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

*(John 20:19,20)*

The church of Jesus Christ began with a frightened group of men in a second-floor room in Jerusalem. It was the first crisis in missions.

Though trained and taught, they didn't know what to say. Though experienced and exposed, they were exasperated. Though they'd marched with the Master for three years, they now sat in silence. They were timid soldiers, reluctant warriors, speechless messengers. Their most courageous act was to get up and lock the door. Some looked out the window, some looked at the wall, some looked at the floor—but all looked inside themselves.

And well they should, for it was an hour for self-examination. Bitter on their tongues was the taste of their own failure. And acrid in their memories were the

promises they'd made, but not kept. When the Roman soldiers had appeared with their torches and weapons, Jesus' followers had ducked their tails to run instead of putting up their dukes to fight. With the wine of the covenant on their breath and the bread of his sacrifice in their belly, they'd fled.

All those words of devotion? All those promises of faithfulness? All those claims of loyalty? They laid broken and shattered at the gate of Gethsemane's garden.

We don't know where they went when they fled the garden; we do know what they took. They took a memory. They took a heartstopping memory of a man who called himself no less than God in the flesh. And they couldn't get him out of their minds. Try as they might to lose him in the crowd, they couldn't forget him. As a result, they came back. One by one they returned—ashamed and confused, seeking solace and safety. Too in love with him to give up, too confused to go out. Too faithful to flee yet too fearful to fight. Too devoted to stay away, yet too disturbed to leave.

### **The Mediocrity of the Upper Room**

Yes, the church of our Lord began with a group of frightened men in an upper room.

Sound familiar? How many churches today find themselves trapped in the mediocrity of the upper room? How many elders' meetings are held behind the locked doors of timidity and myopia? How many mission committees speak in hushed tones and make timid plans? How many congregations have just enough religion to come together, but not enough passion to go out? If the doors



aren't locked, they might as well be!

"The mediocrity of the upper room." A little bit of faith, but very little fire. More motivated by guilt than by grace. Shamefully aware of broken promises but masterfully adept at finger-pointing and excuse-making.

"Sure we're doing our part to reach the world. Why, just last year we mailed ten correspondence courses. We're anticipating a response any day now."

"You bet we care that the world is reached! We send \$150 a month to, uh, well, ol' what's his name down there in uh, well, oh I forget the place, but. . .we pray for it often."

"World evangelism? Why, that's high on our priority list! In fact our planning committee has plans to plan a session that will develop some plans. At least, that is what we are planning to do."

Good men. Lot's of ideas. Plenty of good intentions. Budgets. Meetings. Words. Promises. But while all this is going on, the door remains locked and the story stays a secret.

What will it take to unlock it? That is the question of this Lectureship. What will it take to ignite the fire? What will it take to restore the first century passion? What will have to happen before the padlocks of fear and timidity tumble from our doors and are trampled under the feet of determined departing disciples?

More training? that's part of it. Better strategies? That would help. A greater world vision? Undoubtedly. More money? That's imperative. A greater dependence on the Holy Spirit? Absolutely. But in the midst of these items there is one basic ingredient that cannot be overlooked. There is one element so vital that its absence insures our

failure. What is needed to get us out is exactly what got the apostles out—an encounter with the resurrected Savior.

Picture the scene. The apostles are in the upper room. They came back. Hoping beyond hope that the impossible would happen once more, they came back. Dreaming that the well of forgiveness still had a few drops, that the master of the mysterious had left them some word, some plan, some direction, they came back.

But little did they know, their wildest dream wasn't wild enough.

Even the rumors of the empty tomb couldn't prepare them for what was about to happen. "Peace be with you," he said. Every head lifted. Every eye turned. Every mouth dropped open. Someone looked at the door.

It was still locked.

### **To Good To Be True**

The apostles would never be the same. The missions crisis was about to be solved. They were standing face to face with the resurrected Savior.

He walked right through the walls of their guilt and shame. He met them in their darkest night. The one betrayed sought out his betrayers.

And because he did, a transformation occurred. The followers were taken to the edge of the cliff of amazement. Wide-eyed and opened-mouthed they stood in disbelief not just that God could come back, but that he would come back for them!

Luke tells us that they couldn't believe it for joy, (Luke 24:41). It was too good to be true! So amazing was the appearance that some were saying "pinch me I'm dream-

ing” even at the ascension, (Matthew 28:17). No wonder they returned to Jerusalem with great joy! (Luke 24:52) No wonder they were always in the temple praising God! (Luke 24:53).

What was it that unlocked the doors of their hearts? What gave them the courage to flee the timidity of the upper room? What was the flame that lit their boiler?

The Apostle Paul answered the question for us in 2 Corinthians 5:14 when he wrote, “For Christ’s love compels us.” What solved the missions crisis of the early church was a face-to-face confrontation of sinful men with a resurrected savior. What lit the boiler of the first century church was a red-hot conviction that the very one that should have sent them to hell went to hell for them and came back to tell about it.

Never before had they seen such love. And never again would they cease to tell about it.

*A man is never as powerful as when he simultaneously sees his utter despair and Christ’s unending grace.* To see the despair without the grace is suicidal. To see the grace without the despair is Sunday School futility. But to see them both is conversion.

A lot of things would happen in the lives of these men over the next few decades. Many nights would be spent away from home. Hunger would gnaw at their bellies. The rain would soak their skin. The stones would bruise their bodies. Shipwrecks, lashings, martyrdom. But there was a scene in their repertoire of memories that caused them to never look back. It was the scene of the betrayed coming back to find his betrayers; not to scourge them, but to send them. He came, not to criticize them for forgetting, but to commission them to remember that he

who was dead is alive and those who were guilty have been forgiven.

Doesn't it stand to reason, then, that if our doors are locked we need exactly what the apostles received? And what did they receive? A naked encounter of their sin with God's mercy. An inescapable conviction of their utter dependence on grace.

There is a direct correlation between the accuracy of our memory and the effectiveness of our mission. If we are not teaching people how to be saved, it is perhaps because we have forgotten the tragedy of being lost! If we're not teaching the message of forgiveness, it may be because we don't remember what it was like to be guilty. And if we're not preaching the cross, it could very well be that we've subconsciously decided that, God forbid, somehow we don't need it.

“. . .remember,” Paul urges us, “that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:11,12).

We don't look like a bunch of sinners do we? Coats and ties, heels and hose. We smell good, look good, and by and large we do good. We don't seem like a group that would crucify God, but we are. . .and we did. And when Jesus looked into the future and saw the sea of faces in desperate need of a Savior, he saw yours and he saw mine. Perhaps that is why he was so willing to die.

### **The Final Act of God's Dream**

When Jesus laid down on that Roman beam, the young soldier didn't have to pry his hands open. Jesus

opened them willingly. His spread palm welcomed the cold spike. It was as if all of eternity had awaited this moment. Had there been no soldier to slam the mallet down upon the nail, he would have called one of the thousands of angels that stood watching to do it. And had there been no one to jam the cross into the hole, God himself would have done it, for in reality it was God who was sacrificing his son anyway.

But there was a soldier appointed to swing the hammer, and there were Romans to lift the tree. These nameless men, however, had no idea that they were participating in the final act of God's dream. As the ring of the pounded nail went largely unnoticed in the world visible, it rang like a shot through the world invisible. The final act in the history-long plan of redemption had just begun. God was being crucified. God was on his way to the tomb. But he wasn't going to go alone. He had some baggage to take into the pit of the earth.

When the mallet hit the nail the great gathering began. The first item on the list to be gathered was man's efforts at saving himself. All the rites. All the rituals. All the ordinances. They were all nailed to the cross.

Next to be brought to the cross was death himself. Hissing, cursing, and kicking he was brought to Calvary.

The last enemy to be crucified was the ugliest and most painful one. The sins of humanity. all the filthy booty of failure and rebellion was taken to the cross. So ugly was our sin that God himself could no longer bear to see it. So he turned his back on his own son.

Legalism, death, sin; they were crucified on the cross with Christ. They were buried in the same borrowed tomb. They were laid on the same cold rock. And they

were left in the same foreboding darkness.

There is one difference, however. They stayed in the tomb. Jesus came out. When Jesus stood victoriously outside his own grave on that Sunday morning, he stood alone. And he challenged his enemies to follow him out.

“Legalism, death, sin,” he dared, “If you still live then come out!”

There was a moment of silence. And then the angels broke into praises and shouts of joy. God had won! The law was finished! Death was defeated! And the sins of every follower of Christ were covered by the blood of the Lamb.

The locked door of the upper room must have appeared a bit silly to this conquerer who’d just stormed the gates of death. And I can’t help but think that this defeater of Satan shook his head a bit when he saw fear written on the face of his followers. And he must have thoroughly enjoyed the looks of joyous disbelief when he stood in their presence and said, “Peace be with you.”

### **“Christ-ians”**

It was a moment the apostles would never forget. And a story they would never cease to tell.

It was a transformed group that stood beside a transformed Peter as he announced some weeks later, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

About three thousand people believed his words. Three thousand people chose to enter the tomb with Jesus and be buried with him in baptism accepting his resurrection and new life.

They became followers of Jesus. They became worshippers of Jesus. They became imitators of Jesus. They couldn't hear enough or say enough about him. They were so enamored with him that people began to call them "Christ-ians." Christ was their model. Christ was their message. They preached "Jesus Christ and him crucified," not for the lack of another topic, but because they couldn't exhaust this one.

### **No Choice**

It was Paul who would put their feelings into words when he wrote, "Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Or as the New English Bible renders the verse, "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice." Paul's readers understood clearly the verb he used in this phrase. It is a powerful verb that suggests "to be claimed or totally controlled."<sup>1</sup>

Growing up in West Texas, I occasionally had the opportunity to see cattle being loaded into a cattle truck. The scene reminds me of this verse. The ranchhands would maneuver the reluctant cow until he was standing at the foot of a ramp that would lead him up into the back of a trailer. On both sides of the ramp was a high wall that denied the animal any exit. If he turned to the right, he would hit a wall. If he turned to the left, he would hit the other wall. And should he try to descend backwards, there awaited him an electric cattle prod in the hand of a determined cowboy.

When Paul says, ". . .the love of Christ leaves us no choice," It is this type of domination he is describing. For when one truly tastes the love of Christ he had no choice but to obey him. He turns to the right, and there is

the forgiveness of Christ. He turns to the left, and again, there is the patience of Christ. He tries to back up, only to find himself confronted with the cross of Christ. He is left with no choice.

### Chief of Sinners

Paul, by the way was writing out of personal experience. He, too, had been in the upper room. It's just that his room was in Damascus.

Before his encounter with Christ, he'd been somewhat of a hero among the Pharisees, a Wyatt Earp of sorts. He kept the law and order; or, better said, he revered the Law and gave the orders. Good Jewish moms held him up as an example of a good Jewish boy; he was given the seat of honor at the Jerusalem Lion's Club Wednesday Luncheon. He had a "Who's Who in Judaism" paperweight on his desk and was selected "Most Likely to Succeed" by his graduating class. He was quickly establishing himself as the heir apparent to the sandals worn by his teacher Gamaliel.

All this came to a halt, however, when he saw the light and heard the voice. His horse reared, and back he fell. Back, back, back into the lonely upper room of reflection. God left him there a few days. And he left him with scales on his eyes so thick that the only direction he could look was inside himself. And he didn't like what he saw.

He, like the apostles saw himself for what he really was, to use his own words, "The chief of sinners." And he, like the apostles and Beecher, saw Jesus for what he claims to be, our only hope. That's when it hit him. Alone in the room with his sins on his conscience and blood on his hands, he asked to be cleansed. Saul was



buried, and Paul was born. He was never the same afterwards. And neither was the world.

Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, Collossae. Special engagements in Jerusalem, Malta, Athens, Syracuse and Rome. When he wasn't traveling, he was in prison. When he wasn't talking, he was writing. He never had a course in missions. He never sat in on a committee meeting. He was just inspired by the Holy Spirit and punch-drunk on the love of Christ.

It was the insanity of the whole thing that kept him going. Jesus should have finished him on the road. He should have left him in the gutter for the buzzards. But he didn't. He did to Paul the very thing he did to the Apostles. He sent him to the lost Paul himself called it crazy. He described it with phrases like, "stumbling block" and "foolishness," but chose in the end to call it "grace."

And he defended his indefatigable loyalty by simply saying, "The love of Christ leaves me no choice."

### **"Remember Jesus Christ"**

Andrew Murray, a preacher with the Dutch Reformed Church, was invited to speak at a conference on missions in the year 1900. Unable to attend due to the Boer War, he wrote the book, *The Key to the Missionary Problem*. In it he set forth the thesis, "The key to the missionary problem is a personal one."

Listen to his explanation:

*"Take gold and put it into the furnace. Exposed to insufficient heat, it gets heated but not melted. Exposed to an intense heat for only*

*a short time, and then taken out again, it is not melted. It needs an intense and continuous heat, before the precious but hard metal is prepared for the goldsmith's work. So it is with the fire of God's love. They who would know it in its power, and in power to proclaim and convey it to others must keep in contact with the love of Christ. They must know its intensity, and know what it is to continue in it till their whole being realized that that love can reach all and melt all. It can make even the coldest and weakest child of God a lover and seeker of souls.*

*As we seek to find out why, with such millions of Christians, the real army of God that is fighting the hosts of darkness is so small, the only answer is a lack of heart. The enthusiasm of the kingdom is missing. And that is because there is so little enthusiasm for the king.”<sup>2</sup>*

What will motivate us, then, to unlock our doors and obey his command? How do we, then, get our people to leave the upper room of mediocrity? Once again, let Paul answer the question. This time in his second letter to Timothy.

“Remember,” wrote the aged warrior, “Remember Jesus Christ!” (2 Timothy 2:8).

The answer to the missions crisis is found not so much in what we need to learn as in what we need to remember. Let us remember Jesus Christ. Let us remember how he met us in our own upper rooms of

retreat and confusion. Let us remember how he walked through our walls of guilt and failure. Let us once again be drawn face to face with the resurrected Lord. Let us once again stand amazed before him who answers our fear of death, our frustration of sin, and our failure at faith.

Let us once again be amazed at his grace and compelled by his love. Let us lift him up. Let Jesus be preached. For once the love of Jesus encounters the sinfulness of man, a transformation is inevitable.

We may temporarily resolve the present crisis with new ideas, strategies, or added funds. But the only real solution is the raising up of a people whose conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God burns like a hot iron in their hearts.

The answer to the missionary problem? Call it oversimplistic, if you wish. But I can find no other long-term solution than a re-encounter between Christ and her church.

Let's once again stand awestruck and dumbfounded that though we deserve hell, we've been given heaven, and though we've been faithless, he's been faithful.

The first missions crisis was resolved by repentant hearts meeting the resurrected Lord. The same Lord is nearby with the same commission, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Will we go?

<sup>1</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* V. VII, p. 877.

<sup>2</sup>*The Key to the Missionary Problem*, 131-133, (Christian Literature Crusade).

## JIM McGUIGGAN

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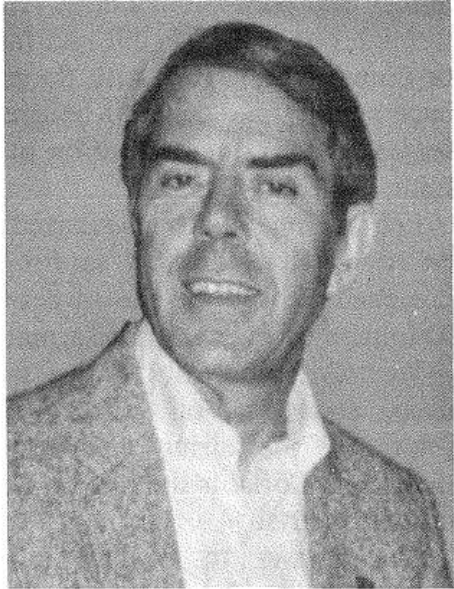
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# GOD'S SELF-IMPOSED MISSION (What does he purpose?)

by Jim McGuiggan

Alexander was driven by the gods to Grecianize the world in their name. Before that mission was completed, millions had died in the wars. Bawden tells us that the Mongol leader, Ghengis Khan, was impelled by a sense of "divine mission" which led him to slaughter 11 million Chinese and take an oath to bury the whole nation. A handful of men planned to liberate the world's oppressed workers, and recently we were told that 66.7 million people have died in the Communist Gulag labor system. Hitler's "inner voice" of Providence urged him to set a world on fire and millions perished. *Death bringsers, all of them!*

Rome was a flea market of borrowed gods and conquered peoples. A world of eyes sunk in fat, double chins, illiterate emperors, sodomy, wedding dresses priced at \$200,000 and \$834,000, an elite which fed on nightingale tongues and peacock brains while their pet fish fed on the flesh of learned slaves. A world of death, gladiator shows, and sixty million slaves. A morose sexual deviant called Tiberius ruled this putrifying mass, while over in Palestine a young rabbi was heard to say: *"I am the bread of life!"*

Palestine was in an extended uproar. The priesthood

was a sham, Hasmoneans warred against each other while foreigners got a stranglehold on the country. Religion was going up and spirituality was going down, bandits roamed the hills, and more than one would-be messiah died in the heat of the desert with his deluded followers. The nation groaned and withered, its face sunken and its ribs showing. A man in a restless crowd said: "I didn't hear that, what did he say?" and was told: "He says his father sent him into the world to bring us abundant life!"

The world was discovering, one more time, that man can't live by bread alone, or anything else alone! They "lived" in a frenzy of activity (religious, political, cultural and otherwise) to hide their deadness. The earth, a giant globular coffin, swung its silent way around the sun, and a young man prayed in a garden: "*This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God.*"

He said he came to do his Father's will! He said no one knew his Father except him and those to whom he revealed him. He "bring out the meaning of" God and insisted that God sent him to give life to dead people, abundant life, eternal life! If we can believe Jesus, *God's* self-imposed mission is to bring LIFE!

### **The Scope of God's Mission (To whom does he offer life?)**

The scope of it isn't discovered in a number of independent proof-texts like Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:47. These bring into focus the message God has saturated the Bible with. The purpose of God is universal, it embraces all people irrespective of their ethnic, religious, or moral background. This purpose is

developed in numerous broad terms.

*It's seen in the Bible's doctrine of monotheism.* There is only *one* God, said Paul, and he argues justification by grace through faith for ALL men on that basis. See Romans 3:29-30. "If there is only one God," he argues, "then *all* can be saved by grace!"

*It's seen in the Bible's doctrine of creation.* God didn't create Abraham, the father of Israel and the father of all that believe (Romans 4:11). He created Adam, the father of *all*, everywhere. Psalm 33:5-8 calls all people to revere God whose unfailing love fills the earth. Psalm 8 reminds us that God created mankind and Psalm 136:5-9 says he created out of love! Despite the fall, man remains in the image of God (James 3:9 with the perf. part. and Genesis 9:6). God didn't create mere creatures, he created sons (Luke 3:38). The universal Fatherhood of God *is* taught in Scripture!

*It's seen in the Bible's doctrine of covenants.* After the flood, a covenant was made with *all living beings* (Genesis 9:9,12,15). The rainbow is a permanent witness to God's universal love of man. The covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is never mentioned without *universal* blessing being talked of (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

The Mosaic covenant which nationalized the Abrahamic community (Exodus 19:5-6; 24:6-8) created Israel the world's servant. See Isaiah 41:8 thru the end of the book. He reminds Israel (whether speaking of it as a full national entity, a righteous remnant or the Messiah as representing what Israel was meant to be to the world) that she was to serve *the nations of the world* on God's behalf; bringing salvation and life to them. See, too, John

4:23.

The new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 creates a new Israeli commonwealth of faith. This new Israel (with twelve new founding fathers, new covenant, new mediator, new priesthood, new sacrificial system and new Highpriest) is the Church. Initially it was made up of believing physical Jews who were sent to the whole wide world offering salvation and life under the terms of that new covenant into which *all nations* were invited (Hebrews 8:6-13; 2 Corinthians 3; Ephesians 2:11-12).

*It's seen in the Bible's doctrine concerning the nations.* Psalm 67 (NIV) says: "May your ways be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth." Psalm 104 and note the universality of God's loving care.

Solomon sees the day coming when foreigners would come from distant lands to worship God and praise him in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 8). Here's what one out of the elect nation prayed concerning the non-elect: "When he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the people of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel. . ."

The book of Jonah is a standing rebuke to Jewish eliteism. Assyria was more than a foreign nation; she was an evil foreign nation. God cared not only for her people but for her animals!

In Acts 14:15-17, Paul insists that the Lord, who created all, allowed the world's nations to go their own



wicked way. Still, he didn't wash his hands of them. He continued to speak to them by loving provision, filling their hearts with gladness. In Acts 17, he insists that God blessed all nations with life and possessions as an expression of his search for them. Even when we're told that God gave the Gentiles up (Romans 1:24,26,28), we're not to think he utterly jettisoned them. We're assured (Romans 11:32) that God bound all men under sin that he might have mercy on all!

"Do you see that cottage on the hill?" we can hear Christ say. "The man who lives there is wicked, he fears neither God nor man. But I want you to watch when the sun shines through the clouds. There, look, it shines on his field, ripening his grain and warming his soil. And tomorrow, when it rains, notice that it doesn't skip his field. Let me tell what that means! It means my Father loves him and blesses him, sinner or no sinner, rebel or no rebel." *It's seen in the biblical doctrine that Christ is the Representative of Mankind.* Christ wasn't made sin only for the Church (2 Corinthians 5:21). His blood wasn't shed only for Christians (1 John 2:2) and the ransom he became was for all men (1 Timothy 2:6). We're expressly told that God's Son became human so he could submit to dying for the human race as the unique expression of God's love for them.

Personally without sin, Christ is so identified with Man that he publicly responds to John's call to repentance and joins the penitents being immersed by him. In solidarity with mankind he confesses mankind's sin and need of repentance. On the cross, becoming our sin-bearer and curse-bearer, he who knew no sin says: "I am one with them by loving choice. We confess that you are right

about our sin. In me, as representative of us all, we humbly bear your just condemnation of our sin!”

(And what is the *real* hindrance to these summarized truths? It isn't man's *teaching*, it's man's *practice*. Ruskin was right when he said: *Faith is that by which men act while they live; not that which they talk about when they die.*

Racism, in practice, makes God the God of only one race and not humanity! Radical nationalism, in practice, despises the truth that all men are created in God's image. Cultural or political eliteism undermines the universal Fatherhood of God who longs to reconcile his created children with himself. Religious sectarianism and eliteism creates the unhealthy “we” and “they” as if the two groups before God were the innocent and the guilty rather than the forgiven guilty and the unforgiven guilty! Israeli self-centeredness was a major obstacle to God's purpose to reach for the world and the Church's preoccupation with itself is too.)

### **The Cost of God's Mission (Is he in earnest about it?)**

You can tell how earnest a person is about a purpose by how much he is willing to endure to see it accomplished.

*God's earnestness is seen in his patience.* His purpose to gift man with *life* is eternal in duration (Romans 8:29). If he hasn't quit by now, he won't! After the flood, almost as if he were musing we're told he said he'd destroy the world no more (Genesis 8:21). The reason he won't is peculiar. *See the versions!* God's slowness, at times, to bring judgment is because he longs for everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9) and he endures with “great patience”

the objects of his wrath (Romans 9:22).

*God's earnestness is seen in his sternness.* It is *life* God wants to give; not just pardon! His judgments are his love in action. Chastisement is an inevitable expression of God's love; not the absence of it (Revelation 3:19). Love *by being* is compelled to clean up the objects of its love (the Bible calls this aspect of love holiness).

And it's because God loves *all* men that he experiences a "conflict of interests." He loves tyrants and oppressors, but he also loves the oppressed and that love requires him to act on their behalf (Assyria is a good illustration; see the books of Jonah and Nahum). Think of a loving wife and mother who excludes her husband from the home because he's abusing the children. Is this loveless? If she loved only him, she wouldn't exclude him. If she loved only the children, she wouldn't weep in the darkness of the hallway as he walks away, sent away!

*God's earnestness is seen in the Son's earnestness.* The Word called a halt to the unbroken worship of the heavenly hosts and became incarnate! Something was more urgent than his continuing to be worshipped. This is Philippians 2:5-8. A woman's womb and a cattleshed showed Christ was in earnest. He spent thirty years in living preparation for the final conflict. He wanted to save the world, this big, round crowded world. He. Alone. "Are you prepared to pay the price?" asked God with admiration in his eyes for the young carpenter. "To leave all you have, home and friends and quiet joy?" And he said: "I am." Some months went by. "And are you *still* ready to meet the cost of it? enquired God, "to watch the crowds drift away, your followers desert you, the criticism and gossip becoming more vicious, the enthusiasm dying,

and the sniggering growing louder?" "Yes, yes I am!" he quietly said. A couple of years later and the ugly shadow of a cross fell across his path. "And now?" challenged God. "Nothing's changed!" said the sober young man. By and by they nailed him down and left him there to die, with nothing done, no one who really understood, his dreams appearing ridiculous and his words worse. And God, his while being glowing at the bravery of it, gouged him with: "Dare you pay the full price for it?" And this earnest young man, dying said: "I do, Father" *That is to want! That is to be earnest!*

*God's earnestness is seen in his own willingness to absorb pain.* This historical act at Golgotha was the price God was willing to pay for offering *life* and friendship to mankind (2 Corinthians 5:19; Acts 20:28, the "church of God which he purchased . . ."). God's Son, bearing *in his body* humanity's sin, revealed what God had all along been bearing *on his heart*.

Whichever theory of the atonement you favor, this much is clear: *Sin causes God incredible pain!* Our view of *how* Golgotha fits into God's dealing with sin may or may not be important. It's crucially important that we believe it *does* and that atonement involves at least this: Soul-wrecking pain for God! We can't sit by free from pain while our loved ones destroy themselves—can God? In the cross God *uniquely* commends his *own* love to us (Romans 5:8) but the cross didn't *create* the love of God, it was an *expression* of it. The pain felt there didn't begin or end there! And the love expressed there is beyond our comprehension.

Mackintosh is right! He said many of us think we can't understand the atonement because we aren't intellectual-

ly profound enough. That's not the real problem, he claims. The real problem is, we aren't *lovers* enough! We've never forgiven a river of deadly injuries at a price like this. We fail to understand such sacrificial love because it so far outstrips our shrunken ideas of what goodness is and what love will endure. "Let the man be found who has undergone the shattering experience of pardoning, nobly and tenderly, some awful wrong done to himself, still more to one beloved of him, and he will understand the meaning of Calvary better than all the theologians."

The pain of treachery on the heart is greater or less depending on the depth of one's love for the traitor. Were you ever compelled to tell a mother the story of her son's evil and disgrace? Have you ever had to tell a devoted partner of the other's treachery and desertion? If you have, you've seen sin smiting love. God spoke to you than of his own heartache.

And Hosea married Gomer. The first child he "sowed" and called his name, "whom God sowed" (Jezreel). He was suspicious about the second child, didn't feel the same about it and called its name, "who knew no pity" (Lo-Ruhumah). He knew the third wasn't his and called it, "No kin of mine" (Lo-Ammi). By and by the girl ended up on the auction block. It's easy to imagine a friend of Hosea knocking on his door to say: "Hosea, I know Gomer has been faithless to you for years, breaking your heart and shaming you. I just wanted to tell you I saw her among the slaves in Dothan yesterday. They're auctioning them tomorrow. She's finally getting her due!" Good news to Hosea? Hardly! He got out his money and headed off to Dothan to buy

her back. Easy? Yes and No. Painless? Never! Over in one act? No, sir! But it was God who sent Hosea to buy her back. It was in his own pain that Hosea learned the gospel.

### **Our Response To God's Mission (What does all this mean to us?)**

It means the God who lovingly drew us into the Church, offers us *life!* Not just forgiveness, but a loving and redeeming relationship with him. *We should gladly acknowledge that.*

It means the God who so loves us, so loves MANKIND, without exception, national or individual, cultural or religious, racial or socio-economical. *We must fervently embrace that.*

*It means the God who graciously elected the Abrahamic community, the Israelite nation, and the Church eternally intended the elect to be his channel of blessing to HUMANITY, which he also elected to create for loving fellowship with himself. We must soberly receive that.*

It means the God who unashamedly loves MANKIND will bear any pain in pursuit of HUMANITY'S redemption. He has borne it all along and will choose to bear more through the new servant Nation (the Church) whose calling is to bear witness in proclamation and experience of the suffering and death of Christ that it might bear witness to his resurrection! *We need to prepare for this.*

It means it isn't enough to worship God. (*Worship* in the narrow sense.) We must imitate him (Ephesians 5:1). It's too easy to substitute emotional hymns and correct

creedal statements for imitating God. In Christ, God identified himself with something more urgent and pressing than his perfect right to be worshiped! It's precisely *because* God is so wonderful that he doesn't need his ego constantly stroked. It's precisely *because* he cares so little for unbroken praise that we can't keep quiet about him. We honor him best, not by endlessly telling him how wonderful he is, but by carrying out his will—by seeing to it that what he died for (in Christ) we'll gladly die for!

Little people insist on being endlessly and extravagantly praised; great people would just as soon be forgotten if what they cherished and toiled for was pursued to a lovely conclusion. Is God less selfless? It's precisely *because* God is so worthy of praise that he supremely cares that what Jesus left heaven to live, die, and live again for should saturate the world.

I'm fully aware there is no *life* without praising and adoring (worshipping) God! I'm simply (but poorly) saying that his worthiness doesn't lie in his commanding worship, but in the loving and selfless character which lies behind the command. And I'm saying we must be extremely careful not to substitute verbal adoration or creedal correctness for vital involvement in what he regards to be paramount importance—the bringing of the Gospel to HUMANITY in word and in way. Is this not what he said to his people in Micah 6:6-8 and Isaiah 1:10-17? Is this not the principle of Matthew 5:23-24? And don't we hear this in Matthew 7:21? *We should seriously ponder this.*

### **In Conclusion**

Those of us who by grace have said *Yes* to God as

Lord have said *Yes* to what he cherishes and is in solemn earnest about. Our lives are to be spent, then, in pursuit of nothing less than that! We must offer no less than *life with God*. We aren't called simply to be good or kind—we are called (however we lawfully do it) to confront people with *God's* offer to eternal *life!* We aren't called to merely make them happy or comfortable; our destiny is to work with God to bring people into a redemptive relationship with *God! That, and nothing less than that,* is the Christian's call.

And the teeming millions of humanity must not paralyze us. A great man, musing on the extent of the world's misery, said: "I never let myself get lost in broodings over it; I always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of it to an end." What do you think?

Nor must we be discovered by our own listlessness in comparison to God's consuming desire. Continue to want and do what you are now able to do. Who knows when the Spirit of God will fill our life's flapping sails and speed us into some strange harbor for God irrespective of the cost?! A great man once concluded a lesson with this: Let me borrow and adapt it as my parting remark.) Every preacher has his dreams, and this is mine: that not only will many of us ordinary men and women have the heart of God in our day-to-day lives, but that there may be here some special man, woman, girl, or boy, of strange potential—one for whom God is particularly looking. When out into his generation such a person moves, ready to do what no one has a right to expect—the whole world is changed! O person like that, the greatest things haven't yet been done; the greatest music



hasn't yet been composed, the greatest books haven't yet been written, the greatest triumphs of the soul haven't yet been achieved, and the profoundest sacrifices haven't yet been made. These all await the coming of the right people—people who have a common characteristic—they yield obedience to the unenforceable! They're like God and HUMANITY is their much loved task.



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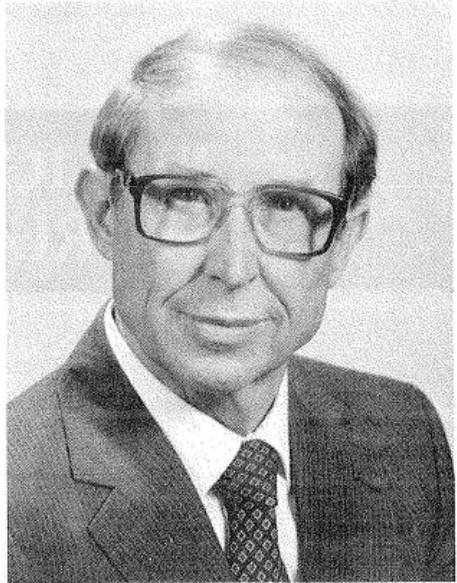
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# EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 5:19 AND COLOSSIANS 3:16

by Neil R. Lightfoot

I have been asked to do an exegesis of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. I welcome this opportunity, but first I need to say a few introductory words about what I am attempting to do. “Exegesis,” generally speaking, refers to an explanation of a text. More specifically, it is a critical interpretation of a text by the use of linguistic and historical tools. As applied to a portion of Scripture, exegesis seeks to arrive at the *original meaning* of a passage. In other words, what did the text first mean to its first readers? When, for example, Paul wrote his letter to the church at Colossae, it was to be read in the hearing of the congregation (Colossians 4:16). What did the letter mean at that time and place, to those who first heard it read in their public assembly? If only we could have been there! Exegesis, as far as possible, attempts to place us there in order that we might understand the texts in the light of their historical circumstances and problems. We today often make the mistake of reading the Bible through our twentieth-century glasses (our own situation and struggles) instead of through first-century eyes. No wonder we inject all kinds of ideas into the text that were never originally there.

Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are close parallels, and it is necessary to treat them together. Colossians and

Ephesians may be referred to as companion letters, since each in thought and style is similar to the other. About two-thirds of Colossians is parallel to Ephesians; and Ephesians, which is longer, reflects about one-half of Colossians. Both letters, for example, speak of the “fullness” of God and of Christ (Ephesians 1:23; 3:19; 4:13; Colossians 1:19; 2:9); of Christ as the head of His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18); of redemption as “the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14); of Christians “rooted” in Christ or in His love (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 2:7); and so forth.<sup>1</sup> But, of course, there are distinct differences in the two letters, largely because Colossians is polemical and deals with a specific false teaching that was rearing its ugly head among the Colossian Christians (see esp. chap. 2). Yet both letters, particularly Ephesians, reveal the prayerful and thankful spirit of Paul the prisoner, for both sound praises in the highest to God and to Christ. “Christ in all, Christ above all.”

The passages at hand both occur in sections on the new life in Christ. The word “walk” (*peripatein*, often translated as “live,” “lead a life”) is the key word. Christians once walked in the way of sin (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 3:7), but now they “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8; cf. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2; Colossians 1:10; 2:6; 4:5). Another key word is “wisdom.” The false teaching at Colossae had an “appearance of wisdom” (2:23), but real wisdom and knowledge are in Christ (2:3; Ephesians 1:9,17; cf. 3:10). Christians, therefore, are to be filled with this “spiritual wisdom” (Colossians 1:9; cf. 1:28; 3:16) and are to “walk in wisdom” (Colossians 4:5).

In a short paper it is impossible to give an extended

exegesis of these grand passages on singing. So I propose to sketch their meaning in context, and then by way of further explanation to raise several relevant questions and to offer some concluding observations.

The verses leading to Ephesians 5:19 present a series of contrasts on wise and unwise actions. The main thoughts of verses 15-18 may be represented as follows:

*Look carefully how you walk*

*Not as unwise men, but as wise*

*(Do not waste time, implied), but make the most of it*

*Do not be foolish, but understand the Lord's will*

*Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*

The structure shows that foolish people are characterized by wasting their time and by being drunk with wine. On the other hand, the wise are those who use their time to the fullest—the days are evil—and learn to comprehend what the will of the Lord is. The wise also are those who are filled with the Holy Spirit; that is, they experience the fullness that the Spirit imparts. It is important to notice that “be filled with the Spirit” is passive. Some people go around trying to pump themselves up with the Spirit, not remembering that the filling of the Spirit is a blessing that comes only from God.

“Be filled with the Spirit” is the leading thought of verses 19-21. The main ideas of these verses may be represented as follows:

*Be filled with the Spirit*

*Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns,*

*and spiritual songs*  
*Singing and*  
*Making melody to the Lord with all your*  
*heart*  
*Giving thanks to God in the name of Christ*  
*Submitting to one another in reverence for*  
*Christ.*

The structure shows that five present participles amplify the imperative, “be filled with the Spirit.” To put it another way, the effects of being filled with the Spirit are speaking in songs, singing, making melody, giving thanks, and submitting. “Submitting to one another. . .” provides a concluding statement of general application and a transition to the next paragraph.

Ephesians 5:19f. wonderfully fits in with a letter that gives itself so much to the exalted praise of God. A supreme manifestation of being filled with the Spirit is that Christians address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. “To yourselves” (*heautois*) is reciprocal in force and is used in the sense of “one another,” as in “forgiving one another” (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13) and having “love for one another” (1 Peter 4:8).<sup>2</sup> Speaking to yourselves” (KJV), although possible, is open to misunderstanding, as though one communes with himself. Older commentators (Trench, Lightfoot, etc.) carefully distinguished between “psalms,” “hymns,” and “spiritual songs,” but now it is widely accepted that there is scarcely any difference of meaning in the terms. The Septaugint uses these terms rather indiscriminately, as do Philo and Josephus.<sup>3</sup> Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich defines each term generally as a “song of praise.”<sup>4</sup> “Psalms” here does not refer to the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, but



to Christian songs of praise, as in 1 Corinthians 14:26.<sup>5</sup> If it is asked why Paul uses three equivalent terms for songs of praise, the context supplies the answer. Being “filled with the Spirit” (v. 18) and “giving thanks always for everything” (v. 20) bracket “psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs” in verse 19, and thus Paul seems to be heaping up terms in an overflow of his spirit in divine praise.

“Singing” and “making melody” is to be understood similarly. William Tyndale, known as “the father of the English Bible,” coined the expression “make melody.” Attaching approximately the same meaning to the two words, he could not very well translate “singing and singing”; so he chose the alternative, “synginge and makeinge melodie.” The Greek word for “make melody” is *psallo*. Since its meaning has been much disputed, it deserves attention later. Suffice it to say now that *psallo* occurs here in Ephesians 5:19 and in four other places in the New Testament, Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15 (twice), and James 5:13. In these four instances *psallo* clearly means “sing” or “sing praise,” and is so rendered by the various translations.

The singing of which Paul speaks is a matter of the heart. In ancient times some believed that silence was the ideal of worship; Philo, for example, speaks of songs of praise that were to be offered not audibly but by the invisible mind.<sup>6</sup> Some people today say that they simply “sing in the heart.” But Paul obviously is not referring to silent worship. One cannot “sing” only in the heart, nor is it possible to “address one another” in songs of praise and remain silent. Paul’s expression “in your heart” (*en te kardia*) is not the same as “from the heart” (*ek tes*

*kardias*). “In your heart,” however, might mean “with the heart”; thus the Revised Standard Version translates, “with all your heart,” that is, heartily, enthusiastically. But this rendering does not fit in with Paul’s use of “heart” (*kardia*) elsewhere in Ephesians and Colossians, where in the nine other instances Paul consistently employs “heart” for the inner person, the inmost self. Besides, Colossians 3:16 has “in your hearts.” Is there really a difference between “in your heart” in one passage and “in your hearts” in the other? Indeed, the immediate context in Colossians helps to explain what Paul means. Colossians 3:15 says, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” Verse 15 has “in your hearts” (*en tais kardiais*), verse 16 has “in your hearts” (*en tais kardiais*). As Christ’s peace is to become the ruling principle, Paul says, “in your hearts,” that is, *within you*, so, Paul says, “sing in your hearts,” that is, sing *within you*. Paul’s teaching, then, in both Colossians and Ephesians is that the innermost depths of one’s being must *also* participate in worship to God. The outer song of the lips is to be accompanied by the inner song of the soul.

Colossians 3:16 presents further similarities and differences. Again, wisdom is fundamental: teach and admonish “in all wisdom” (v. 16). But the key word in the Colossian parallel is “thankful,” which occurs in three consecutive verses (vv. 15,16,17; cf. Ephesians 5:20). The leading thought of Colossians 3:16f is, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”; and the main ideas can be represented as follows:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all  
wisdom  
Teaching and*

*Admonishing one another*

*in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*

*Singing with thankfulness in your hearts to  
God. . .*

*Giving thanks to God the Father through him  
(Christ).*

The structure gives prominence to four participles, three of which are directly connected with the indwelling word of Christ, with the other forming part of a concluding statement of general application and being transitional. "The word of Christ" may refer to "the teachings Christ gave"; but more probably it denotes "the teachings about Christ," the all-sufficient word centered in Him, previously referred to as "the word of the truth of the gospel" (1:5). That word is to live in the Colossians "richly" and abundantly. As it does, by means of their hymns they are to teach and admonish one another. This is a strong command for mutual ministry in song along the lines of mutual edification as in 1 Corinthians 14:26ff.

It is possible to take the participles here and in Ephesians as imperatives, for this is rather common in Koine Greek.<sup>7</sup> But this breaks up the flow of Paul's thought; "filled with the Spirit" is closely related to "speaking to one another" and the indwelling "word of Christ" to "teaching and admonishing one another." It is also possible in Colossians 3:16 to translate "singing with grace" ("in the realm of God's grace," "on the basis of His grace," etc.), but the context of thanksgiving argues for "singing gratefully," "singing with thankfulness."

These are the classic passages in the New Testament on singing, and it is remarkable how many enigmas they pose to translators and skilled exegetes. It is not surprising,

then, that these passages often raise certain questions for us today. I want to deal briefly with some of these questions; and because they are controversial, I will try to address them in the kindest way possible.

1. Is the singing in these passages congregational or individual? This is often asked about various passages, and answers are not always easy to give. We forget that this sort of question would scarcely arise in the first-century church. We should remember that most of the New Testament letters were written to churches and were read to assembled congregations. Yet in response to the question one needs to ask: When today do Christians generally address one another in songs of praise? Under what circumstances so they teach and admonish each other in these songs? Usually this takes place in the worship assembly. So it was in the early church. While teaching certainly occurred outside the assembly, Christians taught and admonished one another in the assembly.<sup>8</sup> Of course, this is why Christians were not to neglect the assembly because this is where exhortation took place (Hebrews 10:25). Practically all recent scholarly research on this point understands Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 to refer to congregational worship—Schlier, Rengstorf, Behm, Preisker, Delling, Lohse, M. Barth, Bartels, R. Martin, Moule, etc.<sup>9</sup> At the least, it can be said that these passages on singing reflect the scene of the primitive church in worship.

2. What and how did the early church sing? They sang not in harmonious parts, but probably in responsive-type singing. Perhaps Romans 11:36 is an example of responsorial singing, with the congregational “Amen!” In the early centuries of the church the ideal of praise was

*koinonia*, singing in unison.

3. Does the mention of “spiritual songs” mean that these songs were inspired by the Spirit? This is possible, but if so, this cannot refer to ecstatic tongue-speaking because Ephesians 5:17 clearly says, “understand what the will of the Lord is.” But “spiritual songs” more likely distinguishes songs as to “sacred and profane,” and even as to “pagan and Christian.”

4. What is the meaning of “make melody”—*psallo*? I do not at all want to be argumentative here. I will simply summarize the most up-to-date research on the question.

a. *Lexicons*. The standard New Testament lexicon is Baurer-Arndt-Gingrich. Unfortunately, this lexicon has occasioned confusion. The first edition of Arndt-Gingrich, in 1957, said of *psallo*: “in our lit., in accordance w. OT usage, *sing (to the accompaniment of a harp), sing praise*” (p. 899). But the second edition, in 1979, correcting many errors of the first edition, reads:

*in our lit., in according with OT usage, sing, sing praise. . . In the LXX ps. freq. means “sing,” whether to the accompaniment of a harp or (as usually) not (Psalm 7:18; 9:12; 107:4 al). This process continued until ps. in Mod. Gr. means “sing” exclusively. . . it is likely that some such sense as make melody is best here. Those who favor “play” . . . may be relying too much on the earliest mgn. of psallo (p. 891).*

b. *Theological wordbooks, etc.* It is important to notice that of the many articles by various authors in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, every article that so much as touches on the meaning

of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 consistently explains the passages simply in terms of “sing,” “sing praises.” G. Delling wrote the articles on *psallo* and related words. Speaking at first of “singing and making melody,” he says:

*The expression adontes kai psallontes in v. 19b. underscores v. 19a. The combination of verbs in this order is found in the OT, Ps. 26:6; 56:8; 104:2; 107:2. The literal sense “by or with the playing of strings,” still found in the LXX, is now employed figuratively (VIII, 498-99).*

Schlier wrote the article on *ado* (“sing”). Discussing its use in the New Testament, he says pointedly: “There is no distinction from *psallein* in Ephesians 5:19.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, Schlier says that “sing” and “make melody” are used interchangeably. But this cannot be true if *psallo* here means “play with an instrument.” Thus the one verb “sing” in Colossians does service for the two verbs “sing” and “make melody” in Ephesians.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence indeed could be multiplied.<sup>12</sup> But are there not other authorities that define *psallo* differently? If so, why? Yes, sometimes one can find something to the contrary. This happens, I believe, for the reason already noticed in the new Arndt-Gingrich: “those who favor ‘play’ . . . may be relying too much on the earliest mgn. of *psallo*.” I add two other reasons: (1) too frequently a term is defined by its root meaning, but a word should be defined by its use, and (2) no matter what a word can or does mean elsewhere, the important thing is what it means in a given verse in context. Contextually here, and according to New Testament usage, *psallo* means “to sing,” “to offer praise.”

In conclusion, let me try to put all of this in perspective. I want to state clearly that I do not believe that this is the most vital of all topics. The most important question in all the world is, "What do you think of Christ?" This is the crucial question that every person must answer for himself. On the other hand, I do believe that what we have considered today is important. Some, indeed, do not understand this, for they regard it as a slight matter. To the contrary, however, anything Scripture teaches on must not be looked upon as minor. How can we submit to the Lordship of Christ if we do not listen to Scripture? It is not just the use or non-use of the piano or organ in worship. What is involved here is the larger principle of *how the New Testament teaches us on any subject*. If the New Testament requires immersion for the forgiveness of sins, can baptism be something less? If in the New Testament men are the elders of congregations, do we have the right to appoint women as elders today? To ask these questions is but to answer them in the negative. The first-century church met in worship and sang songs of praise. The New Testament requirement to sing (*adein, psallein*) does not leave the option to sing and play.

There is one point I have not developed thus far. Not only were early Christians to address one another in songs, but these passages stress that their singing was to be directed to God. Their praises were outward and upward, manward and Godward. The church meets, therefore, to exhort and to offer praise. The Jerusalem temple and its animal sacrifices are no more. In their stead, let us draw near God in worship with real hearts (Hebrews 10:22). Let us continually offer up to Him a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15).

<sup>1</sup>On Eph.-Col. parallels, see the commentaries of T.K. Abbott (p. xxiii f.) and Wm. Hendriksen (pp. 5-32); for a thorough treatment of Pauline style in these letters, see A. Van Room, *The Authenticity of Ephesians* (Leiden, 1974), pp. 192-212. Van Room defends the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

<sup>2</sup>*Heautois* = the reciprocal *allelouis* even in classical Greek and in the LXX. See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1979), 212. Hereafter referred to as BAG. Cf. Blass-Debrunner-Funk, sect. 287; Robertson, 690.

<sup>3</sup>William Sheppard Smith in his *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* (Amsterdam, 1962) has an excellent discussion of these terms (pp. 60-65).

<sup>4</sup>BAGm 891, 836, 895.

<sup>5</sup>See BAG, 891.

<sup>6</sup>See J. Quasten, *Music & Worship in Pagan & Christian Antiquity*. Trans. by B. Ramsey (Washington, D.C., 1983), 51-55; also Smith, op. cit., 165f.

<sup>7</sup>See Moulton's *Prolegomena*, 180-183; Blass-Debrunner-Funk, Sect. 468. Cf. NEB, TEV, etc.

<sup>8</sup>The word "admonish" (*noutheteo*) seems to have assembly connotations in such passages as 2 Thess. 3:15 and 1 Thess. 5:12, and probably also here.

<sup>9</sup>See the articles in TDNT, *The New International Dictionary of NT Theology* (hereafter, NIDNTT), the commentaries, and the relevant works on New Testament worship.

<sup>10</sup>TDNT, I, 164.

<sup>11</sup>Smith, op. cit., 61.

<sup>12</sup>See K.H. Bartels, "Song, Hymn, Psalm," NIDNTT, III, 668-676; also the books of G. Delling, C.F.D. Moule, & R. Martin on New Testament worship.





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# INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CONTROVERSY IN AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

by Earl West

In the history of church music the use of the organ has had both its devotees and its critics. John Milton was well known for being one of the former. He wrote in *Il Penseroso*

*There let the pealing organ blow  
To the full-voiced choir below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.<sup>1</sup>*

On the other hand, when Elder Ben Franklin was “pressed from several quarters” to express his viewpoint on the use of the instrument in worship, he replied with a tinge of sarcasm, that it was permissible under the following conditions:

1. “When a church never had or has lost the Spirit of Christ.”

2. “If a church has a preacher who never had or has lost the Spirit of Christ, who has become a dry and lifeless speaker. . .”

3. “If a church only intends being a fashionable society, a mere place of amusement and secular entertainment and

abandoning the idea of religion and worship. . .”

4. “If a church has in it a large number of dishonest and corrupt men. . .”

5. “If a church has given up all idea of trying to convert the world. . .”<sup>2</sup>

In the wide chasm that separates these two opposing viewpoints lie stubborn impediments to understanding each other. The Ben Franklins have been invariably cast in the mold of agitators, while the John Miltons rejoice while borne along on the tides of aesthetic charms.

While the instrumental music controversy has been neither an enduring nor major controversy in American religious history, its disturbing presence has occupied the center of the stage sporadically over the past three centuries.

It is the purpose here to view these turbulent scenes, to understand if possible what forces lay behind them, and to see what light they may throw upon those vigorous controversies that rocked the restoration movement over the past century.

The twilight of this controversy in colonial America focuses attention upon the Puritan religious elements who brought the issue with them from England and Scotland. Percy A. Scoles may have overstated the case but he was generally correct when he said, “Instrumental music was generally taboo to them. As far as we know there was not a musical instrument in New England before the year 1700. If there was it has shown remarkable ingenuity in escaping detection.”<sup>3</sup> Henry Wilder Foote disagreed with Scoles, saying that drums, trumpets and horns were used to summon Puritans to church and to sound alarms. He

nevertheless admitted that while records are scarce, there are cases where the disturbance was intense.

During those youthful Puritan times in old England when they insisted on going by the Bible, these religious people generally opposed the instrument in worship. For instance, when the English exiles returned from the Rhineland upon the death of Queen Mary, they wanted the new Queen Elizabeth to carry forward the reformation her father had launched. In addition to wanting clerical vestments discarded, they urged, among other things, that instrumental music be eliminated from the worship of the Anglican church. Later, during the English Civil Wars, the Puritan military forces of Oliver Cromwell destroyed many church organs in Anglican churches, sold some, and ordered others to remain silent.

The controversy continued in European Puritan churches for over two centuries. At the time Thomas Campbell was departing for America in 1807 agitation over the instrument was occurring in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Glasgow. A year earlier the minister, Dr. William Ritchie, petitioned the Provost, the magistrates and the council to move some seats to make room for an organ. The next summer Dr. Ritchie organized a musical association composed of a few heads of the families to improve their music. A "chamber-organ" was brought in "as a help to the precentor for guiding the voices of the singers." But controversy rocked the church. When the matter reached a church court, they severely remonstrated against the minister for his action and then added significantly:

*That the Presbytery are of the opinion that  
the use of the organ in the public worship of*

*God is contrary to the law of the land, and to the law and constitution of our Established Church, and therefore prohibit it in all the churches and chapels within their bounds. . .the introduction of the organ into public worship is inexpedient and unauthorized in our church.<sup>4</sup>*

The seventeenth century witnessed but little contention in colonial churches over the instrument. The Episcopalians who would have used the instrument without any internal difficulty ensuing, were generally latecomers to the colonies so had not yet popularized the instrument. On the other hand, the Methodist Church had not yet been born, and the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists—all a part of the Puritan picture—were not yet employing the organ in worship.

Among the Puritans during this century there was little occasion of controversy, since organs were virtually non-existent in the colonies. Moreover, they were expensive and all were manufactured in England and had to be transported to the colonies. Also, the Puritans were generally of middle class and unable to afford organs. Then, too, space on shipboard was scarce so there was little room for an organ.

The first organ in the colonies dates from 1694 when a group of German Pietists brought a small one and used it in their services near Philadelphia. Soon after, another one was used in St. Peter's church in Port Royal, Virginia. For a century this particular instrument was passed around from one Anglican church to another until it finally found its way into the Smithsonian Institute. Only a few organs found their way into colonial churches. By 1724 Governor William Burnet of New York presented one to

the Dutch Reformed Church and four years later, one was introduced in Christ's Church in Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup>

The Puritan-oriented churches were not yet ready for the organ as the Anglicans discovered early in the eighteenth century. In 1695 Baptists and Presbyterians were worshipping together in an abandoned storehouse in Philadelphia. When trouble arose three years later, the Baptists withdrew to a separate place of worship. Nine years later they organized the first Baptist Association in Philadelphia, which is the oldest continuing one in America. In colonial times, then, Philadelphia was the center of Baptist life.

The Anglicans organized the Society for The Propagation of The Gospel in 1701. Two years later their missionaries appeared in the new world. Since the colonies belonged to England, Anglican clergymen invited all churches "to return to your Church of Christ." The Baptist reply was significant. They would come to the Church of England if English clergymen could show them (1) that the formation of their church was a divine institution, (2) that the government of the church should be prelatical, (3) that infant baptism was a duty, (4) "that instruments of music are to be used in God's worship under the New Testament. . ."<sup>6</sup>

As organs entered the colonies during the eighteenth century and the level of economic growth grew, the Puritan churches faced considerable pressure. Thomas Brattle, a wealthy citizen of Boston and member of the Brattle Square Congregational Church, purchased an organ for the church in 1711. However, the church would not accept it, so he used it in his home until his death two years later. He bequeathed the organ to the Brattle Square

church with the stipulation that if they refused it, it should go to King's Chapel in New York, an Episcopal church. It was used here until 1756 when it was sold to St. Paul's at Newburyport, where it was used until 1836 when it was sold to St. John's church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire where it continues to be used.

The pressure continued at Brattle Square, however, to secure an organ. Finally, in 1970 one was purchased in England, placed on a sailing vessel and sent to Boston harbor. The ship was stalled far out in the harbor for several days because the wind stopped blowing. A wealthy member who opposed the organ paid men to row a boat at night out to the ship, seize the organ and dump it into the harbor. This was momentarily an effective way to end the controversy, though not an enduring one.

As the eighteenth century passed in New England differences appeared more frequently over the instrument in worship. Ezra Stiles, one of the leading Congregational ministers in the colonies, later President of Yale College, noted that in 1763 a tract appeared in Philadelphia addressed to Presbyterians and Baptists who thought the use of the instrument was unlawful. The tract complained that congregational singing was terrible; therefore, the instrument was a necessity. In seven years the instrument was used. Stiles noted in his diary on July 10, 1770 that an organ of 200 pipes was used in the church a month earlier for the first time. He commented, "This is the first organ in a dissenting Presbyterian Church in America except Jersey College or Great Britain."

In the case of the "Old Brick Church," as it was commonly called, or "The First Church" in Boston where Charles Chauncey preached for sixty years, a younger



generation wanted the instrument, but Chauncey was opposed so the only thing to do was wait until this old veteran died. Stiles noted in his diary in 1785:

*This spring the Meetinghouse was repaired and Dr. C. preached a consecr and farewell sermon on acct of his great age. The people, eager to get an organ waited on the Dr. who told them that it would not be long before he was in his grave—he knew that before his head was cold there they would have an organ—and they might do as they pleased.<sup>7</sup>*

Judging from the number of times the complaint appeared, the Puritans came to the instrument because of the low quality of their singing. One is reminded of L.L. Pinkerton's statement when the instrument was introduced during the restoration movement at Midway, Kentucky when Pinkerton observed that the singing was so bad it would scare the rats. The Puritans had similar criticisms. A writer in England in 1676 said, " 'Tis sad to hear what whining, tooting, yelling, or screeching there is in many country congregations." About the same time Lord Rochester, upon hearing a Psalm sung, wrote a little ditty:

*Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,  
When they translated David's Psalms,  
To make the heart right glad;  
But had it been King David's fate  
To hear thee sing and them translate,  
By God, 'twould set him mad.*

A century later someone wrote of the singing in the Puritan congregation at Salem, Massachusetts:

*Could King David but for once  
To Salem church repair,  
And hear his Psalms there warbled out,  
Good Lord, how he would swear.<sup>8</sup>*

Despite the tensions created by the introduction of the instrument in Puritan-type churches in colonial America, by the beginning of the nineteenth century there were fewer than twenty organs found in all New England. However, the flute, bassoon, bass viol, and clarinet were often used so some kind of an instrument was used more often than there are records to show.

By the Civil War era, however, most denominations that had previously rejected the instrument were now laying their scruples aside and were convinced that there was no principle involved. The Presbyterian Church of the U.S. (North) and the Dutch Reformed church both took this position. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church by 1870 gave the churches the liberty to use the instrument "provided the harmony of the congregation be not thereby disturbed." Moreover, the United Presbyterian Church permitted its use in 1872 with the Synod making the statement:

*That this Synod decline to pronounce a judgment upon the use of instrumental music in public worship, yet do not longer make uniformity of practice in this matter a rule of the church; but the Synod urge upon the courts of the church, and upon individual ministers, the duty of guarding anxiously the simplicity of public worship; and press on the earnest attention of all the members of the church watchfulness over the unity of our congregations.<sup>9</sup>*

Despite the Synod's permission for churches to use the instrument, the United Presbyterian Church's seven to eight hundred congregations had numerous fierce contentions. This died away slowly as the denomination began to feel "that better edifying and large attention to public praise must be edifying and elevating."

It is to be noted, therefore, that Protestant bodies' use of the instrument grew rapidly after the Civil War out of conviction that there was no principle involved to prevent its use. Moreover, "progressive Christianity," a term now coming into popular use, called for the instrument since it aided public praise to become more edifying and elevating.

It is to be noted, therefore, that Protestant bodies' use of the instrument grew rapidly after the Civil War out of the conviction that there was no principle involved to prevent its use. Moreover, "progressive Christianity," a term now coming into popular use, called for the instrument since it aided public praise to become more edifying and elevating.

Concomitant with this growing acceptance of the instrument in the post Civil War days by denominational churches, the restoration movement was entangled in the instrumental music controversy. Moreover, similar motivations as those used by denominational people were held out to make the adoption of the instrument a more gentle and less stressful experience.

While the controversy over the instrument was occurring in some religious bodies in America, Isaac Errett, editor of the *Christian Standard*, was calling for the acceptance of the instruments among more "progressive" churches in the restoration movement. His series of

articles in the spring of 1870 served to placate those congregations which wanted to use the instrument.

As Errett saw it, the use of the instrument was now in this progressive age almost a necessity:

*Singing without the accompaniment of an instrument is like a picture without a frame, a lecture without delivery, or play of Shakespeare without action. It may be the best in the world, but it is yet susceptible of improvement by the aid of an instrument. . . We insist that it is conclusive as to the fact that all vocal music is better with instruments than without them—and we ought to render to God the best music in our power to make, in a congregational capacity, then ought we to have an organ to assist us?<sup>10</sup>*

Errett, both positively and negatively, approached the subject to make growing, economically prosperous urban churches feel good about what they were about to do. He denied that churches who wanted the instrument were desiring to be fashionable or to copy their religious neighbors. “. . . We have no reason to believe,” he wrote, “that churches now using the instruments are a whit behind the churches rejecting them, in earnest desire to serve and glorify God.” He contended that a transition was now occurring among churches away from the “old style” of music to a more “scientific style.” The rising generation of people, he observed, “have acquired new tastes.” Furthermore, “better singing could be had with instruments than without them.” Likewise, did he strike out at the foes of the instrument:

*Brethren that are grieved over the sweetest*

*music that an organ assists to make, seem to have no trouble over the wretched banglings and harsh discords which mar the worship of so many congregations, and while declaiming against the instruments as destroying congregation singing, seem to be entirely oblivious of the fact that, without instruments, congregational singing had largely become a farce.*<sup>11</sup>.

Errett's apologetic for the introduction of the instrument, however, was clearly overdrawn. The early Christians of the restoration movement found their singing attractive and meaningful. John Augustus Williams in later years remembered that as a boy he heard Jacob Creath, Allen Kendrick and other preachers near his home at Harrodsburg, Kentucky. There were as yet no collection of hymns, since Alexander Campbell's first hymn book did not appear until 1828. Preachers were generally what English Puritans called precentors. They stated the words to the audience and began the hymn. Creath had such a rich, musical voice that people sat weeping as they listened. L.L. Pinkerton said he would ride many miles just to hear Creath sing.<sup>12</sup>

Errett was indeed an influential editor whose journal circulated among growing urban churches across the north. Many ministers championed his viewpoints. One especially led the way effectively in the growing use of the instrument.

No one was a more complete embodiment of Errett's viewpoint than the tall, eccentric Knowles Shaw. Although he was born in Lebanon County, Ohio in 1835, he was reared in Rush County, Indiana where as a child he was educated in music. As a young man he played and

sang at local festivities and, gifted with a charming personality, he enjoyed great popularity. He laid much of this aside when he became a Christian, but after W.H. Hopson convinced him to become a preacher, he employed his talents so energetically that he became one of the most successful preachers in the brotherhood.

His six feet, three inch one-hundred-seventy pound body was “restless and impetuous in every motion seemingly never at rest in mind or body.” While his hazel eyes flashed, his massive whiskers danced on his face in ceaseless movements as he preached and sang. Though never sublime in the reaches of his oratory, he was tender and touching in his appeals.

It was not unusual for his evangelistic meetings to result in fifty to one hundred baptisms. His great meeting at Covington, Kentucky in October-November, 1876 with P.B. Wiles that resulted in more than a hundred baptisms was typical. He was “clear, forcible, and pointed” and proved as a speaker to be “quite entertaining.” His resource of personal illustrations seemed inexhaustible, and his clear, musical voice punctuated his sermons with solo renditions of hymns that helped him move his audience. But Wiles noted:

*Some have charged he advocated instrumental music in the worship. This is a rash charge. While he has no conscientious objections to the use of instrumental music, provided the church is agreed, he neither advocates it nor urges it, but leaves the brethren free to decide for themselves. Indeed, I am authorized to state unequivocally that he would oppose its use if there were conscientious objections.<sup>13</sup> He was,*

*quite clearly, a living embodiment of Errett's views.*

During his brief career as a preacher, the instrument came in while his meetings were in progress or did so previous to his arrival. While his "big, little meeting" was conducted in Henderson, Tennessee during the Christmas holidays of 1877, the instrument seems to have been introduced. However, before his arrival with the Commerce Street Church in Dallas in June 1878, his final meeting as it proved, the instrument was introduced. This followed a division in the Ross Avenue or the First Church of Christ when the church refused to permit the instrument. Thirty people left and formed the new congregation in September, 1877. Three years later, Ross Avenue purchased property at Pearl & Bryan and became one of the stalwart congregations of the brotherhood in Texas.

For the time, however, Kirk Baxter, the new preacher at Commerce Street Christian Church, secured Shaw from his busy schedule and huge crowds came to hear him. The day after this meeting closed Shaw was killed in a train wreck on the Texas Central Railroad, one mile south of McKinney. His last words on the coach were, "Oh, it is a grand thing to rally the people to the cause of Christ."<sup>14</sup> Later, at the funeral service in the Commerce Street Church, the organ played one of the hymns Shaw wrote, "If thou Lord callest me. . ."

Shaw's death cut short an effective, dynamic preacher's career in which over ten thousand people were baptized. On the other hand, a career that popularized the use of the instrument in the worship, and thereby helped widen the chasm in the restoration movement, dulled some of the glitter of his personal achievements to members of the

churches of Christ.

In the fifteen year period following the close of the Civil War the restoration movement had reached the cross-roads. One element took the progressive road, seeking emancipation from the "tyranny" of frontier religious lifestyles. The instruments had found place in urban churches, along with pew renting, before the war began. Later, as economic conditions in northern cities leaped forward and a plethora of new church buildings took shape, the instrument found even wider acceptance aided by the editorial policy of the *Christian Standard*.

This is the road, however, that was clearly not taken by another element who planned to speak only on the authority of the Scriptures, who rejected "innovations" of any kind not authorized by the Word of God. Maintaining the inspiration of the Bible, they sought the approval of that divine message for their worship and service.

When the new century later dawned and the Federal Bureau of Census wanted a distinction drawn between the Christian Churches and the churches of Christ, David Lipscomb offered a description of his conservative-minded brethren.

*The disciples have separated from the Christian Churches that grew out of the effort to restore pure primitive Christianity, by remaining true to the original purpose and the principles needful to develop it, while these churches have departed from this end and have set aside the principles of fidelity to the word of God as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice of Christians. . .<sup>15</sup>*



<sup>1</sup>Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York, 1957), 76.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Franklin, "Instrumental Music in Churches," *American Christian Review*, 3 (Jan. 31, 1860), 19.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Henry Wilder Foote, *Three Centuries of American Hymnody* (Aporchon Press, 1968), 8 from Scoles, *The Puritans And Music*.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Greig M'Crie, *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* (Edinburgh, William Blackwood & Sons, 1892), 314-16.

<sup>5</sup>Henry W. Foote, *Three Centuries of American Hymnody*, 81-84.

<sup>6</sup>H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity* (2 vols., New York, 1960), 270, 1. See also, Morgan Edwards, *Materials Toward a History of The Baptists in Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1770), 99-103.

<sup>7</sup>Henry W. Foote, 84,5.

<sup>8</sup>Henry W. Foote, 96.

<sup>9</sup>R. McCheyne Edgar, *Progressive Presbyterianism: A Plan for Liberty and Enterprise Within the Church* (Belfast, 1894), 156.

<sup>10</sup>Isaac Errett, "Musical Instrumental," *Christian Standard*, 5, (April 23, 1970), 130.

<sup>11</sup>Isaac Errett, "Instrumental Music in Our Churches," *Christian Standard*, 5 (April 30, 1870), 140.

<sup>12</sup>John A. Williams, "Our Church Music in the Early Times," *Christian Leader*, 12 (Jan. 4, 1898), 2.

<sup>13</sup>P.B. Wiles, "Covington Meeting And Bro. Shaw," *Apostolic Times*, 8 (Nov. 16, 1876), 723,4.

<sup>14</sup>"Bro. Shaw is Dead," *The Christian*, 15 (June 13, 1878), 4.

<sup>15</sup>David Lipscomb, "The Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ," *Gospel Advocate*, 44 (July 18, 1907), 457.

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# THE USE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN OLD TESTAMENT WORSHIP

by John T. Willis

Musical instruments were used in at least four types of life settings, according to texts of the Hebrew Bible. First, they were played in a variety of secular activities. Jubal is called “the father (originator) of all those who played the lyre and pipe” (Genesis 4:21). Laban rebukes Jacob for fleeing from him with his daughters and grandchildren without giving him an opportunity to hold a farewell party. He says: “Why did you flee secretly, and cheat me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre?” (Genesis 31:27).<sup>1</sup> Saul chooses David to play the lyre in order to drive away the evil spirits from the Lord that tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14-23; 18:10; 19:9). The Lord compares the way the Jews receive Ezekiel’s message after the fall of Jerusalem with the way people enjoy listening to “one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument” (Ezekiel 33:32). Isaiah compares the forthcoming seventy-year ruin of Tyre with a harlot whom everyone has forgotten, so that she must go through the streets of the city, playing a harp and singing many songs to

remind people that she exists. He announces that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years. Then he says:

*At the end of seventy years, it will happen to  
Tyre as in the song of the harlot:  
Take a harp,  
go about the city,  
O forgotten harlot!  
Make sweet melody,  
sing many songs,  
that you may be remembered  
(Isaiah 23:15-16).*

Job laments the prosperous and happy life of the wicked rich, saying:

*They send forth their little ones like a flock,  
and their children dance.  
They sing to the tambourine and the lyre,  
and rejoice to the sound of the pipe  
(Job 21:11-12)*

Job himself was accustomed to playing happy tunes on his lyre and pipe, but his suffering had turned him to play melodies of mourning and weeping (Job 30:31; cf. Isaiah 24:8; Ezekiel 26:13). Trumpets were blown to get peoples' attention for an important announcement (Isaiah 18:3; 58:1) and to summon people to come together (Isaiah 27:13). Lyres were used as accompaniment to teaching (Psalm 49:4).

Second, musical instruments were used at banquets either to provide background music while the participants ate or as entertainment (often as

accompaniment for singing).<sup>2</sup> Amos rebukes the wicked rich of North Israel because they host their rich friends at extravagant banquets (at which they lie on beds inlaid with ivory, eat mutton and beef, sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, like David improvise for themselves new songs on instruments of music,<sup>3</sup> drink wine by the bowlful, and anoint themselves with the finest perfumes), but are totally insensitive to the miserable plight of the poor living all around them (Amos 6:4-6). Similarly, Isaiah pronounces this Woe Oracle against the wicked rich of Judah:

*Woe to those who rise early in the morning,  
that they may run after strong drink,  
who tarry late into the evening  
till wine inflames them!  
They have lyre and harp,  
timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts;  
but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord,  
or see the work of his hands.  
(Isaiah 5:11-12)*

The context indicates that the “deeds” or “work” of the Lord to which these people are insensitive are justice and righteousness toward one’s fellowman, especially the poor (see vs. 16).

Third, musical instruments were connected with different phases or aspects of war strategy. Now since Yahweh led his people (his army) in battle (see e.g., Exodus 14:14; Deuteronomy 1:30; 3:22; 20:4; Joshua 10:14; 2 Chronicles 20:29; Nehemiah 4:20), the wars of Israel fought under his direction were considered

religious activities. Strictly speaking, then, from a biblical perspective, the use of musical instruments in military campaigns launched in keeping with God's will was religious in nature. (1) Trumpets were blown by watchmen standing on the walls of fortified cities to inform the king or the people within the walls of activities going on outside. For example, watchmen often warned that an enemy army was advancing toward the city (Amos 3:6; Hosea 8:1; Jeremiah 4:5,19,21; 6:1,17; 42:14; 51:27; Ezekiel 33:3-6; Joel 2:1; Nehemiah 4:18,20). (2) When an army returned from a battle victorious, the women of their land would go out to meet them with timbrels and other types of musical instruments and singing and dancing (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6-7; 21:11; 29:5). Similarly, after Jehoshaphat's victory over the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites, he and his army returned to the temple with joy, with harps and lyres and trumpets (2 Chronicles 20:28). (3) Gideon's strategy against the Midianites was to have his three hundred men blow their trumpets and smash their jars and hold up their torches, giving the impression that a large army had surrounded the enemy (Judges 9:8; 16-22). When Joshua and the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho, the seven priests blew their trumpets of rams' horns as they advanced before the ark of the covenant (Joshua 6:4-9,13,16,20). The Lord commanded Moses to make two silver trumpets to be used for various signals, including sounding an alarm in time of war so that the Israelites might be remembered before the Lord and be saved from their enemies (Numbers 10:1-10). In God's first speech to Job, he refers to the blowing of the

trumpet as the signal to begin a battle, a signal which the well-trained war-horse knows very well, and to which he immediately responds (Job 39:24-25). It was common to blow a trumpet to signal that a battle is imminent or to spur on soldiers engaged in battle (Numbers 31:6; Amos 2:2; Hosea 5:8; Isaiah 30:32; Zephaniah 1:16; Zechariah 9:14; 2 Chronicles 13:12). (4) Trumpets were blown to gather an army together to prepare for battle (Judges 3:27; 6:34; 1 Samuel 13:3; 2 Samuel 20:1) and to declare an end to a battle (2 Samuel 2:28; 18:16; 20:22). (5) Trumpets were blown to declare someone to be king, as Absalom (2 Samuel 15:10), Adonijah (1 Kings 1:34), Solomon (1 Kings 1:39,41), Jehu (2 Kings 9:13), and Joash (2 Chronicles 23:12-13).

Fourth, instruments of music are connected with various types of religious or worship situations in the Hebrew Bible. Sixteen different musical instruments are specifically mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, most of which are used in worship. These are the horn and the trumpet; three stringed instruments: the harp, the lyre, and the ten-stringed lute; three woodwinds: the double clarinet or double oboe, the end-blown flute, and the reed pipe; five percussion instruments: the hand drum, the cymbals, the rattles or castanets, the golden bells, the bell-shaped jingles; and three other instruments which have not been identified with certainty.<sup>4</sup>

(1) Daniel 3:5,7,10,15 relates that when the apostles in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar (including the Jews) heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, they were to fall down and worship the image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar had made. Of course, the Hebrew Bible condemns the

worship of this image.

(2) Prophets played musical instruments as they prophesied (1 Samuel 10:5). Elisha had a minstrel brought to play a musical instrument for him, and when he began to do so, the power of the Lord came upon Elisha and he began to prophesy (2 Kings 3:15). In a similar way, the Wisdom Teacher of Psalm 49 uttered his message to the music of the lyre (vss. 3-4).

(3) Musical instruments were used to announce or proclaim various religious events and festivals of God's people. (a) A loud trumpet blast accompanied thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on Mount Sinai declaring the presence of Yahweh (Exodus 19:16,19; 20:18). (b) A trumpet was blown throughout all the land of Israel to proclaim the Year of Jubilee every fiftieth year (Leviticus 25:9). (c) When Asa and the Judeans under him took an oath to seek Yahweh with all their heart and with all their soul, they did this "with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns" (2 Chronicles 15:14). (d) Joel commands his fellows to blow the trumpet, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly (the imperative verbs here are plural in Hebrew), so that the people might repent and avert the impending calamity facing them (Joel 2:15).

(4) On a broad, general scale, the use of instrumental music in Israelite worship began with David in connection with the ark of the covenant (which was regarded as God's throne-chariot [see Numbers 10:35-36; 1 Samuel 4:3-4; 2 Samuel 6:3], and symbolized his presence among his people [see 1 Samuel 4:21-22; Psalms 78:60-61; 132:1-8]), and especially in making preparations for the worship at the temple to be built by



his son Solomon.

When David brought the ark to Jerusalem from Kiriath-jearim (where it had been virtually dormant for twenty years—see 1 Samuel 7:1-2), he and all the house of Israel made merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyre and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals, with shouting and the sound of the horn, and trumpets (2 Samuel 6:5,15; 1 Chronicles 13:8; 15:28). Psalm 47:5 may refer to this event, or to an annual celebration of this event.

1 Chronicles 15-16, 22-29 give an extensive record of various preparations which David made in his waning years for Solomon's reign, especially for the building of the temple and the worship which was to be practiced there. Singing and playing instruments of music played a major role in this worship. The Lord commanded through David, Gad, and Nathan that the Levites play musical instruments in worship to him. 2 Chronicles 29:25 states this clearly in describing Hezekiah's reform.

*And he (i.e., Hezekiah) stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets.*

The reference here is to certain instructions given to the Levites in 1 Chronicles. For example, 1 Chronicles 15:16, 19-22 states:

*David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brethren as the singers who*

*should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps, and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. . . The singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were to sound bronze cymbals; Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were to play harps according to Alamoth; but Matthithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azariah were to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith. Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it.*

Again, 1 Chronicles 16:4-7 relates:

*Moreover he (i.e., David) appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel. Asaph was the chief, and second to him were Zechariah, Jeil, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow trumpets continually, before the ark of the covenant of God. Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brethren.*

Similar passages are found in 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 23:4-5; 25:1-7. 1 Chronicles 25:6-7 indicate that those chosen to sing and to play on instruments in worship services spent much time training and practicing for these

activities. Later, when Solomon finished building the temple, he placed the ark in the Holy of Holies. Then the Levites began to do what the Lord had commanded them through David. The Bible describes it this way:

*And all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with a hundred and twenty priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord,*

*“For he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever,”  
the house, the house of the Lord, was filled  
with a cloud.  
(2 Chronicles 5:12-13; see also 7:6; 1 Kings  
10:12 = 2 Chronicles 9:11).*

In addition to Solomon's dedication to the temple described in these passages, the Hebrew Bible specifically mentions the use of musical instruments in celebrations similar to this in Hezekiah's Reform (ca. 705 B.C.— 2 Chronicles 29:25-30), at the completion of the laying of the foundation of the temple by the Jews under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (ca. 536 B.C.— Ezra 3:10-11), and at the dedication of the wall which Nehemiah and the Jews had built (ca. 445 B.C.—

Nehemiah 12:27-30). The numerous commands and resolutions to worship God with various types of musical instruments in the Psalms (see references below) show that this was the common practice throughout the history of Israel from the time of David.

Now, according to the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites engaged in at least five religious activities when they played instruments of music.

(a) They *worshipped* God. 2 Chronicles 29:26-30 describes Hezekiah's rededication of the temple (in connection with his reform) in these words:

*The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. And Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshipped.*

(b) They *prophesied*. 1 Chronicles 25:2 states:

*David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service certain of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals. (See also verses 2-3).*

(c) They *invoked* (1 Chronicles 16:4). The meaning of the Hebrew word translated “invoked” here *lehazkir* is difficult to determine. It comes from a Hebrew root meaning “to remember,” So in this passage, the possible meaning is “to cause to remember,” that is, when the Levites played their instruments, they “reminded” the people of God’s mighty acts in their behalf.

(d) They *gave thanks* to God for all his blessings. The author of Psalm 92:1-4 writes:

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord,  
to sing praises to thy name, O Most High;  
to declare thy steadfast love in the morning,  
and thy faithfulness by night,  
to the music of the lute and the harp,  
to the melody of the lyre.  
For thou, O Lord, has made me glad by thy work;  
at the words of thy hands I sing for joy.*

Similar thoughts occur in 1 Chronicles 16:4-7; 25:3; 2 Chronicles 7:6; Ezra 3:10-11; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalms 57:7-9 = 108:1-3; 147:7.

(e) They *praised* God for his steadfast love and faithfulness and all his mighty deeds. This is by far the most frequently mentioned worshipful activity in connection with the use of musical instruments in the Hebrew Bible. For example, one psalmist commands:

*Praise the Lord with the lyre,  
 make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!  
 Sing to him a new song,  
 play skilfully on the strings, with loud shouts.  
 (Psalm 33:2-3)*

Another psalmist promises:

*I will also praise thee with the harp  
 for thy faithfulness, O my God;  
 I will sing praises to thee with lyre,  
 O Holy One of Israel.  
 My lips will shout with joy,  
 when I sing praises to thee;  
 my soul also, which thou hast rescued.  
 (Psalm 71:22-23)*

Many other passages express the same sentiments (see 1 Chronicles 16:4; 23:4-5; 25:3; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13; 7:6; Ezra 3:10-11; Psalms 43:4; 57:7-9 = 108:1-3; 92:1-3; 98:4-6; 149:1-3; 150:3-5).

Like all other external acts of worship (including offering animal sacrifices, attending worship services regularly, baptism, partaking of the Lord's Supper, praying, and singing), praising God with musical instruments was acceptable only if it was done by those whose hearts and lives were truly devoted to God. God makes this clear through Amos:

*I hate, despise you feasts,  
 and I take no delight in your solemn  
 assemblies.  
 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings*

*and cereal offerings,  
I will not accept them,  
and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts  
I will not look upon.  
Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.  
But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an everflowing  
stream.*

*(Amos 5:21-24).*

In the context in which God proclaimed this oracle through Amos, he is not condemning the use of harps (or other musical instruments) per se in worship any more than he is condemning regular attendance at feasts and solemn assemblies, animal and cereal sacrifices, or singing. Rather, he is reproving the faithful execution of these things by the very people who treat the helpless poor unjustly and unrighteously (cf. similar oracles in 4:4-5; Hosea 6:4-6; Isaiah 1:10-17; 29:13-14; 58:1-8; Micah 6:6-8; Jeremiah 7:1-4, 21-23; Joel 2:12-13).

Two concluding observations seem appropriate. First, the playing of instruments is often connected with "singing" in the Hebrew Bible. Psalm 81:1-3 is typical:

*Sing aloud to God our strength:  
shout for joy to the God of Jacob!  
Raise a song, sound the timbrel,  
the sweet lyre with the harp.  
Blow the trumpet at the new moon,  
at the full moon, on our feast day.*

See also 2 Samuel 6:5 = 1 Chronicles 13:8; 1 Chronicles

15:16, 19-22; 16:4-7, 41-42; 25:6-7; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13; 9-11; 29:25-30; Ezra 3:10-11; Amos 5:21-23; Psalms 33:2-3; 57:7-9 = 108:1-3; 71:22-23; 92:1-3; 98:4-6; 137:2-6; 144:9; 147:7; 149:1-3; Nehemiah 12:27-28. This makes it quite clear that in Israelite worship both singing and playing on instruments of music were worshipping activities. It would be unthinkable here to contend that singing was worship, and playing on instruments was an aid to worship.

Second, the terms “sing” and “make melody” occur eleven times in the Hebrew Bible: Judges 5:3; Psalms 27:6; 33:2-3; 57:7 = 108:1; 92:1,3; 98:5; 147:7; 149:1; 3; Amos 5:23; Isaiah 23:16 (not always in a context of worship).<sup>5</sup> The translation of these words in the LXX (ado for the Hebrew *shir* = “sing,” and *psallo* for the Hebrew *zamar* = “make melody”), and the use of these same two Greek words in Ephesians 5:19 demonstrate that Paul borrowed these terms from the LXX Hebrew Bible. The word *zamar*, “to make melody,” “refers exclusively to joyful singing of praises to God, often accompanied by stringed instruments of various types”<sup>6</sup> in the Hebrew Bible. Accordingly, Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians is to sing joyful praises to the Lord.

<sup>5</sup>There is ample evidence for the secular use of musical instruments in Mesopotamia and Egypt as early as the third millennium B.C. See Hershel Shanks, “World’s Oldest Musical Notation Deciphered on Cuneiform Tablet,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, VI/5 (September/October 1980), pp. 14-25. This is at least a millennium before the Patriarchs, and Mesopotamia is the region from which they migrated into the Palestinian area. Therefore, their familiarity with and use of musical instruments is to be expected.



<sup>2</sup>The Mesopotamian “Royal Standard” of Ur mosaic, dating from the third millennium B.C., portrays a leisurely banquet scene with a male lyre player and singer supplying the entertainment. See Seton Lloyd, *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1978), p. 130, illustration 87; cf. p. 131, illustration 90.

<sup>3</sup>On the meaning of this difficult expression, see David Noel Freedman, “But Did King David Invent Musical Instruments?” *Bible Review*, I (1985), pp. 49-51.

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent description of the various musical instruments mentioned in the Bible, see E. Werner, “Musical Instruments,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 3 (1962), pp. 469-476; D.A. Foxvog and A.D. Kilmer, “Music,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Fully Revised*, 3 (1986), pp. 438-446. For further discussion of music in the Hebrew Bible, see H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 203-208.

<sup>5</sup>The same terms occur together in Ugaritic (dating from ca. the thirteenth century B.C.) in the sense of “sing” (*sr*) and “play music, chant” (*dmr*). For example, in Ras Shamra text 24.254:3-4, we read, “who *sings* and *plays* on the lyre and the flute, on the tambourine and cymbals.” See J. Nougayrol, et al, *Ugaritica*, V (1968), p. 552; M. Dahood and T. Penar, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallels,” *Ras Shamra Parallels*, I, ed. Loren R. Fisher (1972), p. 369, Item 581, citing Ugaritic Text 602:3-4.

<sup>6</sup>D.M. Howard, Jr., “Melody,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Fully Revised*, 3 (1986), p. 314.

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# **JEWISH RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN THE FIRST CENTURY— Temple, Synagogue, Home, and Sect**

by **Everett Ferguson**

The historical context of the beginning of Christianity is provided by first-century Judaism. A proper interpretation of New Testament texts requires an understanding of their historical background and of the subsequent development of the church. This material defines the historical parameters of what was possible and what was probable in the situation of the time. The present essay will survey Jewish religious music in the first century with a view to defining the practices with which early Christians would have been familiar. Four settings must be considered: the temple, the synagogue, the home, and the sects.<sup>1</sup>

## **Temple**

There is an absence of contemporary sources for the music at the temple in the century before its destruction in A.D. 70. Information from both before and after the first century, however, permit a fairly detailed description of the temple liturgy.<sup>2</sup> The account of the rededication of the temple under Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 29 mentions that the Levites stood with their “cymbals, harps, and lyres” and “the priests with their trumpets,” and “when the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord began also,

and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments'' (2 Chronicles 29:25-28). There is a similar account of the rededication of the altar by Judas Maccabee in 165 B.C. with songs, harps, lutes, and cymbals accompanying the sacrifices (1 Maccabees 4:52-56). The songs were presumably the Psalms: "Hezekiah . . . commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chronicles 29:30).<sup>3</sup> This is made explicit in the rabbinic remembrances of temple worship written down after its destruction. The Mishnah<sup>4</sup> and the Talmud<sup>5</sup> preserve lists of which Psalms were sung on each day of the week by the Levites in the temple. Otherwise, the Hallel Psalms (113-118) are most frequently referred to in connection with the temple.<sup>6</sup> At the daily sacrifice the singing was accompanied by stringed instruments, with cymbals to keep time(?) and a pipe to close the melody.<sup>7</sup> At every break in the singing there was a blast on the trumpet and prostration by the people (Tamid 7.3). The Levites who sang stood on the fifteen steps that led from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites, and those who "played upon harps, lyres, cymbals, and all instruments of music" were in the chambers beneath the Court of the Israelites which opened into the Court of the Women.<sup>8</sup> The type of pipe called the *halil* was played on twelve days in the year at set feasts. It was the use of this instrument which provoked the rabbinic discussion whether playing an instrument overrode the prohibition or work on the Sabbath (bArakhin 10a; bSukkah 50b-51a). Those instruments mentioned in the Bible which accompanied the sacrifice did override the prohibition of work, but an instrument on another occasion did not.<sup>9</sup> This could have some bearing on the absence of instruments

from the synagogues.<sup>10</sup> One rabbi suggested that there was no water organ in the temple because it would interfere with the song (tArakhin 1:13; bArakhin 10b). This accords with other indications that the vocal music was primary and the instruments accompanied.<sup>11</sup> Music, vocal and instrumental, was closely connected with sacrifice at the temple and was sometimes considered essential to it (bArakhin 11b-12a; bSukkah 51a; bTa'anith 27a).

### **Synagogue**

There is a similar lack of first-century sources for musical practices in the synagogues. Here the situation is more controversial, however, because there are first-century references to other activities in the synagogues. It is generally agreed that instrumental music was absent from the synagogue meetings, but some have argued that singing too, and particularly psalm-singing, was also absent.<sup>12</sup> The argument from the silence of first-century sources about psalmody proves too much. The sources cited<sup>13</sup> mention only scripture reading and its interpretation; if these sources were all we had to go on, we would have to omit prayer from the synagogue service in the first century. No one does so, and for good reason; but to include it, one has to adduce other sources. There are special reasons why Philo and Josephus mention only instruction in the scriptures and do not give a complete account. On the other hand, there are indications of the use of the Psalms in the synagogue. If rabbinic sources, some of them going back to the second century, although written later, are accepted as preserving the liturgy of the temple, then their descriptions of synagogue practice may also go back to the first century. Representatives from the towns

of Israel met for prayer at the times of the daily sacrifices in the temple; this practice gave the names to the times of prayer in the synagogues. At these gatherings the Hallel Psalms were recited (Ta'anith 4.4; 3.9).<sup>14</sup> The practice originated while the temple was still standing and would seem to be the origin of the use of the same Psalms in the synagogues as in the temple. The Mishnah, compiled around A.D. 200, gives instructions about the congregational reciting of the Hallel.<sup>15</sup> The tractate Rosh HaShanah 4.7 refers to reciting the Hallel before the ark where the Torah scrolls were kept in the synagogues. The argument is made that the accounts of "reciting" do not refer to "singing," but it must be remembered that cantillation, a kind of chanting, was employed in scripture reading (bMegillah 32a; Sopherim 3.13), prayer (bTa'anith 16a), and reciting the Shema (Aboth R. Nathan B 44).<sup>16</sup> In the context of the times we must describe the Hallel as "sung," not "read."

Philo himself gives another indication that singing was part of the synagogue service. In his account of the persecution of the Jews in Alexandria under Flaccus, the prefect of Egypt, Philo relates that at the Feast of Tabernacles the Jews learned of the arrest of Flaccus. In their homes "with hands outstretched to heaven [the Jews] sang hymns and led paeans to God." Then, "all night long they continued to sing hymns and songs, and at dawn pouring out through the gates, they made their way to the parts of the bench near at hand, since their places of prayer [synagogues] had been taken from them" (*Flaccus* 121-122). It is rightly observed that this was an exceptional circumstance and not a service nor in a synagogue.<sup>17</sup> The very fact that it was an exceptional circumstance argues

that the Jews were accustomed to sing religious songs. They had learned these hymns to God somewhere, and they would have gathered in their synagogues on this occasion if they had been able to do so. Concerning a similar situation of crisis from an earlier time, (ascribed to third century B.C. but written probably in the first century B.C.) 3 Maccabees 7:16 speaks of the Jews as a group joining in “songs of praise and melodious hymns” to celebrate their deliverance. These songs included “psalms” (6:35) and “the song of their fathers” (6:32).

It seems reasonable to conclude that at least some of the Psalms were sung at least on some occasions in the synagogue meetings. But this was not the only setting in Judaism for the practice of unaccompanied song.

### **Home**

It has recently been argued that Jewish religious activities in the family and home provide the pattern for early Christian assemblies. Noting that early Christian assemblies resembled Jewish private gatherings by meeting in houses, including a meal with their worship, and holding vigils at night, J.A. Smith has observed these further similarities between the church and Jewish private religious assemblies: they were informal but not disorderly, there were no musical instruments, and there was no exclusion of women.<sup>18</sup>

We are best informed about the Passover. Although the lambs were sacrificed at the temple, the Passover meal itself was eaten at home. The Passover was a celebration by families or small groups. Once more the most detailed accounts come from rabbinic literature, that is, later than the New Testament. The Hallel Psalms were sung in the

passover ritual in the home (Pesahim 9.3; 10.6). The rabbis could not conceive of the Passover with uttering song (bPesahim 117a; 118a; cf. 85b; yPesahim 7:11). Other songs were sung in addition to the appointed Psalms of the *sedar* (yPesahim 10.6). In regard to the Passover we have the confirmation of the New Testament for the first-century practice of singing (Matthew 26:30).

There is also first-century evidence for the practice of singing the Psalms in families on other occasions. A faithful mother reminded her children that their father “sang to you the psalm of David” in home (4 Maccabees 18:15).

Musical instruments did continue to have a place in the family observances of weddings and funerals. There was singing for joy at weddings (Sotah 9.11; 3 Maccabees 4:6-8) and songs of lamentation at funerals (Moed Katan 3.8f.). The Mishnah refers to “pipers for a bride or for a corpse.”<sup>19</sup> Again there is New Testament confirmation: pipe players at a funeral in Matthew 9:23 and pipe playing at a (wedding) dance in 11:17).

There is some indication that some of the rabbis sought to eliminate or restrict instrumental music from banquets in the home (bGittin 7a; Sotah 48a), but this effort belonged to a later period.

### Sect

There is another context in Jewish religious life in the first century that must be considered: sectarian Judaism.

The musical practices of the Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls are not clear, but some evidence is suggestive. The Qumran documents include scrolls of the Psalms which contain psalms in addition to



the canonical Psalms. An intriguing hypothesis about these supplementary psalms is that they were written so that each of the twenty-four courses of Levites would have a different Psalm for each day of its week on duty (twenty-four courses times seven days required a total of 168 Psalms).<sup>20</sup> If this hypothesis should hold up, it would give significant new evidence about the use of the Psalms at the temple. Whether there was some effort to preserve this Psalm usage at Qumran must remain uncertain, but a note in one of the Psalm Scrolls (1Q Ps<sup>a</sup>) on David's compositions envisages four liturgical uses for the Psalms: daily, Sabbaths, thirty holy days, and exorcisms.

The Thanksgiving Scroll (Hodayoth) contains hymns that may have been employed in community worship. The use of the first person singular is not necessarily a barrier to this use. One of the hymns declares, "Into my mouth Thou hast put songs of thanksgiving and on my tongue [a song of pr]aise, and Thou has circumcised my lips in the abode of rejoicing that I should sing Thy favors" (1QH xi.3). A reference to instruments in the Rule of the Community may be metaphorical: "I will sing in knowledge (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:15), and my whole lyre shall throb to the glory of God, and my lute and harp to the holy order which he has made. I will raise the flute of my lips because of His righteous measuring-cord" (1QS x.9).<sup>21</sup>

The Therapeutae, a sect in Egypt perhaps related to the Essenes, are known from Philo's treatise *On the Contemplative Life* (early first century).<sup>22</sup> At one of the sacred banquets of the sect:

*The president rises and sings a hymn composed as an address to God, either a new one of his own composition or an old one by poets of*

*an earlier day who have left behind them hymns in many measures and melodies [Psalms ?] . . . After him all the others take their turn as they are arranged and in the proper order while all the rest listen in complete silence except when they have to chant the closing lines or refrains, for then they all lift up their voices, men and women alike. [Contemplative Life 80.]*

And an all-night vigil:

*They form themselves into two choirs, one of men and one of women, the leader and precentor chosen for each being the most honored among them and also the most musical. Then they sing hymns to God composed of many measures and set to many melodies, sometimes chanting together, sometimes taking up the harmony antiphonally, hands and feet keeping time in accompaniment, and rapt with enthusiasm reproduce sometimes the lyrics of the procession, sometimes of the halt and of the wheeling and counter wheeling of a choric dance. . . . Then they mix and both together become a single choir, a copy of the choir set up of old beside the Red Sea in honor of the wonders there wrought . . . . This wonderful sight and experience . . . so filled with ecstasy both men and women that forming a single choir they sang hymns of thanksgiving to God their Savior, the men led by the prophet Moses and the women by the prophetess Miriam. (Contemplative Life 83-87.)<sup>23</sup>*

This description has a special importance for the study of Christian origins. It shows the types of vocal music available in the Judaism at the time of the beginning of Christianity. Therapeutae employed solo, responsive (the congregation chanting refrains following one person's rendition), antiphonal (the group divided into two choirs singing alternately), and unison singing. These same four types of vocal rendition are attested in Christian usage in the fourth century.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the description sounded so much like Christian practice that Eusebius thought Philo was describing Christians (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.17.22).

### **Conclusion**

The Christians' practice of singing in their assemblies would have had its ultimate roots in the psalmody of the temple. The transfer of the use of the Psalms to a congregational setting apart from material sacrifice and without instrumental accompaniment presumably occurred in the synagogues. The influence of synagogue practices in general upon the early church makes this a likely historical source for the Christian practice of unaccompanied song. The most explicit evidence from the first century, however, of religious songs without instrumental accompaniment pertains to religious exercises in homes and in sectarian groups. Whatever the exact Jewish antecedents, the Christian practice of unaccompanied singing of the Psalms and other religious songs is well attested and would have been quite at home in the context of the Judaism of the first century.

<sup>1</sup>For surveys see Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1972); Bill Flatt, ed., *The Instrumental Music Issue* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1987). More extensive treatments, based mainly on rabbinic and later sources are found in A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York: Tudor, 1944); Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959; New York: KTAV, 1984); Karl Erich Groezinger, *Musik and Gesang in der Theologie der fruhen Juedischen Literatur* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>See my *A Cappella Music*, pp. 29-31 for some of the evidence.

<sup>3</sup>A. Buechler, "Zur Geschichte der Tempelmusik and der Tempelpsalmen," *Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 19 (1899):344 correctly notes that the Chronicler says nothing about Psalm singing, but seems unduly skeptical about the extent of the usage of the Psalms at the Temple, especially in view of indications within the Psalms themselves. See Jack P. Lewis, "New Testament Authority for Music in Worship," *The Instrumental Music Issue*, ed. Bill Flatt (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1987), pp. 20-22.

<sup>4</sup>Tamid 7.4

<sup>5</sup>bRosh HaShanah 30b, citing R. Akiba, early second century; cf. BShabbath 118b; song of Solomon Rabbah 4.4.6

<sup>6</sup>Pesachim 5.7; Sukkah 3.9; 4.1; Buechler, *Z.N.W.* 20(1900):131-135, would limit the use of these.

<sup>7</sup>Arakhin 2.3-6, which gives the minimum and maximum number of each instrument and of singers.

<sup>8</sup>Middoth 2.5,6; cf. Sukkah 5.4 on instruments and bMenahoth 44b on Psalms sun over the drink offering.

<sup>9</sup>Groezinger, pp. 128, 228.

<sup>10</sup>James W. McKinnon, "The Exclusion of Musical Instruments from the Ancient Synagogue," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106 (1979-1980):82.

<sup>11</sup>Groezinger, pp. 128ff. Cf. Sirach 40:21.

<sup>12</sup>McKinnon, 84f.; J.A. Smith, "The Ancient Synagogue, the Early Church and Singing," *Music and Letters* 65 (1984):1-16.

<sup>13</sup>Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.13; *Quod omnis probus* 12 (81) on the Essenes; Josephus, *Apion*, 2.17 (175); cf. Luke 4:16ff.; Acts 13:15f. See Smith, pp. 7f.

<sup>14</sup>See *A Cappella Music*, p. 33 and H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: University Press, 1933), p. 794, note on Maamad.

<sup>15</sup>If a slave, woman, or a minor says it, others must repeat the words; if the person reciting is of age, then others may respond only with "Hallelujah" (Sukkah 3.10f.) The later bSukkah 38a-b gives directions for the responsive singing of Hallel Psalms. The different types of congregational participation in bSotah 30b (see *A Cappella Music*, pp. 33f.) corresponds with the practices in the church—Basil, *Ep.* 207.

<sup>16</sup>McKinnon, after saying that the references "give much more the impression of a simple recitation than a melodious psalmody" (pp. 84f.), then must grant that "the recitation of Scripture in the ancient Synagogue was not a dry reading in the modern sense, but rather some sort of elemental declamation or cantilation" (p. 85). There seems to be nothing more than a quibble over what constitutes "melody."

<sup>17</sup>Smith, pp. 4f.

<sup>18</sup>Smith, 12-15.

<sup>19</sup>Baba Metzia 6.1; for funerals cf. Shabbath 23.4 and Josephus, *War* 3.9.5(437).

<sup>20</sup>R.T. Beckwith, "The Courses of the Levites and the Eccentric Psalms Scrolls from Qumram," *Revue de Qumran* 11.44 (1984): 499-524.

<sup>21</sup>Eric Werner, "Musical Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Musical Quarterly* 43 (1957):21-37.

<sup>22</sup>For Philo's own musical views, see *A Cappella Music*, pp. 12-14, 37-42.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Sukkah 5.4 for dancing and song as part of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

<sup>24</sup>Basil, *Epistle 207*; for comparable practice among Jews see b Sotah 30b.