

1986

1986: Abilene Christian University Lectures - Full Text

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Willard Collins


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PREFACE

The lectures and special classes contained in this volume are those which were given at the 68th Annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian University on the theme "The Living Restoration."

This theme suggests that the task of restoring New Testament Christianity is never complete. The restoration movement poses two great emphases. First, all believers should be united into the one body of Christ. Second, unity occurs by a return to the New Testament. The Lord's church is always just one generation away from apostasy.

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 are able to attend in person, but also, through this volume, to thousands of others for years to come.

CARL BRECHEEN
Lectureship Director

MAIN SPEECHES

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THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS

by Avon Malone

In his most scathing denunciation of hypocrisy, Jesus cried out, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!" (Matthew 23:23).

To men then and now who major in minors, Jesus calls for a sense of balance and proportion. He calls for a devotion that is personal and genuine, a commitment that emanates from the heart and goes beyond the keeping of a few externals. He calls for faith, justice, and mercy.

The classic utterance of our Lord in Matthew 23:23 brings before us a distinction and a demand; and, in addition, it implies a certain dynamic.

The reference to "weightier matters" suggests a distinction. The Lord's language makes it clear that all matters are not of equal consequence. If some matters are weightier, then clearly some are not as weighty.

There is a certain mentality that would see Christianity as little more than another legal system which superceded the Mosaic Law and in which every part and facet is of equal significance. While Jesus is careful to say, "These ye ought to have done," with regard to the tithing of the garden herbs (all that God requires is important), still he makes it clear that some matters are much weightier. So we must be concerned to teach "all things whatsoever"

he commanded (Matthew 28:19). We must not minimize anything His word instructs us to do. However, at the same time, there is a distinction—a very definite delineation—which Jesus' language demands: some matters are weightier!

One of the revealing statements of our Lord in this connection occurs in a compelling context. Jesus is before Pilate. (Merrill C. Tenney has said that Pilate is on trial before Jesus.) The Lord does not exonerate Pilate from his wrong, but he makes it clear that another is weighted with greater guilt. As Pilate is pressing his "power to release" and his "power to crucify," a composed Christ counters with, "Thou wouldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin" (John 19:11).

While there are no little sins because there is no little God to sin against, still it is clear some wrongs are greater (John 19:11) and some matters are weightier (Matthew 23:23). A mark of maturity is the recognition of this distinction.

Micah, chapter six, provides a graphic picture of "the weightier matters" as opposed to empty, though lavish, offerings. In this dramatic scene, God confronts His people with a kind of spiritual lawsuit. As he presses his charges against them, the people break in with a kind of hypercritical eagerness: "Wherewith shall we come before Jehovah?" They proceed with proposals calculated to appease his wrath and "set the books right." What about "thousands of rams, or thousands of rivers of oil"? What about "my first born, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul"? When God through his prophet said, "He hath showed thee, man, what is good and what doth Jehovah

require of thee but to do justly; to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God," Jehovah was saying, "I want you to discern between the major and the minor." God thunders the crucial truth, "I want *you*, not your things but *you*—your heart given in humble devotion to me and seen in love and justice toward others" (Micah 6:8). This great Old Testament text makes it clear that it is the individual's relationship to God—and not lavish offerings—that really matters. In every age, it is God and individual in an authentic spiritual relationship that is at the heart of all true religion.

Twice in Matthew's gospel, Jesus called attention to Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Now, Jehovah did require sacrifice. There were stipulated offerings minutely described in the law, and they were required by that system. Of the sacrifices which were bound up in the fabric of the Levitical legislation, our Lord would say, "These ye ought to have done." However, there is something that far surpasses the offering of animals in the divine concern. The sacrifices he does require; but, beyond that, he desires that his people show a heart and life of mercy.

The occurrence of this great Old Testament text in Matthew 12:1-8 illustrates this truth. The disciples of Jesus plucked and ate the ears of grain, and they walked through the grain fields. The judgment of the Pharisees was swiftly and succinctly stated: "Behold, thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath." Jesus counters with the example of David eating the shewbread (cf. 1 Samuel 21:6). He also argues from the conduct of the priest in the temple on the sabbath. Having shocked his hearers with the claim that "greater than the

temple is here," he added, "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

As significant as is sacrifice—as crucial as is conformity to the sacrificial system—a heart of compassion and mercy is greater and more desired by our Father.

In the plaintive cry of Psalm 51, we are again confronted with this truth: "Thou desirest not sacrifice else I would give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of Jehovah are a broken and contrite spirit. A broken and contrite spirit thou wilt not despise, O Lord."

The word teaches with clarity that some matters take definite precedence over others. Sacrifice is required, but mercy matters more. Offerings are demanded by the Deity we serve, but they become hollow effrontery if given by a heart that lacks love. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Paul prays for the Philippians that "your love may abound in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent" (Philippians 1:9f.). This is the appropriate petition for us. God give us that discernment to distinguish the weightier matters from those of less consequence. May we not major in minors. May we avoid the trap of the trivial. May we scrupulously teach and observe "all things whatsoever" he commanded (Matthew 28:19f.), while at the same time allowing the matters of real moment—the weightier matters—to pervade our hearts. May we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, and may it come from a heart of compassion. May we do as well with faith, justice, and mercy

as we do with the tithing of the garden herbs. May we have our “senses exercised to discern” not only good and evil, but also the weighty and the less consequential.

In 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul describes those who “have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.” J. B. Phillips translates: “having a facade of religion” but denying its power and reality. This language well describes the ultimate result of magnifying minors to the neglect of the weightier matters.

The late R. C. Bell was concerned that we might emphasize “human mechanics” to the neglect of “divine dynamics.” Buildings and budgets, though useful, can never take the place of a transformed individual who demonstrates justice, lovingkindness, and a humble walk with God. How crucial is the discernment that “approves the things that are excellent”—that consistently gives due emphasis to the weightier matters.

Ringling through the Lord’s language (Matthew 23:23) is the demand, “Ye ought not to have left the other undone.” That is, you should never have neglected the weightier matters. The divine demand here calls God’s people to a sense of proportion and to a life of faith, justice, and mercy. The great imperative of the passage makes it clear that the individual’s relationship with God is central. Restoration in the ultimate sense is the restoration of a man or woman to God’s favor and fellowship. To emphasize only isolated doctrinal truths, no matter how vital, to the neglect of the individual’s relationship to the Lord—the “humble walk with God”—is to leave the effort at restoration bereft of real power.

Any consideration of the “weightier matters” must focus on the crucial nature of the individual’s relationship

with Christ. When we think only in collective terms, we become easily preoccupied with the “tithe of mint, anise and cummin.” It is when we see that restoration must, at its heart, be the restoration of the individual to God’s fellowship that we best prepare to come to grips with “the weightier matters.”

Paul possesses the perspective that sees the great value of the individual. He writes, “Whom we proclaim, admonishing *every* man and teaching *every* man in all wisdom, that we may present *every* man perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1:28). This maturity—“perfect in Christ”—Paul describes in a companion letter: “Till we all attain . . . unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). The individual molded into his image is the ever-beckoning ideal.

The thrilling truth is that every Christian is a priest of God—an integral part of a kingly, royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 5:9,10). Every child of God is a minister—a servant—of Christ (1 Peter 2:21; Isaiah 53). Each Christian is a part of God’s heritage—his clergy as portion (Ephesians 1:11). We are highly privileged. Though a part of a great corporate *koinonia*, the individual is highly and personally privileged. He is a child of the king!

In all of our rightful stress on biblical worship and correct organization, may we not lose sight of the individual and his relationship with the redeemer. May each of us—every child of God—have a strong, unwavering sense of personal, spiritual identity. May we always remember who we are, that we may mature in the matters that are weightier.

In Alex Haley’s celebrated *Roots*, Toby, the slave, was

not a slave at all in his own thinking. He remained Kunta Kente, a Mandinka warrior. He never lost his sense of identity.

May we not forget that we are “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.” We are called by Calvary not merely to tithe the garden herbs but to “show forth the excellencies of him that called you out of darkness into his marvelous lights” (1 Peter 2:9).

Why have weightier matters been left undone? Why have the great principles been at times neglected?

A partial answer might be that controversy is sometimes allowed to determine areas of emphasis. We salute the pioneers of the past who battled error valiantly. Ours is a rich heritage in which controversy played its necessary part. However, it is conceivable that in our polemic against religious falsehood, we emphasized certain vital truths to the neglect of equally essential truth. Bible baptism is indispensable to authentic conversion; but has repentance—a real turning from sin—received its rightful stress? Church organization, church anatomy, and worship are all crucial to real restoration. But what is worship (though free of unauthorized innovations) if unaccompanied by a heart of justice, lovingkindness, and a humble walk with the God who is worshipped? Some of the most piercing words of the prophets are directed against a hollow worship by those who have no heart for God and his weightier matters (Amos 4:4ff.; 5:21-24).

The neglect of the weightier matters may issue, at times, from the fact that it is much easier to comply outwardly to a list of externals than it is to surrender one’s heart to God. The Pharisee who prayed *with himself* paints a pic-

ture of this kind of superficial religion: "I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get" (Luke 18:11,12). He had missed the major as he majored in minors. The weightier matters eluded him as he prided himself on his compliance with isolated externals.

Pure legalism will tend to gravitate to one of two extremes: pride or despair. The former we see in the Pharisee of Luke 18. The latter we often see in ourselves. As paradoxical as it may appear, both extremes at various times may plague the same individual. May we avoid both. May we carefully and scrupulously observe all things that He has commanded (Matthew 28:19f.). May we hear and heed his "These ye ought to have done" (Matthew 23:23). At the same time, may we be painfully dissatisfied with a comfortable list of externals, and may we probe our hearts for the faith, justice, mercy, and true holiness without which no man can see the Lord. May we learn from the controversies of the past and present, yet all the while may we strive for the balanced, proportionate emphasis that gives the weightier matters their rightful place.

Perhaps the passage that will call us back to the great essentials is the incomparable love hymn of 1 Corinthians 13:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to re-

move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.

The late William Barclay observed that no passage poses such a frightening, fearful challenge to the good man as the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. "It profits nothing" describes the end result of all the tithing of herbs if love is lacking. What a shocking, sobering truth! A perfunctory performance through a lifetime in which outward rites are kept by a loveless heart is all for naught. How we must search and cleanse our hearts, and how we must cling to the truly great essentials—justice, mercy, and faith.

The Lord who makes the great demand—" . . . these ye ought to have done and *not to have left the other undone*"—also provides us with the great dynamic. In fact, he is himself the dynamic of his demands. The key to the enshrining of the weightier matters in our hearts is not rigorous self-effort (though our will is free and personal

discipline has its place), but is rather our unconditional surrender to an indwelling Lord. This dependence on him and on his indwelling power and presence is the key. Without him within, we will likely stop with "the tithe of mint, anise and cummin." With Christ in our hearts, kindness, compassion, justice, faith, and invincible *agape* love flow freely through our lives to touch the lives of others.

The great reality of his indwelling is undeniable:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

"And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10).

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17).

"To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Our Christ is not some irrelevant relic from the remote

past. He is the incomparable and contemporary Christ who lives in us!

He is the answer, the sure antidote to our problem. We cannot live out life's little day majoring in minors if "Christ dwells in" our "hearts by faith."

The necessary condition to his indwelling is our surrender to Him. Before Paul could say, "Christ lives in me," he had to say, "I am crucified with Christ."

May we become his captive, that his freedom may be ours. May we find the path to the weightier matters by our unconditional surrender to his will.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields,"

He said, "No, walk in the town."

I said, "But there are no flowers there."

He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the sky is black,

and there is nothing but noise and din."

He wept as he sent me back,

"There is more," He said; "There is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,

and clouds are veiling the sun."

He whispered, "Yet souls are sick,

lost, in the dark, undone."

I said, "But I'll miss the light

and friends will miss me, they say."

He said, "You must choose tonight

whether I am to miss you or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.

He said, "Is it hard to decide?

It will not seem hard in heaven

to have followed the steps of your guide."

WILLARD COLLINS

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Other Fields of Special Interest: Has authored four books: *Daily Living for Christ*, 1951; *A Plea for Christ*, 1960; *Collins-Craig Auditorium Meeting Sermons*, 1962; and *Volume VI, Great Preachers of Today Series*. Member of editorial staffs of *Gospel Advocate* and *20th Century Christian*.



NEITHER LIBERALISM NOR LEGALISM

by Willard Collins

Introduction

This large audience from across our land has assembled because, as individuals, you love Christ and his church.

The church of our Lord has been splintered by legalists and liberals. Division is wrong. Therefore, we are here to study legalism and liberalism and then to search for a better way.

Legalism and liberalism are at opposite ends of the spectrum. It is easy to go to extremes.

I am here to oppose extremism. I make an appeal—as one who has been preaching for 50 years—for a much better way.

My friend Batsell Barrett Baxter, who served as Lipscomb's chairman of the Department of Bible, as a radio and television speaker for the "Herald of Truth," and as the prominent minister of the Hillsboro congregation in Nashville, told me this story of a friend of his. It seems that this man stopped at a truck stop in the middle of the night. While he was eating, there were two truckers who had driven in on their big juggernauts—one from one direction and one from the other. They had known each other—they visited—and they ate together. He overheard their conversation as they got up to leave. One of them in his parting word to the other said, "Well, keep it between the fences!"

Your dedication and mine, as members of the church, is to keep the Lord's church between the fences—between the dry dust and ashes of legalism on one side, and on the other side the even more dangerous swamp of legalism. This is the more dangerous of the two, because when you go into legalism there is no way back. You just go on and on, and it gets worse and worse.

Definitions

Most of us have heard the term “legalism,” but really what does it mean?

Legalism means a blind concern for law without a corresponding concern for the spirit of the law or the elements behind the law. Jesus gave a good description when he said:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:8,9).

My friend Batsell Barrett Baxter said:

As I think of legalism, I think of it as the obeying of law without the spirit of the law and without any love behind the obedience. Ultimately legalism becomes burdensome and leads almost to despair. ¹

The Pharisees described in Matthew 23 just have to be prime examples of legalists from the mind of Christ.

Do you remember the seven woes that were pronounced on those Pharisees? Jesus said:

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers (Matthew 23:4).

Legalists are those who are “anti” to so many of the things which are needed in the Lord’s church—anti-class, anti-literature, anti-orphan home, anti-congregational cooperation, and the list could be made longer. But the making and the proliferation of rules and regulations and the binding of them on people where the Lord has not is an important element in this definition of legalism.

In matters of faith that are clearly taught in the scriptures, there must be absolute loyalty and unity from the elders on down in the congregation. But in the area of judgment and opinion, surely we must continue the spirit of the restoration movement of allowing liberty. In all of my preaching, I have heard people proclaim, “In matters of faith—unity; in matters of opinion—liberty; in all things—charity and love!”

Legalism is the kind of attitude that will divide the body of Christ and fraction it.

May I go back to the Freed-Hardeman speech made by Batsell Barrett Baxter in 1977 to give an illustration which captures the very heart of legalism:

I think I can say what I want to say in terms of a very simple illustration. We are approaching a school zone, and there is the usual sign that says

15 mph when school is in session. Here comes a car, and the man in it is a selfish kind of individual. He is aware of the sign, but he is more concerned about himself. He's in a hurry. He rushes right on by and speeds through at about 30 to 50 mph. He's the liberal—has no respect for the law. But there's another car coming behind him, and this car slows and goes through at 15 mph. But the driver churns inside—he resents that sign. Yes, he's obeying it, but only because he's often seen a police car in the neighborhood and he doesn't want the traffic citation. And so he's obeying it to the letter, but certainly not in the spirit. Now that's the legalist.

And then there comes another car. The man driving this car slows to that same 15 mph. He's not so much aware of the sign as he is aware of the children! He goes through that zone at the slow speed because he loves and respects the lives of those children. Now there's the Christian—the better way. There is the obedience to the law, but there's more—there is the proper spirit of the law.

You remember the 31st chapter of Jeremiah in the Old Testament and how that in the book of Hebrews it's copied (not quite in its entirety but nearly), and down in the 10th verse of that 8th chapter of Hebrews there is the repeating of the Old Testament phrase, “. . . the law written on the heart” The legalist doesn't have the law written on his heart, but the ideal Christian

has the law written on his heart. And out of love for God, he does the things that are required. ²

The central problem of legalism is a low view of the authority and the inspiration of scriptures. ³

What about "liberalism"? The classic liberalist is a man who does not believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. He does not believe in the miracles of the Bible or in the divinity of Christ. He does not believe in the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, or in many of the basic teachings of Christ, including heaven, hell, and the judgment.

Classic liberalism simply cuts the ground out from under Christianity. It is a denial of the inspiration and the authority of the Bible. You find classic liberalism in saying that Isaiah was written by two or maybe even nine different writers. You find it undermining the authority and the inspiration of the scriptures. It is wrong and deadly, and it will destroy Christianity.

There is a practical kind of liberalism that is perhaps less immediately destructive. It moves away from the New Testament pattern. This is the movement toward denominational terminology. It is a move toward religious significance in Christmas and Easter and Good Friday. It is known in the fellowshipping of denominational people as they lead away from the respect of the law of God.

Searching for the Better Way

Are legalism and liberalism the only choices we have in the church today? They are not! There is the better way—the way of keeping between the fences.

There are two scriptures which I want to read to you, and I am asking for your mind as I read them.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24).

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment (Mark 12:28-30).

A Christian must have an open heart and an open mind to ask the question in each generation and with each individual student, "What does the Bible actually say—what does God really want me to do?"

How can I accomplish his will in my life? There should always be a sense of willingness to accept the eternal truth that the Bible is right—that instead of saying I am right and you are wrong in a very sectarian spirit, just simply say that the Bible is right.

Christians should always be sincerely willing to accept the eternal truth that the Bible is right and that anyone who departs from its teachings is wrong in whatever way or to whatever extent he may do so. By the same principle, anyone who studies, learns, and follows the teachings of the Bible is right in whatever way and to whatever extent he may do so.

There must be an honest recognition of and frank acceptance of the principle that right and wrong are determined by "thus saith the Lord" and not by "thus saith the brethren."

The cardinal principle in the teaching of the Bible should be, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

Far too often, religion has tended to divide rather than to unite—to create hate rather than love—and to prevent rather than achieve the accomplishments of God's will in the hearts of men. The degree to which this spirit of loyalty to the word of God is revealed in the scriptures, coupled with genuine humility concerning our own wisdom and achievements, will be the measure of strength in the years to come for the church.

Those of us who have worked in Christian colleges and universities in connection with training people for the church—and all of us who work as members of the church in this present secular age in any capacity—will have increasing responsibilities to deal calmly with the surging tides and currents in our society which threaten these principles from both the conservative right and the radical left in religion and in life. The path of wisdom lies in a quiet loyalty to the basic principles of the Christian religion and restrained action which avoids the irresponsible ex-

tremes which have snared and destroyed human beings and human endeavors through the ages.

This is the better way!

Practical Examples

In the history of the world, there is perhaps no more conspicuous example of inconsistency and hypocrisy than these Pharisees/legalists mentioned in Matthew 23. Jesus said of them, "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).

In reference to oaths, they said:

Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters

of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel (Matthew 23:16-24).

There is the principle. The blind guides who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel—these were the legalistic Pharisees.

In giving examples of legalists, or hairsplitters, I want to lean heavily on an article from L. L. Brigance in the February 28, 1974, issue of the *Gospel Advocate*. This is 11 years ago, but I think you will find it interesting and practical. Let's examine these people who, in the words of L. L. Brigance, were so "particular about gnats and so indifferent to camels."

*The Pharisees could hear the chirp of a cricket a few feet away, but could not hear the rolling thunder of a gathering storm. Their religion was blind, bigoted, narrow and hypocritical.*⁴

In regard to hairsplitters, brother Brigance continued in his 1974 article:

*There are those among us who are constantly finding fault, kicking and quibbling about little things. They appear to regard everyone that does not agree with them in all things as unsound in the faith, disloyal to the Bible, ignorant, insincere and dishonest. Everyone must be on his p's and q's.*⁵

Brigance continued:

These hairsplitters are a contentious lot. They enjoy controversy. They will stay with you "till the cows come home" and "the sun goes down" on the most insignificant matters. They will split hairs with you about fermented or unfermented wine; the common or individual communion cup; whether it is right to use a baptistry; whether it is a sin to have the Lord's Supper more than once a Sunday, or take a collection on Sunday night, or to build and maintain schools in which to teach the Bible; whether it is right to have a "regular" or "located" preacher; and a hundred and one other things of like nature. ⁶

The next example is from Abilene's own Dr. J. D. Thomas in his book *We Be Brethren*. I want to remind you of the fruits of legalism as compiled by Dr. Thomas.

An extreme legalistic attitude causes one to want everything to be either "black" or "white" with no shades of gray whatever—a "sharp" detailed law.

- (a) For instance, relative to the sin of gluttony, the legalist would want to be able to say that two and one-half bites of pie are scriptural; but three bites would be a sin!*
- (b) He likes the definiteness of the 10% requirement of the Mosaic law on giving and chafes at the Christian requirement of "as we have been prospered," since it gets away from the exact, detailed rule. He is made uncomfort-*

able and insecure to think that you cannot draw a sharp line on the exact amount.

- (c) *The extreme legalist recognizes that the scriptures authorize church enrollment and support of certain SIXTY-year-old widows (1 Timothy 5:9,10), but he would be willing to let a FIFTY-NINE-year-old widow starve! Being "scriptural" to him means no more than meeting a technical demand. There is no spirituality involved—no concern with right attitudes.*
- (d) *In the realm of MORALS he also wants sharp lines drawn, with every activity either scriptural or completely unscriptural. Croquet, coffee or whatever, must be either scriptural or sinful—with no possible mitigating circumstances allowable. Everything is either black or white!*

*The normal legalist is a man who loves the LETTER, but ignores the SPIRIT of God's will.*⁷

On the other side, it is sad indeed to know of people who as liberals turn from the authority of the Bible. I respect those who try to stand up and be counted for the Lord's truth. To brother Brigance's credit, let me say that I agree with him wholeheartedly in regard to this statement made in his February 1974 article in the *Gospel Advocate*:

No one should underestimate being "sound in the faith." We ought to be careful to speak the

things that become sound doctrine. I am thankful for people who are trying to plead for the true inspiration of the Bible, and to do those things—and those things only—which are authorized in the Book. The way of the liberalist is not the sound way.

I am not saying that some of the things mentioned above are not important and should not be determined carefully by the Scriptures, but I am contending that many of them are matters of opinion, of indifference, and that perhaps none of them belong to “the weightier matters of the law.” To spend a great deal of time on them, therefore, is to tithe mint, anise, and cummin, to the neglect of far more important things.

I deplore and abominate wrangles, hairsplittings and personalities. When issues of real importance are discussed and the discussion is confined to the issue and not allowed to degenerate into personalities; when truth and victory is the objective of the disputants; and when both sides of the argument—having once been clearly stated—are brought to a close, I think that discussions do good.⁸

As a gospel preacher, I believe I have lived in one of the greatest periods in the history of the world—perhaps the greatest. There have been more changes in my lifetime than perhaps from Abraham to the year of my birth. There have been major changes in technology, in transportation, and in so many ways. I have gone from the

horse and buggy to the rockets sending people to the moon.

I wish we had the strength in the family and in our homes now that we had when I was a boy!

I can stand in this beautiful coliseum this evening on the campus of Abilene Christian University because we have had people—strong men in the past supported by fine wives as companions—who have stood up and have been counted for the great primary principles. They have stood up *against* liberalism and *for* the inspiration of the scriptures. They have stood in dark hours for the importance of the church in contrast to Protestantism, the value of giving our young people a Christian education, the deity of Christ, the existence of God, the importance of the way of salvation given through Christ, and the inspiration of the scriptures as to why we believe the Bible as the word of God. I have thrilled to hear men like G. C. Brewer and others as they have called people away from the world of Satan. I admire those who have thrilled me in their speeches against communism, premillennialism, and secularism. I appreciate people here and in my own home state of Tennessee and throughout our brotherhood who have defended vocal music as right and mechanical music as wrong. We appreciate those who have spoken for unity based on a submission to God's will as given in John 17 and who have stood foursquare for the plenary inspiration of the Bible. They have met scholars, and the Bible lives!

Remember that Paul taught in Ephesians 4 that a great Christian is one who is sound in doctrine but who believes and preaches the seven "ones" of unity. A great Christian is one who is sound in attitude, who preaches and practices longsuffering, love, and humility. The preaching of

sound doctrine is not enough. It must be preached with the right attitude.

The church is **NOT** a Protestant denomination. Catholicism and Protestantism are entirely different movements from the church described in the New Testament. The seed of the church is the inspired word of God. When liberalism destroys the seed, or so waters it that we do not see the great and beautiful distinction between the church and Protestantism or between the law of Moses or the world, then we have destroyed that for which Jesus died.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Thank God for the many thousands of preachers who make the distinction in the spirit of love and truth.

Conclusion

Years ago I went to Lubbock, Texas, for a meeting with the Broadway congregation. I met Liff Sanders, teacher and gospel preacher. He told me, "I have preached in the dugouts and brush arbors and in the open air." He grew up with Lubbock, and that meant that Liff Sanders and the church—the body of Christ—grew along with Lubbock because brother Sanders was a member of the church of Christ. They grew together.

He had a great spirit. He believed in doctrine, but he believed also in the Christian spirit. His friends told me about the school which the community named for him.

The loyal congregations of the church in Lubbock are a

tribute to the fact that there is a better way than the legalist who is a hairsplitter and the liberalist who would discredit the word of God and try to make it the word of man. I pay tribute to the Liff Sanderses of the West and the David Lipscombses of the East who have lived and died as searchers and lovers of truth rather than as hairsplitting legalists and destructive liberalists who have sought to destroy the deity of Christ—the foundation of the church, the greatest kingdom in the world!

¹ Baxter, B. B., *Freed-Hardeman Lectures*, 1977 (Freed-Hardeman College Lectures speech, February 1977).

² Baxter, B. B., *Freed-Hardeman Lectures*, 1977.

³ Baxter, B. B., *Freed-Hardeman Lectures*, 1977.

⁴ Brigance, L. L., *Gospel Advocate*, February 28, 1974.

⁵ Brigance, L. L., *Gospel Advocate*, February 28, 1974.

⁶ Brigance, L. L., *Gospel Advocate*, February 28, 1974.

⁷ Thomas, J. D., *We Be Brethren*, p. 115.

⁸ Brigance, L. L., *Gospel Advocate*, February 28, 1974.

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OUR FATHERS IN FAITH

by Jerry Rushford

At the moment of its wondrous birth, Christianity was a simple, unsophisticated faith. The first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The church that emerged from the preaching of the apostles was a group of awakened people who hungered to learn together, grow together, worship together, and pray together. They saw themselves corporately as members of "one body in Christ," and they rejoiced to know that individually they were "members of one another" (Romans 12:5). They were bound together by a mutual faith in Christ and love for one another, and their life style ultimately shook the Roman world to its foundations.

Those early Christians shunned the priestly control which invests all leadership and initiative in the hands of specialists. They were unaware of distinctions between "clergy" and "laity," and they dared to suggest that every Christian is a priest. Although recognizing that gifts and functions vary among individual believers, the first followers of Jesus insisted that all Christians are "called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Through their preaching and teaching, they attempted to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). Rejecting worldly standards of greatness, they sought to follow the teaching and example of their servant Lord who said, "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11).

With the passing of time, however, the Christian faith

became muddled. Less than 30 years after the establishment of the church, the apostle Paul wrote to warn the Christians in Corinth: "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Christianity was already in danger of becoming complicated. Misguided leaders took unto themselves a power and preeminence once reserved for Christ alone. The church soon lost sight of her simplicities, lost hold of her centralities, and became enmeshed in an increasing array of things that were peripheral and trivial.

Hierarchies, councils, creeds, ornate liturgies, and the loud creaking of church machinery eventually obscured the essential simplicities of the Christian system. Politics and denominations further distorted the original purity of the faith. Inevitably, as the church became submerged in human traditions, ceremony, and ritual, it lost its vitality. The intimate and vibrant fellowship of the original Christians was replaced by a cumbersome institutional superstructure that often inhibited access to the Lord.

However, in century after century, through 92 generations, God raised up spokesmen who pleaded for a return to what was original and central in the faith. These leaders attempted to restore apostolic preaching and practice by an appeal to the revealed Word of God. The story of these back-to-the-Bible movements is one of the most thrilling in the annals of man, and it is to a brief portion of this story that we direct our attention tonight. This message pays tribute to our debt to our fathers in faith.

Christianity has always affirmed an intimate connection between the activity of God and the course of human his-

tory. We are forever indebted to the past. It is the source of our very identity. In the present moment, which changes as we live it, the past is all we know. Without a knowledge of the progress of Christianity in history, we have no understanding of who we are or how we came to be.

By telling us what our fathers did, church history inspires us in two directions: to respect their achievements, great in their day, and to strive to equal their resourcefulness and courage. The chronicles of church history are a marvelous drama of thought, feeling, and action. In times of discouragement and decline, the great stories from our fathers can instill us with renewed strength and encouragement.

So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

What Christian has not felt the mood of discouragement from time to time? We seem to be such an insignificant minority when viewed against the backdrop of world events. There are times when our deepest faith is troubled, and God seems distant and silent. What do you do when you are sorely perplexed by everything that is happening around you, and you know within yourself that you lack the courage to withstand the scorn and derision of the secular world?

It is in this mood that we turn again to the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, remembering that it was written to a small group of Christians who were almost overcome by discouragement and despair. The recipients of this letter were most likely living in Rome, the most powerful and the most pagan city in the ancient world. The church met in secret. The public persecution of Christians was increasing

with every passing week, and many believers were falling away from the faith.

The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* has one central purpose in mind—to reassure and strengthen his readers and prevent them from falling away from their faith. He addresses their fears and their shaken faith, and he attempts through a variety of approaches to stiffen their resolve. At the beginning of the eleventh chapter, the writer tries to accomplish his purpose by reminding them of their fathers. This is a bold and daring strategy, and it produces one of the most exciting chapters in the Bible.

He guides his readers down a long corridor in a portrait gallery of Old Testament heroes, and he reminds them of the monumental faith of their fathers. As he discusses the great faith of men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, his readers listen intently and with keen anticipation. At the end of the long corridor, he pauses to say:

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight

Notice his strategy. He wants his readers to linger in the presence of their fathers and to learn from them the secret of endurance under trial. He wants them to stay in the presence of their fathers long enough for that presence to

become real to them. He wants them to feel the strength of being surrounded by their fathers and to know the immortality of their spiritual heritage and destiny. As he ushers his readers out of the portrait gallery, he offers this urgent exhortation:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

In February of 1839, Julius Hare preached a sermon to students at Cambridge University in England, in which he picked up where the eleventh chapter of *Hebrews* ended and extended the list on through church history.¹ In the midst of his long historical summary, he included lines such as these:

By faith Wycliffe, the morning-star of the reformation, rose out of darkness, and heralded the coming daylight.

By faith Luther proclaimed his theses against the doctrine of indulgences. By faith he burned the pope's bull, and thereby for himself and for millions and millions after him threw off the crushing yoke of Rome.

By faith he went to the diet at Worms, though warned the fate of Huss would await him, go-

ing, as he said, in the strength of Christ, despite the gates of hell, and of the prince of the powers of the air.

By faith he translated the Bible and received a glorious reward of being the interpreter of the Word of God to his countrymen for all generations.

By faith Rogers, the protomartyr of our reformation, when his wife and his eleven children met him on his way to the stake, and an offer of life and pardon was brought to him in their sight, if so be he would recant, walked on with a stout heart, and washed his hands in the flames while he was burning, rejoicing in the fiery baptism whereby he gave up his soul to God.

At the close of this dramatic sermon, Hare challenged the Cambridge students with these words:

And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Ignatius, and Justin, and Cyprian, and Basil, and Augustine, and Patrick, and Columba, and Bede . . . who by faith subdued kingdoms for Christ, wrought righteousness, obtained the fulfillment of the promises, stopped the mouths of blasphemers, and filled them with hymns of praise, quenched the violence of hatred, melting it into love, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in the fight against Satan, and turned armies of aliens to bow before the name of the living God.

His strategy was the same as that of the writer of the

Epistle to the Hebrews. He wanted the Cambridge students to linger in the presence of their fathers in the faith and to learn again the secret of endurance under trial. And, like the author of *Hebrews*, he concluded his journey into the past with an urgent exhortation about being "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" and the need for the students to take heart and continue the race with their eyes on Christ.

Can you imagine what it must have been like when that little band of Christians in Rome first read the eleventh chapter of *Hebrews*? Can you see their mood of fear and discouragement giving way to one of faith and courage and resilience? Can you picture in your mind the students at Cambridge as the chronicles of church history were unfolded before their eyes? Was their mood of complacency and indifference replaced by one of urgency and commitment?

Those of us who share a common heritage in the Restoration Movement can appreciate this appeal to history. We, too, are surrounded by wonderful fathers in the faith. We need to spend more time in their presence and to be reminded of their sacrifice and commitment. There must be something tremendously worthwhile about a spiritual heritage like ours that is bequeathed with such passion from one generation to the next. We will never be able to entirely repay our indebtedness to our fathers in the Restoration Movement, but we can try to be faithful to that heritage and bequeath it to our children.

They Claim No Creed but the Bible

Thomas D. Garvin, a gospel preacher from Ohio,

moved to southern California in 1884 and immediately began preaching in evangelistic meetings. One such meeting with the church in Santa Ana in March, 1885, resulted in 15 baptisms and prompted Garvin to submit a brief report to the *Christian Standard* back home in Cincinnati. At the close of his optimistic letter, Garvin said, "We feel grateful that so many were willing to hear the plea for a restoration of primitive teaching and practice."² What is the historical background to this plea that Garvin spoke of?

The Restoration Movement in North America originated on the frontier at the turn of the nineteenth century in a period of religious enthusiasm and ferment. The first leaders of the movement deplored the numerous divisions in the church and urged the unity of all Christians through a restoration of New Testament Christianity. Protestantism had gone astray, they felt, and the denominations must be directed back to primitive Christianity. They generally conceived that this would be possible if everyone would wear the name "Christian" and return to the Biblical pattern of the New Testament church in doctrine, worship, and practice.

Those two ideas—the restoration of New Testament Christianity and the reunion of all Christians—became a distinctive "plea"; and, unceasingly, in season and out of season, they penetrated the frontier with their appeal. They called their efforts the "Restoration Movement" or the "Current Reformation" and saw themselves as participants in a movement within the existing churches aimed at eliminating all sectarian divisions.

Our fathers in this movement accepted the Bible as the absolute and final authority in religion, and they believed

that an intelligent investigation of that source would result in the discovery of truth. An early motto was, "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent."³ With unabashed zeal, they waged war on all human religious creeds and pleaded with all men to take "the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven."⁴

Of the two main streams in the movement, one was led by Barton Warren Stone of Lexington, Kentucky, and the other by Alexander Campbell of Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia). Of the two, priority in time belongs to Stone. In the summer of 1804, he left the Presbyterian church to become part of an independent movement of "Christian churches." Having renounced the name "Presbyterian" as sectarian, these churches agreed henceforth to call themselves "Christians." In a short time, Stone had become the acknowledged leader, and the movement began to enjoy a rapid growth in the states of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee.

In 1809 the Campbells, unaware of Stone's movement, severed their ties with the Presbyterian church and formed their own independent movement. They called themselves "Reformers" or "Disciples," and for nearly 18 years (1813-1830) they had a tenuous relationship with the Baptists. In 1823, Alexander Campbell founded his first monthly, the *Christian Baptist*, and for seven years he used it to gain followers among the Baptists of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, western Virginia, and Kentucky. Through the pages of this paper, Campbell exposed sectarianism and pleaded for the "restoration of the ancient order of things."⁵

Despite difficulties of travel and communication, the two movements crisscrossed on the frontier and gradually

became aware of one another. When Stone and Campbell met in 1824, they recognized that the principles of "Christians" and "Disciples" were strikingly similar. In addition to similar restoration and unity themes, both groups were Armenian in the sense in which that term was used on the frontier: both movements were born as a reaction to Calvinism and its doctrines of total depravity, predestination, and limited atonement. These similarities paved the way for a future merger of the two restoration movements.

Meanwhile, the Campbell movement had experienced a positive reception among the Mahoning Baptist Association churches on the Western Reserve in northeast Ohio. Through the evangelistic efforts of Walter Scott in 1827-1830, the Western Reserve became "the principal theatre" of the Campbell movement. Scott's preaching contained a sharply defined "gospel plan of salvation." If man would confess his faith in Christ, repent of his sins and be baptized into Christ, God would respond by remitting man's sins and granting him the gifts of the Holy Spirit and eternal life. This message resulted in a great revival which so transformed the association that it dissolved itself out of existence and was absorbed by the rapidly expanding Campbell movement. That ended the 17-year marriage with the Baptists and freed Campbell's "Disciples" to come together with Stone's "Christians."

In 1830, Campbell changed the name of his paper to *The Millennial Harbinger*, which reflected his optimistic faith that a golden age for Christianity was dawning. A number of consultation meetings between the leaders of "Christians" and "Disciples" in 1831 led to a large unity meeting at Lexington, Kentucky, on January 1, 1832, in which both groups agreed that they should unite. Since

neither group recognized any ecclesiastical authority above the local church, actual union could only be accomplished by going to the congregations and urging them to unite. This was accomplished on a broad scale, and it has been estimated that the united Campbell-Stone movement had over 30,000 members in 1832.

Although Stone had a major role in bringing "Christians" and "Disciples" together and viewed the union as the "noblest act" of his life, Campbell soon became the dominant figure in the movement. Campbell was 16 years younger than Stone, and he was a natural leader. A fine scholar and a powerful spokesman, Campbell gave direction to the youthful movement for another 30 years following the merger with Stone. His Bethany College, founded in 1840, became the principal training school for a new generation of gospel preachers.

An informative editorial appeared in 1865, the year the Civil War ended, in the *Baltimore American*, a fine newspaper on the Atlantic seacoast. The author of the editorial was not a member of the Restoration Movement, but notice what he had to say about the movement.

The growth of this body of Christians, sometimes called Campbellites, is unparalleled in the annals of religious history. They had their origin in this country only about forty years ago, but they number now, in the United States alone, over six hundred thousand communicants, while they are growing rapidly in Great Britain, the Canadas, the West Indies, and Australia. As a denomination, they have always been devoted to the interests of education, and the diffusion of

general intelligence. They have now under their control, thirteen first-class Colleges, and in addition, a large number of Academies and higher Seminaries of learning. They now publish a quarterly, four weekly, and eleven monthly papers, besides innumerable tracts, pamphlets and miscellaneous matter.

Their statistics show that they have 4,200 preachers in the field in this country, many of whom are men of high intellectual culture and talent.

Their great strength lies in the "Valley of the Mississippi," the State of Kentucky alone having 130,000 persons belonging to that church.

They claim no creed but the Bible, and to call Bible things by Bible names. They contend that they occupy the ground held by the primitive Christians, and teach that all professing Christianity should unite upon the word of God. However much in error their doctrinal tenets may be regarded by their religious friends, the facts cannot be disguised, that during the past thirty or forty years, they have made more rapid progress than any other denomination in the United States. ⁶

We have never enjoyed being referred to as a denomination, but notice all of the fine qualities that are attributed to our fathers. First, *there is the emphasis on growth and evangelism*—over 600,000 baptized believers! Second, *there is the high priority given to education and journalism*. Regardless of where our fathers migrated to in the

nineteenth century, they quickly established Christian schools and produced Christian literature. Third, *there is the high regard shown for gospel preachers*—over 4,200 in the United States alone! Our people have always encouraged the education and training of gospel preachers.

But the greatest tribute of all was the one mentioned in the first two sentences of the final paragraph—*our fathers claimed “no creed but the Bible.”* Our fathers loved the Bible, and that love has enriched our heritage. They were such serious students of the Bible that they became known as “the people of the Book.”

And What More Shall I Say?

It is good for our morale to study the lives of our fathers, because it reawakens a forgotten sense of pride in our heritage. When I was in Oxford, England, this past summer I toured Christ Church College, which was founded in 1525. I was particularly drawn to the great dining hall which was completed in 1529.

Portraits of former students surround the room; and as I wandered down the aisles, I was surprised to find that 13 prime ministers had attended this one college. Included in that select group were George Canning, Sir Robert Peel, William Gladstone, and Lord Salisbury. In addition, I recall seeing the portraits of John Locke, William Penn, Lewis Carroll, and John Wesley.

Our guide described the reaction of new students when they first walked into this historic hall. Invariably, she said, a new student came out of that hall with his shoulders straighter and his head higher, because it suddenly dawned upon him that in being admitted to Christ Church College, he had been admitted to a very select community.

His life was enlarged by the awareness that he was now a member of this illustrious company.

Something like this happens to a new Christian when he first enters the portrait gallery of church history. As Paul said to the Christians at Ephesus, "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, we walk out of the portrait gallery with our shoulders straight and our heads held high.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell of O'Kelly, Haggard, Purviance, Rogers, Smith, Johnson, Burnet, Creath, Gano, Allen, Fanning, Oliphant, Milligan, Lard, McGarvey, Franklin, Lipscomb, Harding and Larimore, who by faith championed a movement to unite all Christians through a restoration of New Testament teaching and practice.

We are the heirs of their noble efforts, but we do not look to them for authority. They consistently pointed beyond themselves to the Bible and to the God who "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). They loved to quote from Paul: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Our fathers had been through the portrait gallery themselves, and they knew the wisdom of these lines:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus

¹ Julius Charles Hare, *The Victory of Faith and Other Sermons* (London: Griffith Farren Okeden and Welsh, 1840).

² *Christian Standard*, April 11, 1885.

³ This statement was made by Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) on September 7, 1809, just prior to the first public reading of his *Declaration and Address*. This 56-page document was a comprehensive statement of the restoration and unity principles which were to become the central themes in the "plea" of the movement.

⁴ This quotation is taken from the text of the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. This document, originally issued by Barton Warren Stone (1772-1844) and four others on June 28, 1804, was one of the first statements of religious freedom ever proclaimed in the Western Hemisphere. The document denounced all human creeds and appealed to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. It also declared in favor of the name "Christian" as the only proper name for the followers of Christ.

⁵ Beginning in 1825, Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) wrote a series of 30 articles in the *Christian Baptist* entitled "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." It was an attempt to evaluate the practices of Protestantism by the light of the New Testament pattern. The spirit of these articles was strongly iconoclastic, and Campbell attacked the clergy, creeds, and authoritative councils of Protestantism.

⁶ This editorial was reprinted in *The Christian Teacher*, November, 1865, pp. 330-331. This monthly periodical was published in Woodland, California, and edited by J. N. Pendegast.

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THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

by Ed C. Wharton

Outline

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- (1) The apostles' pattern.
- (2) The preacher's charge.
- (3) The faith—singular and distinctive.

B. The Identity of the Church.

- (1) Identifying the church.
- (2) Distinguishing denominational division from division within the church.

- (3) Distinguishing the “one baptism” from another baptism.

CONCLUSION.

THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

by Ed C. Wharton

INTRODUCTION

Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

We recognize this as the prophecy of the falling away of the church from the New Testament pattern. That prophecy was fulfilled, and the church was lost to history for a time. But the Lord's church is ordered after a pattern and can therefore be identified ideally and reproduced histor-

ically, if not perfectly, to God's satisfaction and our salvation. Since the New Testament records God's pattern for the church, though it apostatized, it can be reproduced any time, anywhere the pattern is applied.

The fact that the church has distinct identity lies at the base of my assignment, *The Udenominational Church*. Inherent in that terminology is the implication that the Lord's church is not a denomination. That implication is Biblically correct. According to the Scripture, there is an identifiable difference between it and twentieth-century denominations. And that identity is significant, being basic to our salvation. We will develop this timely subject from the vantage points of definitions of the church and of denominations and from comparisons with Bible teaching.

I. DENOMINATIONALISM

The distinction between Christ's church and modern denominations is not merely academic. From within the body come statements that the Church of Christ is just another denomination. Such an allegation manifests a current strain of superficial knowledge of the nature and constitution of the church as Biblically defined. The terms *denomination* and *denominationalism* are not Bible terms. They rather express the recent religious phenomenon of the past three to four hundred years which originated out of protest against the claims of Roman Catholicism. When defined according to their present historical nature, it will be exhibited that this terminology does not express the true constitutional nature of the church defined in the New Testament.

Denomination—A Definition

The word *denomination* gets a good deal of use, often without definition. Generally secular definitions are inadequate to describe a denomination as distinct from the New Testament church.

(1) Beware of secular definitions. However unintentionally worded, secular dictionary definitions of a denomination can be construed to be equated with the church of Christ. One definition states simply, "A body of Christians having a distinguished name."¹ Some could fall prey to that definition since the church is a body of Christians with a name. But fundamentally, there are two things wrong with equating that definition with the church of Christ:

- (1) It is not a body of Christians to be distinguished from other bodies of Christians. The church of Christ constitutes the entire body of the redeemed.
- (2) Nor was its name given to distinguish it from any denomination.² In the New Testament, denominationalism is simply unknown.

Other definitions are:

*"A collection of individuals classed together under the same name; now almost always spec. a religious sect or body having a common faith and organization, and designated by a distinctive name"*³ and *"A name designation . . . a category. A class or society of individuals called by the same name."*⁴

The basic error of equating these definitions with the church of New Testament is threefold:

- (1) They *assume* that denominations are constituted of saved persons;
- (2) They *imply* a divided or denominational nature of the church; and
- (3) They *do not define* the essential difference between modern denominations and the body of Christ as viewed from the Scriptures.

It is similar to the case of Daniel, who was classed as one of "the wise men, enchanters, sorcerers, and magicians of Babylon" (Daniel 2:1-18); but who, while he was a wise man *in* Babylon, was not one *of* the so-called "wise men of Babylon." He was a prophet. The "wise men" were not prophets, though they claimed to be. However, Nebuchadnezzar and Arioch knew not the difference. But that difference was manifested. The difference between the Lord's church and denominations is that the church constitutes the entire body of the saved, while denominations, due to their false teaching of justification by faith only, lie *outside* the body of the saved. And that difference can be doctrinally manifested.

(2) An historical definition of a denomination. Since the term *denomination* is not a Bible term, a definition is dependent upon an observation of the present historical nature of denominationalism. *A denomination is a class of people who profess to be saved Christians, but not the only Christians; who believe they are saved without baptism; and who have denominated themselves with a specific name to distinguish their differences of doctrine and practice from other denominations.* A denomination thus

claims to be a doctrinally distinct but legitimate division of the universal body of Christ. But the denominational claims to identify with the saved body of Christ are made in bold contrast to the Bible teaching of justification by an obedience of faith at baptism (Romans 16:25,26; 6:3,4, 17,18) and consequent induction into the body of Christ (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Our Lord allowed for no exceptions (John 3:5). How is it possible for them to deny saving truth, teach error about justification, uphold denominational division in blatant disregard for Christ's prayer for unity (John 17:20,21), and countenance doctrinal differences contrary to the apostles' teaching (Romans 16:17), and at the same time have a legitimate claim to justification and identity with the saved body of Christ?

It is not bigotry but the Bible which makes us conclude that denominationalism is therefore religious division *outside* the body of Christ. It is not to be equated with the New Testament church.

The Nature of Denominationalism

Denominationalism is rooted in conflict with the authority of Scripture. It is not as though denominational men do not believe the Bible is God's word. In varying degrees, from liberals to strong Bible-inerrancy-defending conservatives, they do. But respect for its authority in doctrines regarding the kind of faith by which we are justified and the purpose of baptism, the organizational structure of the church, and in some cases even the deity of Jesus, is characteristically lacking. A few illustrations from well-known denominationalists should clarify the point.

In 1970, I met by appointment with professor William

Barclay of the University of Glasgow to discuss critical questions of the fourth gospel and historical background references. In the course of our discussion, I asked the professor why he denied the historicity of John's account of Lazarus' resurrection while maintaining John's historical account of Jesus' resurrection and consequent deity. Professor Barclay responded that he had never maintained the deity of Jesus; that Jesus was a man like any other man, but that God chose to reveal himself through him. When I replied that John had plainly written that Jesus was the word declared to be God who had become flesh (John 1:1,14), Barclay replied that that was what John believed! When I pointed out that Thomas confessed Jesus to be Lord and God (John 20:28) and that Jesus then pronounced a blessing on all who believed what Thomas believed (verse 29), the professor replied that that was what Jesus believed! Finally, after appealing to Paul's statement that Jesus existed in the very nature of God prior to his incarnation (Philippians 2:5,6), Barclay answered with thick Scottish tones of finality, "I don't care what Paul said. You have to have the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible." That was the occasion of the most unusual mixture of liberalism and evangelicalism I have encountered.⁵ But it illustrates the point that respect for the authority of Scripture is not always maintained by those who deal with Scripture.

It should be pointed out that many of these denominational men "see" quite clearly what the Scripture teaches about baptism, the organizational structure of the church, and other doctrines, but that they simply do not respect the authority of the Scriptures over their time-honored denominational traditions. A case in point is recorded in

F. F. Bruce's commentary on Galatians. His comment on Galatians 3:27 is initiated by this statement: "To be 'baptized into Christ' is to be incorporated into him by baptism, and hence to be 'in Christ.'" ⁶ No gospel preacher could restate the truth of Galatians 3:27 more clearly and accurately. But what Bruce gives with his right hand he takes away with his left. On the same page, he remarks rhetorically that if Paul makes baptism the gateway into Christ, that would attach saving efficacy to baptism; and then states if Paul "were asked where and when he received justification by faith, he would have pointed to the Damascus road at the moment when the Lord appeared to him; his baptism, which took place some days later, could have been no more than a seal of what had happened there and then." Now it does not take a Solomon to figure out that we are either incorporated into Christ at baptism or we are not. You can't have it both ways. But Bruce affirms we are incorporated into Christ *by* baptism, and turns around and affirms we are justified *before* baptism! It seems apparent he *knows* what the text says, but finds it hard to agree with Paul's language and keep faith with his denominational tradition. A great deal of circumlocution ensues.

Francis Schaeffer has affirmed that organized local churches with a plurality of elders is what he believed "is a pattern that holds for the church till Jesus comes." ⁷ But no shift from the pastor system or the diocesan bishopric has been detected to originate from L'Abri. The traditions are prevailing among the denominations.

In light of all this, I have to conclude that denominationalism is religious division outside the saved body of Christ. The nature of denominationalism is, at least for

conservatives, to affirm the absolute authority of Scripture, but in practice to exalt that peculiar denominational tradition over the Scripture at precisely the point where the Scripture would rob a particular denomination of its historical identity. Denominationalism is seen to maintain itself by a lack of respect for the Bible's teaching on the law of pardon and the pattern for Christian unity. At this point, the doctrines of justification by faith only and its logical corollary, the impossibility of apostasy, are seen to be essential to the support of these man-made systems.

II. THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

The nature of the church, as Biblically defined, constitute it to be a distinctively singular, and therefore identifiable and undenominational, body.

The Church Ordered After a Pattern

The word *pattern* is a Bible term (e.g., Romans 6:17; 2 Timothy 1:13). From the original *tupos*, a pattern is like a mold into which lead or wax is poured, and each time it reproduces the same image. Hence, patterns presuppose identity. If, then, the church is ordered after a pattern—and it is—then the church has a singular nature and a distinct identity. Back of the first-century church is the apostles' teaching which produced it. When that same teaching is reproduced today, it will reproduce the same church. The following shows that the apostles' teaching is the pattern for the church in every age.

(1) **The apostles' pattern.** The following Scriptures will be seen at face value to be more than merely good advice—they carry the force of divine commandment.

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one (John 17:20,21).

Jesus' prayer for the unity of all believers is based squarely on the apostles' word. Without exception, all believers are directed to those words as the sole ground for a common faith. Such language clearly manifests that Christ intended the apostles' teaching to become a pattern of faith for all his followers.

Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me (2 Timothy 1:13).

Christ's prayer is echoed in these words of Paul. Plainly there is a pattern. It is discernable within the sound words of the apostle. And the apostle commands us to "hold" it. From this, it is an indisputable fact that the church is ordered after a pattern.

For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church (1 Corinthians 4:17).

The apostles' words as a pattern for the church is taught nowhere in Scripture with more clarity than here. What Paul taught in one church was what he would teach in every church. A pattern of teaching by which the churches of Christ were ordered then, and are now, could not be more clearly articulated.

(2) The preacher's charge.

As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when

I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3).

Back of the church lies the doctrine which produced it. Back of denominations lie the varied doctrines which produced them. If the old denominational cliché is right, that one church is as good as another, how in the name of reason could the faithful preacher charge another not to preach a different doctrine? Such a charge would be ludicrous. The charge Paul gave Timothy, and us, points up the fact that Christian truth is singular, and therefore identifiable. There is a single standard of apostolic teaching against which we can measure any doctrinal difference, by which we can determine error and defend truth, and by which the church is identified, established, and maintained.

(3) The faith—singular and distinctive. The New Testament refers to the Christian religion as “the faith.” It is the objective historical Christian system, the thing believed. It is always *the* faith, singular. It is distinctive in that it can be identified, distinguished from other faiths. It can be preached (Galatians 1:23), obeyed (Acts 6:7), continued in (Acts 14:22), striven for (Philippians 1:27), and contended for (Jude 3). If one faith of one denomination is as good (meaning acceptable to God) as another, how could we know which *one* to continue in, which *one* to contend for? The apostle writes it unmistakably that there is “*one* faith” (Ephesians 4:4,5), and that all believers who respect the apostolic teaching can “attain unto the unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13). *The* unity rising out of that “*one* faith” is attainable! Jesus prayed for it, and Paul instructed the local leadership to lead the congreg-

gation into it. It is essential to conclude from such teaching that the truth of the one true faith is singular and distinctively identifiable, and therefore exists in contradistinction to modern denominationalism.

Without doubt, the church is ordered after a pattern of apostolic words. Therefore, it can be identified on the pages of the New Testament and reproduced in history. There is not a single denomination which identifies with that pattern in its law of pardon, its organizational structure, its worship, and its doctrine. The church of the New Testament *as it exists in the twentieth century* is distinctively not a denomination.

The Identity of the Church

The Lord's church has a number of marks distinguishing its organizational structure, work, worship, discipline, and life. Jesus said love is a mark of Christian discipleship. But all of these could conceivably be reproduced in a denomination *without the essential ingredient necessary to constitute it the true body of Christ*.

(1) Identifying the church. Since the church is the entire body of the saved, we identify the church when we identify the saved. Consider the Bible answer to two questions:

(a) *What is the church?* It is the saved body of Christ (Acts 2:47); the body of the blood purchased (Acts 20:28); the body of the reconciled (Ephesians 2:16). It is the body of the sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:1,2). No one can be saved outside the church inasmuch as the church constitutes the body of the saved. Since the church is the body of all the saved—and there is not one saved soul outside it—we need only answer the question, “How is one saved?” and the identity of the church becomes clear.

(b) *How is one saved?* Paul reminded the Romans that they were “made free from sin” when they obeyed a pattern or form of teaching (Romans 6:17,18). Since the saved, those made free from sin, are added to the church, we have but to identify that pattern of teaching to identify the church. Paul rehearsed how they died to sin (Romans 6:2) when they were baptized. He reasoned that when they were baptized into Christ’s death (verse 3), at that moment they “were buried *therefore* with him through baptism into death” (verse 4); that is, *our* death. That’s the apostolic logic—baptized into Christ’s death and *therefore* baptized into *our* death. They died to sin in baptism—*not before*. That is the pattern of doctrine “delivered unto” and “obeyed” by the Romans to be “made free from sin.” And at that moment they were added to the church—“baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The church is identified by the same act of faith required to make one free from sin. The identity of the church is the identity of the justified by obedience of faith in baptism.

(2) Distinguishing denominational division from division within the church. The idea that since denominationalism is religious division, and since there is division in the church of Christ, the church of Christ must be a denomination, falls quite short of the truth. Denominationalism is not merely religious division; *it is division outside the church*. Paul said to the *church* at Corinth, “Speak the same thing that there be no divisions among *you*” (1 Corinthians 1:10). The division at Corinth was not denominational division, as if that church were a denomination which had rejected baptism into the body of Christ.

The Corinthian division was sectarian division *within* the church. Division within the church does not constitute denominationalism.

(3) Distinguishing the “one baptism” from another baptism. The Ephesian statement “There is . . . one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4,5) had to be especially significant to that church. They were baptized twice! When Paul asked the original disciples who eventually constituted the first fruits at Ephesus, “Into what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3), they replied, “Into John’s baptism.” At that point, Paul commanded them to be baptized again (Acts 19:4,5). John’s baptism was obviously not the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4. *It was another baptism.* Though God-given (Luke 7:30), it was not acceptable after Pentecost. Why? Two points from this context will clarify a distinction between the one baptism when we are saved and another baptism without saving effect.

(a) We are justified by faith in Christ. But the kind of faith by which we are justified is an obedience of faith (Romans 16:25,26)—a faith which is perfected by obedience and thus reckoned for righteousness (James 2:21-23). Faith “in itself” (James 2:17) justifies no one (James 2:24). The Bible teaches that baptism is faith’s response to Christ. It is trust in Christ to save us and give us the Holy Spirit at that moment (Galatians 3:13,14; Acts 2:38). Baptism is faith in God to cut off the sins of the flesh (Colossians 2:11,12). Our faith is perfected in baptism if it expresses trust in Christ to save.

The Ephesians were first baptized with John’s baptism, but without saving effect. The reason was that John’s baptism was not for justification by faith in Jesus. Paul explained, “John baptized with the baptism of repent-

ance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him; that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:4,5). John's baptism was not conditioned on faith in Christ. It was for covenant Jews, but was not to bring them into New Covenant relationship with Christ. It was another baptism that did not require faith in Christ. Paul explained that. Then Luke said, "When they heard this"—that is, that they were to believe in Christ—"they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." This time, their baptism expressed their faith (trust) in Christ for justification.

(b) *We are baptized into the possession of the Lord Jesus.* Luke's statement ". . . they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" is the same in Matthew 28:19 where baptism is "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Adolph Deissman, Stephen L. Caiger, George Milligan, and W. F. Flemington are on record affirming that the phrase "into the name of" in the Greek *papyri* was "a common phrase for transference of ownership."⁸ It is not a formula of words, but means that the one who is baptized becomes the possession of the one into whose name he is baptized. This same construction is in 1 Corinthians 1:13, where Paul indicates that when the Corinthians were baptized, it was into the possession of Christ. This is the meaning in Acts 19:5, where the Ephesians were baptized *into the name of* the Lord Jesus. When they were first baptized, it was not by faith in Christ to become his possession, to come under his Lordship. When they were baptized again, it was "into the name of the *Lord Jesus*"; that is, into *his* possession.

Note these comparisons between John's baptism and

denominational baptism:

- (1) John's baptism was for covenant Jews, not to bring them into the possession of Christ. Denominational baptism is for covenant Christians, not to bring them into covenant possession of Christ. Denominational doctrine teaches we are Christ's before baptism. When denominationalists baptize, they say "into the name of the Father . . .," but they do not mean into the possession of the Lord. They believe we are in His possession before baptism.
- (2) John's baptism was not to receive the Holy Spirit. It was not yet given. Denominational baptism is not to receive the Holy Spirit. They teach we have the Holy Spirit as sons of God prior to baptism.
- (3) John's baptism was not into Christ's death, to die in sin. Jesus had not yet died. Denominational baptism is not to die to sin. They teach we die to sin before baptism.
- (4) John's baptism was not into the body of Christ. The church had not yet been established. Denominational baptism is not into the body of Christ. They believe they are saved and have already become members of the body prior to baptism.

It is of some significance in this comparison that John's baptism was from heaven but was not the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:4,5. It was another baptism without apostolic authority. It was not into the possession of the Lord.

How can we say that one is saved in denominational baptism because he is sincere and has obeyed the Lord? It was not sufficient for the Ephesians (Acts 18:24-26; 19:1-5). How can denominationalists be saved with man-made denominational baptism when they don't teach it, don't believe it, and even deny it? If they are saved with denominational baptism, it is in ignorance of it! Hence, they were not saved when they thought they were (by faith only), but they would be saved when they think not (at baptism). If the Lord would not accept his own given baptism (John's) from Pentecost, what reasoning would lead us to believe he would accept another baptism which denies every New Testament statement as to its saving purpose by faith in Christ? If, however, denominationalists are saved in denominational baptism without knowing it, then they are actually members of the church of Christ without knowing it! ⁹ These are cults who follow men, not Jesus Christ. Their faith does not rise out of the gospel, nor is it rooted in Christ, but in Joseph Smith, in The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, and in Ellen G. White. They do not teach justification by faith in Christ at baptism. They do not understand it.

CONCLUSION

The church of the Lord is not a denomination. A distinction exists between the constitutional nature of the body of Christ and the constitutional nature of denominations which the New Testament clearly teaches. The pattern of teaching which produces one cannot produce the other. The New Testament church is constitutionally one, for Christ adds only to one church; it is fundamentally one being based upon the distinctive pattern of

the apostles' teaching; it is distinctively one bearing upon its face the marks of its pattern identity. It is conclusive that the church in the twentieth century which is ordered after the New Testament pattern is distinctively undenominational.

¹ *Funk and Wagnalls*, International Edition.

² The church indeed has names. See Jeremiah 33:15,16; Ezekiel 48:35. But "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16), "church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28), and "church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:1,2) are designations of relationship rather than names. The church of Christ designates that it is Christ's church.

³ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁴ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*.

⁵ I have also encountered disbelief that professor Barclay carried his liberalism this far. But my traveling companion, Dr. Edward Myers, Chairman of the Bible Department, Ohio Valley College, can confirm the incident.

⁶ Bruce, F. F., *Commentary on Galatians*, New International Greek Testament commentary, p. 185.

⁷ Schaeffer, Francis, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 62-63.

⁸ Bales, James D., quoting Deissman, Caiger, Milligan, and Flemington, *The Case of Cornelius*, pp. 83-85.

⁹ Neither are Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Seventh Day Adventists "erring members of the church" because they teach baptism for remission.



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IN QUEST OF UNITY

by **Bill J. Humble**

Our restoration movement began with a beautiful dream—the unity of all believers, to be achieved by going back to the Bible and restoring the New Testament church. The early leaders, Barton W. Stone and the Campbells, were seen as men with a passion for unity, and the world listened. For example, the religious and political leaders of Virginia listened to Alexander Campbell as he preached in Richmond, Virginia, in 1829. Campbell spent five months in Richmond serving in the Virginia constitutional convention. He clashed in political debate with James Madison, James Monroe, John Marshall, and other famous Americans. He also preached in Richmond, and they listened.

Eight days after he arrived in Richmond, Campbell wrote his wife, Selina, "I preached yesterday to about 3,000 souls, the largest assembly which Richmond has seen for many a day—hundreds had to go away without hearing." Months later Campbell wrote Selina, "I think the Lord sent me here for more than political purposes."¹

Then, when men like Campbell pleaded for unity, the world listened. But today, when we preach about unity, the world does not hear. They turned us off a long time ago. The reason is clear: We have not practiced what we have preached. The disease of divisiveness in our brotherhood has made a mockery of what we say about unity. The world does not see us as people with a passion for unity. All too often, they see us as narrow and legalistic,

arguing endlessly among ourselves, with a spirit they want no part of. We must recover the passion for unity. Otherwise, our message will continue to fall on deaf ears. And to recover the passion for unity, *we must begin at home* within our own brotherhood. We must cure the disease of divisiveness that has silenced our message, and the cure is love and longsuffering and forbearance.

There are three truths that we must rediscover and take to heart if we are to rekindle a real passion for unity. I believe these are Biblical truths, and I know they are in harmony with our restoration commitment.

The Children Are the Church

The first truth is that *the Lord's church is bigger than some of us realize*. When you think of the church, what picture comes to your mind? Do you see "our brotherhood" of some 12,000 congregations wearing the name "church of Christ," most of us white, southern, middle-class Americans? If so, it is too narrow, too limited, and too parochial to be the New Testament picture of the church.

In the New Testament, the church is the saved—all the saved—across the centuries and across the earth. In Revelation 5, John saw a sealed scroll, and he wept because no one was worthy to open the scroll and reveal its contents. Then John saw the lamb that had been slain, and he heard the living creatures and the 24 elders sing a new song praising the lamb. Here is what they sang: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to 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 priests to our God, and they shall

reign on earth” (Revelation 5:9,10). Men and women across the ages from many tribes and tongues and peoples and nations—this is the true church as God sees it.

Stated in the simplest possible way, the church is God’s family. It includes every child born into God’s family—every single one of them—but no others. The church is made up of those who have been born again—born of water and the Spirit, as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:3-5). The examples of conversion in Acts are illustrations of how the new birth takes place. The good news about Jesus was preached; and when men and women believed in Jesus as the son of God, repented of their sins and were baptized, they were saved and the Lord added them to his church. The Lord knows who are his. Everyone who has been saved is in the church, because that is what the church is—the entire body of the saved.

There are other ways to state this truth. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23). Christ is the head of the body, and its savior, and we are all members of the body (Ephesians 5:30). “All the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slaves and free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

The dream of a living restoration is that people anywhere can search the Scripture, rediscover and obey its teaching, and then be added to the body of Christ. The seed of the kingdom can be planted anywhere. It is possible for people to become children of God without hearing the message in one of our buildings, without being baptized in one of our baptistries, and without knowing anything at all about us. God may have children out-

side of “our brotherhood”—as we describe the 12,000 churches of Christ listed in the directory, *Where the Saints Meet*.

Let me give you three examples:

(1) Martin Muhlenburg grew up in Wisconsin. His family was German and had been Lutherans before they migrated to America. Martin was sprinkled as a baby, grew up in the Lutheran church, and took his family religion for granted. But a couple of years ago, he faced some personal problems and began to study the New Testament. He was convinced that New Testament baptism was immersion and that there was no promise of salvation without it. He talked with his Lutheran pastor several times, and the pastor tried to dissuade him. But Martin was so adamant that the pastor finally grudgingly agreed to immerse him. So with only the pastor as a witness, Martin, like the eunuch, confessed his faith and was immersed for the remission of his sins. Now a question: did that make Martin a member of the Lord’s church? What he did was what Alexander Campbell and countless others have done. Was Martin saved? Did he become a member of the Lord’s church? Surely we would all answer “yes.”

You may say, “What Martin should do now is cut his ties with the Lutheran denomination and be just a Christian.” I agree completely. But we have to remember that honest, searching men sometimes have to grope for a long time to find their way out of denominationalism. It took years for men like Stone and the Campbells to see beyond Protestantism to simple undenominational Christianity, and it may take Martin a long time. But whether Martin stays in the Lutheran church for six months or six years, if

he truly obeyed the gospel, he was born into God's family and he is my brother.

(2) There was a world's fair in New York in 1964, and the churches of Christ had an exhibit in the Protestant Building. One day Juan Monroy, a man from Spain, walked through the building and saw the exhibit. "The Churches of Christ . . . that's interesting," he said, then added to himself, "Oh, just another denomination," as he started to walk away. But someone working in the exhibit heard his remark and said, "No, we're not just another denomination; we're trying to go back and restore the New Testament church." Juan Monroy stopped short; and in the days of dialogue that followed, we discovered that there was an indigenous Spanish restoration movement—churches of Christ remarkably similar to our congregations in the United States. We rejoiced to accept those Spanish Christians as brothers and sisters. They had never been listed in *Where the Saints Meet*, but I believe that God had them listed in his directory of the church.

(3) A family from Abilene was vacationing in Ohio and stopped in Cincinnati one Saturday night. They had never been to Cincinnati before, so they looked in the telephone directory and found the Westwood Church of Christ just a few blocks away. But the moment they walked into the building the next morning, they knew something was wrong. The church had an organ! It was too late to look for another church, so although feeling out of place, they stayed for the service.

The sermon sounded very much like a "first principles" sermon they would hear at home. They had an invitation song, and four people came forward. They made the confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and were

immersed for the remission of sins. The church had the Lord's Supper just as we do in Abilene. And the Abilene couple noticed that on the church bulletin, they listed the names of the elders and deacons. The people from Abilene were bewildered. It was the Westwood Church of Christ, but they had an organ. And they wondered, "What kind of a church is this?"

Let me tell you what kind of church it is. There are today nearly 6,000 churches with more than a million members that we would call the "independent" or "conservative" Christian churches; but as our Abilene friends discovered, many of them call themselves "church of Christ." These churches are strongest in the Ohio Valley and Midwestern states: Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri. Many of us don't understand the differences between these "independent" Christian churches and the Disciples of Christ, but the differences are great. The Disciples are theologically liberal, but these independents are very conservative. They believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scripture. They believe in the restoration of New Testament Christianity. And they believe in "faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins," just as we do. And when people obey that teaching, they become Christians. There are a million people, then, who are not a part of "our brotherhood," but they are a part of the body of Christ.

You say, "But they are erring brethren." Yes, but I am, too. "But it's wrong to use instrumental music." Amen; I agree. Wherever I have spoken on the subject of our restoration heritage, I have preached that there are compelling reasons why it is wrong to use instrumental music. It is not authorized by the New Testament, it was never

used anywhere in Christian worship for the first 800 years of Christian history, and it is not in keeping with the inner spiritual nature of Christian worship.

But if the University church in Abilene began using instrumental music next Sunday, would that mean that its members are no longer a part of the body of Christ? And that the young man baptized next Sunday is not really a Christian? I am strongly opposed to instrumental music, and I cannot share (have fellowship) in worship when it is used. But I believe that when the gospel is preached and the invitation sung and someone comes in penitent faith to be immersed for the remission of sins, that person is saved and added to the church—even if a piano was playing during the invitation song.

Over the past year and a half, a series of meetings have been held between some of our brethren and leaders of the independent Christian churches. The first meeting was held at Ozark Bible College in Joplin, Missouri, and later meetings were held at Tulsa and Pepperdine University. We have been alienated from these brethren for nearly a century. We have drifted apart, communication has broken down, and we have almost forgotten that these churches even exist. It is time that we get to know one another and start talking again. Dialogue with these brethren will remind us that they believe so many of the same basic truths that we believe; and when we realize this, we can move on to a serious discussion of the differences that separate us. And this is exactly what these forums have tried to accomplish—dialogue among alienated brethren—and not “compromise on the music question” as some have feared and charged. It is distressing to me that some brethren have been very critical of these meetings.

Earlier generations in the restoration movement were always ready for dialogue and discussion. If “our brotherhood” has so turned inward that we feel threatened when we begin talking with alienated brethren, then we have lost the passion for unity.

Let’s return to the idea that God has children who are not among our 12,000 churches of Christ. If this idea sounds strange—even heretical—to some of you, let me assure you that it was commonly accepted in earlier generations. Speaking on this lectureship in 1923, Jesse P. Sewell made this statement:

My brethren are Christians only . . . There is no denominational wall around us. All Christians on earth, all who have believed and obeyed Christ, are our brethren. There is nothing around us to separate them from us. They may have fellowship with us at any moment without joining or coming into anything. We are separated from all denominational believers by the walls which they have erected around themselves . . . No, we are not perfect. We would not claim that we have discovered all divine truth or that we perfectly practice that which we have found. But each of the thousands of congregations standing with us for this great plea is absolutely free from all human authority, free under God to study, to understand and practice any and all truth revealed in God’s word. It is this freedom, I repeat, that constitutes the glory of our plea, the greatness of undenominational Christianity. ²

When I was a student at Freed-Hardeman College, I studied Bible under the late N. B. Hardeman. Brother Hardeman was a great preacher and debater and is remembered for the historic "Tabernacle Meetings" held in Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee. In the second meeting, held in April of 1922, Brother Hardeman said in one of his sermons:

I do not claim, and have never so done, that those who have taken no stand with denominations are the only Christians upon the earth; but here is the contention: Having simply believed and obeyed the gospel, we propose to be Christians only. Now, there is a wonderful difference between saying that we claim to be Christians only and that we claim to be the only Christians. ³

Five years later, in the third "Tabernacle Meeting" in 1928, Hardeman reaffirmed those views in a sermon on "unity":

I have never been so egotistic as to say that my brethren with whom I commune on the first day of the week are the ONLY Christians on this earth. I never said that in my life. I do make the claim that we are Christians ONLY. But there is a vast difference between that expression and the one formerly made. ⁴

Today we sometimes speak of our 12,000 churches of Christ as if we were the sum total of the body of Christ on earth. The title of our directory, *Where the Saints Meet*, might imply that these are "the saints"—all of them.

We plan to establish a congregation in the northeast, and we announce in the brotherhood papers that "there are no Christians in this city or within 75 miles in any direction." Aren't we playing God when we make a judgment like that? "No Christians in that city" we say, even when there is a "Church of Christ" there (one that uses instrumental music) that preaches the plan of salvation just as we do. Earlier generations of preachers—men like Sewell and Hardeman and Brewer—understood denominational Christianity to mean, "We are not the *only* Christians, but we are Christians *only*." Today we need to recover that Biblical view of the church.

Diversity in the Body

There is a second truth that we must recover in our quest for unity: *There is diversity in the body of Christ*. Perhaps I should confess that I have not always been at peace with this diversity. When I was growing up in the Ozark hills of southwest Missouri, the preachers I heard stressed Ephesians 4:5—"There is one faith"—and 1 Corinthians 1:10—"I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." And they argued in summer tent meetings that if people were only open-minded, they could all see the Bible alike. But instead of seeing the Bible alike, those dear brethren were busy arguing the issues of their day.

The New Testament certainly teaches that there is a body of faith that unites all Christians. Paul delivered to the Corinthians what was of first importance—that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, was

buried, and was raised on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). When some did not believe that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, John said that if anyone does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, he does not have God and we cannot accept him or greet him (2 John 7-9). Baptism was a burial in water into the body of Christ; and all Christians, without exception, entered the body in this way. Yes, there was a body of belief—a common faith—that all the New Testament Christians shared.

But the New Testament also pictures a body that had considerable diversity in it. The gulf between Jew and Gentile was enormous in the first century world. When the time came in the grace of God for Gentiles to become fellow-members of the body, it required a miracle to convince Peter to preach the gospel to common unclean Gentiles. Reluctantly and slowly, the Jewish disciples agreed to accept Gentiles, but only if they accepted circumcision. Even after the Jerusalem conference, differences persisted for a long time—questions about circumcision, the law and grace, eating meats sacrificed in pagan worship, and keeping the customs of Moses. Jews and Gentiles were fellow-members of one body by the grace of God, but they did not see eye to eye on many issues.

In Romans 14, Paul talks about diversity in the body and tells us how we should deal with differences of opinion. Listen to Paul's instructions to the strong brother: "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vege-

tables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?" (Romans 14:1-4).

Paul knew there were different levels of spiritual maturity in the body. As the stronger brother, Paul knew there was nothing wrong with eating meats; but the immature, weak Christian did not understand this. And there were other issues. "One man esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike." Eating meats and the observance of days—these were serious issues, perhaps more serious than some of the "issues" that disturb the peace of our brotherhood today.

The beauty of Romans 14 is the way Paul pleads for forbearance and acceptance in the face of these diverse views. He has three instructions to the stronger brother.

- (1) *Accept your weaker, immature brother. Welcome him—and not for disputes over opinions.* Don't despise your brother because he does not see every issue as clearly as you do. Accept your brother "without attempting to settle doubtful points" (as the NEB translates this verse).
- (2) *Don't judge your brother.* "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12). "Our brotherhood" has seemed determined to settle every disputed

question; and if we can't, we turn our backs on one another. Paul says to accept one another—let each other have his opinion, and let the Father be the judge.

- (3) *Don't put a stumbling block in your brother's way. Walk in love.* Even if you are right, don't be so stubborn in exercising your right that you destroy that weaker brother for whom Christ died.

Let's move from the New Testament church to the early days of the restoration movement in America; and once again, we see diverse views in the body. In fact, it seems to me that one of the great differences between the early restoration movement and our brotherhood today is that those brethren allowed more room for diversity of opinion than we do today.

The Stone and Campbell restoration movements in America began independently of one another. Stone left the Presbyterians before the Campbells arrived from Northern Ireland. And by the time the Campbells established their first congregation, the Brush Run Church, in 1811, the Stone movement already had churches in a dozen states stretching from Arkansas to New York. By the 1820s the two movements began to learn of another, especially in Ohio and Kentucky; and around 1830 the question was asked, "Why can't we work together and be one?"

The two movements shared many basic beliefs—the rejection of creeds, the authority of Scripture, the restoration of the New Testament church, and the ultimate goal of uniting all Christians. But there were also differences,

and many of these seem important to us today. The Stone movement had come out of the great revival meeting at Cane Ridge, and Stone always believed that the strange "exercises"—at least some of them—were works of the Spirit. Both movements baptized by immersion, but they disagreed about whether they could fellowship the un-immersed.

Leaders of the two movements met at the Hill Street church in Lexington, Kentucky, the weekend of January 1, 1832, and spent four days exploring the possibility of unity. At the end of the meeting, Barton W. Stone and Raccoon John Smith exchanged the right hand of fellowship; and within two or three years, the two independent restoration movements had become one.⁵ How could they do it when there were serious differences of opinion among them? The answer is simple. They were more willing to tolerate differences of opinion than we are today. When Barton Stone and John T. Johnson announced the union in Stone's *Christian Messenger*, they explained it this way: "If they have opinions different from ours, they are welcome to have them, provided they do not endeavor to impose them on us as articles of faith. They say the same of us."⁶ Similarly, Raccoon John Smith from the Campbell side insisted that diversity of opinion was possible among brethren. He wrote, "We should always allow to others that which we claim for ourselves—the *right of private judgment*. If either Christians or Reformers have erroneous opinions, they never can injure any person, provided we all have prudence enough to keep them to ourselves."⁷

Today, a different spirit seems to pervade our brotherhood. There seems to be so little room for any diversity of

opinion; so little tolerance for different views; so little freedom even to go “back to the Bible” and reexamine its teaching. Instead of an open book, we seem to have closed minds to any opinion except our own. Back in the 1830s Arthur Criehtfield published a brotherhood paper named *The Heretic Detector*. We don’t have a paper with that *name* today, but we have several with that *spirit*. I wonder what would have happened if today’s spirit had prevailed at Lexington. Would unity have been possible? Today we honor Barton Stone; but if we had been at Lexington in 1832, we might have refused Stone the right hand of fellowship—Stone and everyone else there. And it’s sobering to realize that if that had happened and unity had failed, the restoration plea might not be heard in our land today.

The Focus of Fellowship

The third truth we must recover in our quest for unity is that *the focus of fellowship is the family—and not issues*. As we look back over 150 years of restoration history, it seems that fellowship has been very fragile among us. It has been a reed shaken in the wind and broken with every new issue that has arisen. In contrast, fellowship in the New Testament is something that is strong and deep and enduring.⁸

Let’s look at New Testament fellowship. Our familiar English word “fellowship” comes from a family of Greek words that are built on the root *koinon*, meaning “common.” The Greek New Testament uses the verb *koinoneo* eight times, and it means “to have something in common” or “to have a share in something.” The beautiful noun which most of us know, *koinonia*, is used 20 times

and means "sharing, having something in common, fellowship."

An article in *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* stresses the root meaning of fellowship: "The *koinon* group is most common in Paul, for whom it has a directly religious context. Paul uses *koinonia* for the religious fellowship (participation) of the believer in Christ and Christian blessings, and for the mutual fellowship of believers." ⁹ As John wrote: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Christian fellowship, what we share with one another, is rooted in the family of God. We have so much in common because we are children of God. We can call the Lord Jesus our elder brother. We have all been washed in his blood and are all fellow members of his body. New Testament fellowship, then, is limited to the family of God. Children of God share this unique *koinonia*, but others do not. The children of God may have much in common with those who are not God's children, but they do not share New Testament *koinonia* with them.

Fellowship is used three ways in the New Testament.

- (1) *It is used in a vertical sense to describe our relationship to the Father.* John said, "Our fellowship is with the father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Paul told the Corinthians that they had been "called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). When we are born into God's family, we share with the Father and with the Son. We die

with him, we share his life and his sufferings, and we share his resurrection and will share his glory.

- (2) *Fellowship is used for the horizontal Christian-to-Christian relationship that we enjoy with one another.* "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We share a common faith, a common life and a common hope, all because we are children of the same Father.
- (3) *Fellowship is used in the New Testament to describe specific activities—sometimes very mundane activities—that reflect what Christians share with one another.* In the Lord's Supper, the bread we break is a "fellowship" (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing is a "fellowship" in the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). When the churches in Macedonia and Achaia raised money to help the saints in Judaea, Paul used the word "fellowship" for their gift (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13). A gift of money, then, can be "fellowship" as it symbolizes how Christians share with one another. Even a handshake can reflect fellowship, as when Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem and received "the right hand of fellowship" from Peter, James and John (Galatians 2:9).

When fellowship was such a powerful unifying force in the New Testament church, we need to ask why fellowship has been so fragile in "our brotherhood." One reason is

that we have focused fellowship on issues rather than on sonship and family. Every time some new issue arises, some brethren want to make it a test of fellowship. Let's go back to Romans 14. There were serious issues in the Roman church—whether to eat meat and whether to esteem one day above others. Paul never told the stronger brother to withdraw fellowship. (In fact, the New Testament never uses the words “withdraw fellowship.”) Paul told the stronger brother that even though he was right on the issue, he should not despise the brother who did not see it his way. Accept him. Accept him even though he's wrong about eating meats. Accept him without thinking you have to argue him down and win him over to your view. Accept him and let God be the judge.

Earlier, we saw that there was diversity in the New Testament church. The church at Corinth was a frightful example of this. There were factions in the church. They were saying, “I belong to Paul” or “I belong to Apollos” or “I belong to Cephas” or “I belong to Christ.” The Corinthians were wrong in their understanding of many points of doctrine. Some were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. Some were abusing their spiritual gifts. Some were saying that there is no resurrection. Paul did not condone any sin and did not endorse any false idea, but he still shared (had fellowship) with them as brethren and addressed them as “the church of God” at Corinth. We all know that withdrawing from a brother—church discipline—is sometimes necessary (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:3-13; Romans 16:17; 2 John 9,10). But at Corinth, there was only one brother that Paul commanded the church to discipline—the man in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, whose flagrant immorality was bringing reproach on the church.

There were other brothers whose lives and teachings Paul could not endorse. But he still accepted them as “the church of God,” tried to correct them, and never said, “I cannot fellowship you.” I wonder if we would be that charitable with Corinth today.

When I think of Paul’s acceptance of the Corinthians, I realize that it is possible to accept people as part of God’s family (and that’s what fellowship means) even when I can’t endorse some things they do or believe. This, in turn, has led me to see that *there are degrees of fellowship*. One reason our fellowship has been so fragile is that we have made fellowship “all or nothing.” We have seen fellowship as like belonging to the Rotary Club—you do or you don’t, with no middle ground. And when we have focused fellowship on issues, it has often meant that you agree with me on this issue or no fellowship.

But if we go back to the New Testament meaning of fellowship as “sharing” in God’s family, then obviously there are degrees of fellowship. To illustrate with a human family, when a brother and sister were two and three years old, their parents divorced and the children were separated and grew up without ever seeing one another for 20 years. Do they have anything in common (any *koinonia*)? Yes, of course. They are still children of the same parents. But they don’t share nearly as much as twins who have grown up together.

The analogy is God’s family. There are people in Africa whose culture and way of life are entirely different from ours, but they are baptized believers and members of the body of Christ. Do we share (*koinonia*) anything with them? Of course we do. We are all children in God’s family. But there is less sharing between us and those

African Christians than between two elders in a congregation who work side by side shepherding the flock. There are degrees of sharing in the body.

The example of Paul and Barnabas may be instructive. These two great preachers worked and suffered together on the first missionary journey. But when they were ready to set out again, they disagreed about taking John Mark. "There arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other" (Acts 15:39). Were Paul and Barnabas still in fellowship? I hope so! Yet, here was a good work—the second missionary journey—where they could not share. Similarly, there are times when I cannot share with a brother in some belief or practice. But he is still my brother, and there may be many other ways in which I can continue to share (have *koinonia*) with him. There are views in "our brotherhood" today that I simply cannot accept—some on the liberal left and some on the ultra-conservative "heretic detector" right. There are attitudes that I think are unloving and unchristian. But even so, I can accept those brothers as part of God's family, I can share with them in many ways, and I can let God be the judge of the issues between us.

Our sense of fellowship in the church needs to be focused on the family and not on issues, for only then will our fragile fellowship be transformed into the loving concern that God intended for his children to have for one another.

Conclusion

I plead for an end to divisiveness. I plead for the rebirth of a real passion for unity. And I plead for love and long-suffering and forbearance in the body.

To illustrate the beauty of forbearance, I want to share an article from the *Gospel Advocate* written by David Lipscomb in 1875. Lipscomb lived through decades of controversy and division. He was a man of unwavering, childlike faith in the Bible, and he never compromised what he believed. But he was also a man of remarkable forbearance toward brethren whose views he could not accept. Someone wrote Lipscomb and asked how far a man could go into sin without being withdrawn from. Here is his answer:

*We are not much of a believer in capital punishment either in church or state. We are never willing to give a man up finally, until we believe he has committed the sin unto death. So long as a man really desires to do right, to serve the Lord, to obey his commands, we cannot withdraw from him . . . We will maintain the truth, press the truth upon him, compromise not one word or iota of that truth, yet forbear with the ignorance, the weakness of our brother who is anxious but not yet able to see the truth . . . Why should I not, when I fall so far short of the perfect knowledge myself? How do I know that the line beyond which ignorance damns, is behind me not before him? If I have no forbearance with his ignorance, how can I expect God to forbear with mine? . . . So long then as a man exhibits a teachable disposition, is willing to learn and obey the truth of God, I care not how far he may be, how ignorant he is, I am willing to recognize him as a brother.*¹⁰

Brethren, when we begin to treat one another with that kind of love and forbearance, the world will begin to listen to our plea for unity and restoration again.

¹ Letters from Alexander Campbell to his wife, Selina, from Richmond, Virginia, dated October 12, 1829, and December 10, 1829.

² Jesse P. Sewell, "Undenominational Christianity," *Abilene Christian College Lectures of 1922-23* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian College, 1923), pp. 140-141.

³ N. B. Hardeman, *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons, Vol. II* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1923), p. 253.

⁴ N. B. Hardeman, *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons, Vol. III* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1928), p. 125.

⁵ Cf. a series of four articles, "January 1, 1882—Anniversary of Unity" by B. J. Humble, in the *Firm Foundation*, January 5, 1982, through January 26, 1982, for more information about the Lexington unity meeting and the events that preceded it.

⁶ "Union of Christians," *Christian Messenger*, January, 1832, p. 7.

⁷ John Augustus Williams, *Life of Elder John Smith* (Cincinnati, OH: R. W. Carroll and Co., 1870), p. 468.

⁸ Fellowship is discussed in a series of four articles, "Our Fragile Fellowship" by B. J. Humble, in the *Firm Foundation*, February 15, 1983, through March 8, 1983.

⁹ Friedrich Hauck in *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 804.

¹⁰ "Queries on Civil Government," *Gospel Advocate*, April 22, 1875, pp. 399-400.

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WORLDWIDE RESTORATION

by Monroe E. Hawley

It was in June, 1968, that John Ed Clark, newly arrived American missionary in Ethiopia, was preaching at Gunjo in the district of Kambatta. Services that day were held in a newly constructed grass-covered tukul, with about 100 attending. In the audience was a stranger, unknown to anyone in the area. For two hours he listened as Brother Clark spoke, and for another hour as he answered questions. Finally, he arose. He explained that he had come from the other side of the Omo River in Kaffa province, two days away by mule ride. He said that word had reached him and his people that representatives of a church in America had come to Ethiopia, and that they understood that these people taught only from the Bible just as they did. He had come this distance to see if this were true.

Conversation with the visitor revealed that the body of which he was the primary leader was simply following the teachings of the Bible. For over 40 years they had not affiliated with any denomination. They called themselves "the church" and spoke of individual disciples simply as "Christians." They baptized for the remission of sins. The only significant difference seemed to be that they did not observe the Lord's Supper weekly, though they did assemble every Lord's Day. Fifty-one congregations numbering 1500 members had been established. The stranger begged Brother Clark to go back with him to preach to his

people. Other commitments made this impossible. When he saw that Brother Clark could not be persuaded, he responded as he left, "I pray that you will not sleep soundly until you come and teach my people."

Later a missionary visited these simple Christians and confirmed that the report was true. From among them, three men were chosen to go to Addis Ababa to be trained in the Preacher Training School operated by our brethren. Since then, these disciples have been cut off from our brethren because of the political situation in southern Ethiopia. The present status of the movement is unknown, though it is believed that these Christians are continuing as they have for nearly half a century.

Similar stories have often been repeated around the world and across the centuries. Over and over again, leaders have called men and women back to the teachings of Jesus as found in the New Testament. This plea to return to the original Christianity is called *restoration*. There is nothing sacred in the term *restoration*, and other words may be used instead. In Europe, the usual term is *restitution*. When one speaks of going "back to the Bible," he usually has some kind of restoration in mind.

Restoration should be distinguished from reformation. Reformation suggests corrective action respecting existing structures and doctrines. Restoration implies returning to the original and reproducing the faith given to the world by Jesus. Reformation may be restoration in select areas, while restoration, if incomplete, may simply be a kind of reformation.

The American Restoration Movement, of which we are spiritual heirs, was itself a coalescence of many efforts

pointing toward restoration. The Christian Connection, of which Barton W. Stone was a part, was such a loose affiliation of three back-to-the-Bible movements in the first decade of the nineteenth century. One of these, led by James O'Kelly, began in Virginia and North Carolina in 1792 when some dissident Methodists founded the Republican Methodist Church. They soon abandoned that name in favor of Christian Church on the platform that the Bible should be their only creed and that congregational autonomy should be applied.

In the meantime, a similar New England movement began in 1801 guided by two Baptist leaders, Elias Smith and Abner Jones. They rejected all human creeds and called for a return to the scriptures as their sole source of spiritual guidance. They, too, called their congregations "Christian churches."

About the same time, a third movement was launched in Kentucky and Ohio. Five Presbyterian ministers defected from their presbytery in 1803 to found the Springfield Presbytery. The next year they issued its death warrant called "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." Taking the Bible as their only guide, they determined to be just Christians and to work for the unity of all true believers. It was with this group that Barton Stone was associated.

In time, these three bodies seeking to be Christians only learned about one another and began a loose association called the Christian Connection. Other spiritual tributaries soon flowed into the stream as indigenous movements began in other places. In 1809, John Mulkey of Kentucky, on the basis of "the Bible alone," brought a group of churches into the Christian Connection. In 1819, John

Wright of Indiana began forging a movement of Baptists and Dunkards that also cast its lot with Stone and his associates. In the meantime, Christian Dasher of Georgia in 1819 began his own movement in his home state. Twenty years later, he learned that there were others in the same tradition calling for a return to the original faith.

I have not yet mentioned the most significant American effort at restoration. This was the Campbell movement beginning in 1809 under the guidance of two Presbyterians—the father-and-son team of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Of all the American movements, this was most clearly restorationist. I will not relate the story because most of you are probably familiar with it. Leaders of the Stone and Campbell movements soon found that they were making the same plea in the same communities. They had talked much about unity. Now it was time to practice it. Beginning in 1831, the two bodies came together. Most of the western Christian Connection churches joined hands with the Reformers, as those associated with the Campbells were called, though many of the eastern churches did not. And, thus, the plea to unite the followers of Jesus on the basis of the written word and by seeking a return to apostolic Christianity was soon heard across the country.

The history of the churches of Christ in Canada is different from that of American congregations. Four major influences shaped these churches. Foremost was the influence of the Scotch Baptists, of whom more will be said later. Also contributing to the planting of Canadian churches on a biblical basis was the impact of the Sandemanians, a British restorationist body; the New England Christian Connection churches; and the American Res-

toration Movement, largely through the writings of Alexander Campbell and his paper, *The Millennial Harbinger*.

Restorationists have sometimes assumed that their efforts to return to the original faith are unique. Henry Soltau, one of the restorationist Plymouth Brethren, declared in a speech in 1863, of the movement of which he was a part:

. . . it has no parallel in the whole history of the Church of God, because in no other instance has the Word of God (freed from all tradition) been taken as the guide of those who have sought a revival in the Church of God. ¹

Soltau did not realize that the restoration plea has had many proponents through the centuries. The nature of some of the movements, especially the earlier ones, is hard to document. The established church counted these dissidents as heretics and usually severely prosecuted them. In some cases, they have left no writings to counteract the charges of their enemies. Nevertheless, a study of movements in the restoration tradition reveals an exciting story of courageous people who dared to call men back to the original teaching of Jesus.

In our study, we first want to notice a people who flourished in the Byzantine Empire and Armenia from the fifth century into the late Middle Ages. These were the Paulicians, sometimes called "Thonraks." For years they were described, on the testimony of their enemies, as embracing the dualistic philosophy of the Manichaeans. However, the discovery in 1892 of *The Key of Truth*, the apparent church manual of the Paulicians, has prompted a reassessment of these people. *The Key of Truth* reveals a people

rooted in the Bible and bitterly opposed to medieval Catholicism. They rejected infant baptism and stressed faith, repentance, and immersion administered only to adults. The church was perceived as "the universal and apostolic church" composed of baptized believers. The Lord's Supper played a prominent role in their worship. They were guided by the spiritual shepherding of "the elect," who corresponded to biblical elders.

The Paulicians appear to have been the lineal descendants of the original Christianity in Armenia. Since the restoration concept involves a belief that a departure from truth precedes restoration, the Paulicians probably did not view themselves as restorationists since they felt they had never forsaken the true faith. However, their allegiance to the direction of the Lord through the scriptures puts them among those bodies we are examining.

Another group of dissenters, influenced by the Paulicians, were the Bogomils, sometimes called "Patarenes." They emerged in Bulgaria in the tenth century and disappeared at the close of the fourteenth. Their name means "beloved of God." Like the Paulicians, they professed to be just Christians. They bitterly opposed the teachings of the Orthodox Church and rejected the liturgy and icons of that body. They especially called for a return to the pure living found in the New Testament. Elders guided their churches. Unfortunately, none of their writings have survived, and many of their beliefs are unclear. It is uncertain how they viewed or practiced baptism. They were apparently mildly dualistic. Though the degree to which they were committed to restoration is hard to know, Hans Grimm, in his book *Tradition and History of the Early Churches of Christ in Central Europe*, states that his fore-

bear, Gregory Grimm, was tortured as a "Patarene" and that he had been immersed, apparently for the forgiveness of sin.²

A study of the Middle Ages reveals other bodies seeking a return to apostolic Christianity. The Waldensians appeared in the twelfth century as followers of Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant who sold his possessions to become an itinerant preacher. Initially, they sought a reform in the Catholic Church which would minister to the poor. Their basic principles were voluntary poverty, free preaching to the poor, and Christian liberty. They were pacifists who used the Sermon on the Mount as their rule of life. They moved toward a restorationist position after being branded as heretics by the Catholic Church. There were wide diversities among them. Generally, they were more concerned about a recovery of Biblical ethics than in restoring the forms and structure of the early church. Their greatest importance seems to lie in their influence on other bodies in the restoration tradition.

Another fellowship was the *Unitas Fratrum* or Unity of Brethren who began in the fifteenth century in Bohemia. Their ideals bore the imprint of the Waldensians and the Bohemian reformation of John Huss, who in turn was greatly influenced by the Englishman John Wyclif. However, the real spiritual father of the *Unitas Fratrum* was Peter Czelzicky, who died before the Unity began. His *Net of Truth* in 1440 reveals the restoration ideal. He advocated a return to the spirit of Christianity, stressing the law of love taught by Jesus. He attacked social inequalities and renounced violence and war as being incompatible with the teachings of Jesus. The *Unitas Fratrum* began in 1467 on Czelzicky's platform. Their restoration was large-

ly ethical rather than doctrinal. The Moravian Brethren are their spiritual descendants.

The great restorers of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation were the Anabaptists. Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, espoused in principle the restoration ideal by rejecting everything in religion not authorized by scripture. But Zwingli did not go far enough to suit some of his associates, especially when he retained the tie between church and state. They insisted that the church is a voluntary organization of committed people. They rejected infant baptism because a baby cannot make a commitment. For insisting on "rebaptism" of believers, they were dubbed "Anabaptists" by their opponents. Franklin Littell calls the Anabaptists "those in the radical Reformation who gathered and disciplined a 'true church' upon the apostolic pattern as they understood it."³ They emphasized that the true church is a voluntary association deriving its spirit and discipline from those in its fellowship. They believed that the church must follow the guidelines of the New Testament in its confession of faith and structure. This is the restoration ideal. Conrad Grebel, one of their early leaders, expressed this concept in a letter to a fellow believer:

Therefore we beg and admonish thee as a brother . . . that thou will take earnest heed to preach the divine word without fear, to set up and guard the divine institutions, to esteem as good and right only what may be found in pure and clear Scripture, to reject, hate and curse all devices, words, customs, and opinions of men, including thine own . . . whatever we are not

*taught by clear passages of examples must be regarded as forbidden*⁴

The Anabaptists were very diverse and included some who embraced communism. They were congregationalists who stressed that the church is a body of people separated from the world who are bound together by a covenant of love. They emphasized purity of life and maintained it by the ban of excommunication against those who deviated from the rigid standards of the church. They were also very evangelistic. Their zeal brought intense persecution upon them, and their early leadership was decimated by public execution. These restorers were scattered, and some survived. The Mennonites and related bodies are their spiritual heirs.

John Wyclif, the English reformer, had a major influence on British religious thought. He planted the seed of restoration which took deep root in the British Isles. There are numerous examples of restorationism in England, Scotland, and Ireland. While we do not usually think of the Puritans in the restoration context, they definitely had a restoration perception. This was illustrated in 1572 by some Puritans who addressed *An Admonition to Parliament* calling for the restitution of the true church. They listed three marks of identification:

*The outwardes markes wherby a true Christian Church is knowne, are preaching the worde purely, ministering of the sacraments sincerely, and ecclesiastical discipline which consisteth in admonition and correction of faults severelie.*⁵

Now, these aren't the identifying marks we usually list,

but the restorationist approach is unmistakable, as all of us will quickly recognize.

The Independents, of whom there were numerous varieties, went beyond the Puritans in insisting on the abolition of all church-state relationships. Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers all expressed some form of restorationism from local church autonomy to the immersion of believers. The philosopher John Locke wrote in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*:

But since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would ask them here, by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express words, to be necessary to salvation. ⁶

Locke profoundly influenced Alexander Campbell in his restoration ideals and in his Biblical interpretation. We are also his debtors.

One of the movements that affected the Campbells' thinking was begun in 1728 by John Glas and later carried on by his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman. They were known as "Glasites," "Sandemanians," or "Old Scotch Independents." They were particularly concerned about restoring the worship and order of the early church. Their practices include the Lord's Supper, the holy kiss, love feasts, weekly contributions to the poor, and mutual exhortation. Independent churches were led by elders. Some adopted immersion and were called "Scotch Baptists." Walter Scott was a Scotch Baptist.

The Sandemanians were strict legalists. This attitude

and their poor spirit impeded their missionary work. While they saw the importance of purity in worship, they also neglected some of "the weightier matters of the law."

Another influence on Alexander Campbell was that of the Haldanes. James and Robert Haldane were brothers who initiated a Scottish restoration movement around 1800. Campbell formed a close relationship with Greville Ewing, a co-laborer of the brothers. The Haldanes were highly evangelistic as they founded autonomous churches. The application of the restoration principle led them to reject infant baptism and to adopt immersion. Here, Ewing parted company with them, weakening the fledgling movement. The lasting influence of the Haldanes is hard to assess. Recent study of the impact of the Sandemanians and the Haldanes on our own Restoration Movement has been done by Lynn McMillon in his recent book, *Restoration Roots*.⁷

One other British restoration effort should be noted. It is that of the Plymouth Brethren, or simply "The Brethren" as they prefer to be called. It originated in England about 1825 as a group of independent churches committed to undenominational Christianity and the sole authority of the word of God. The Brethren adopted believer's immersion, and their worship focused on the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. They refused to use any name in a sectarian sense. However, they tended toward Calvinism, and J. N. Darby, their most prominent leader, advocated a dispensational theory which has pervaded their theology. In fact, Darby is considered the father of dispensationalism. The Brethren were so insistent on doctrinal conformity that they soon divided—and then divided again and again. The 1936 United States religious

census listed eight distinct bodies among them. Today, they are generally divided into the literalistic "exclusive" assemblies, which reject the restoration ideal, and the "independents," who are more liberal and embrace the restoration concept.

Restoration efforts have originated in all parts of the world. One of the most significant of recent times was that of the Evangelical Christians in Russia. The movement began in 1866 with group Bible studies conducted among the aristocracy by Lord Radstock of England. Vassilij Paschkof, a wealthy landowner, was a convert. He used his fortune to promote primitive Christianity based upon the sole spiritual authority of the Bible. The Evangelical Christians were immersionists and developed autonomous congregations. Through the years, they have been intensely persecuted and more recently have been forced by the Soviet government to affiliate with the Baptists and other non-conformists. The people of this union are called "Evangelical Christian-Baptists." It is known that today, there are a number of independent congregations in the Soviet Union seeking to be Christians only.

An important restoration effect in this century is that of the Little Flock or Assembly Hall churches of China. The spiritual leader of this effort beginning about 1922 was Ni-Shu-tse, better known as "Watchman Nee." This is a story of intense personal struggle with the word and of terrible persecution by the Chinese government. At one time, they numbered 500 Chinese congregations. This was an indigenous movement based solely on Biblical authority and affected only minimally by outside influences. Autonomous churches were shepherded by elders. Immersion was practiced and the Lord's Supper observed as the cen-

tral act of Sunday evening worship. Considerable spontaneity in prayer and exposition of the scriptures was allowed. The movement was highly evangelistic and deeply spiritual. Persecution took a terrible toll. Nee himself died in a labor camp in 1972. Some churches growing out of this movement are found in the United States under the leadership of Witness Lee, one of Nee's associates. They are called "The Local Church."

My last example of worldwide restoration has to do with a group of Presbyterian Khasi tribesmen in the hill country of Assam in India. Dissatisfied with the lack of Biblical teaching in their denomination, they withdrew to establish independent congregations. Using the Bible to settle all issues, they continued to discover areas in which they were deficient. By searching the Bible, they learned that apostolic baptism was by immersion and corrected their practice to conform. In time, they began to wonder if there were others in the world who also sought a restoration of primitive Christianity. By chance, they learned that there were also people in Abilene, Texas, who believed in taking the Bible as their only guide. One of them, Prenshon Kharlukhi, addressed a letter dated March 8, 1948, to the church of Christ in Abilene. He wrote:

There is a small band of Christians in this part of India whose objectives are to follow biblical doctrines in its entirety. It is called the "Church of Christ." Some of its elderly members are ardent Christians who formerly belonged to the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Owing to differences in biblical doctrines on very vital points, these few followers of Christ had no alternative

but to follow their Lord after his own footsteps. They naturally organized a church, named the "Church of Christ," Romans 16:16. ⁸

Glenn Wallace responded to this letter on behalf of the College Church, and from this initial contact a meaningful relationship was established with 10 congregations of simple Christians halfway around the world.

As a people, we have often said that if all men would take the Bible as their only guide, we could reach the same conclusions and thereby unite. In considering these restitutionist movements, to what degree do we find them to be of one mind in their understanding of the scriptures?

First, in a brief summary such as this, one can do little more than sketch each movement. We must also realize that within each effort there are differences, and that no religious body is ever static.

There are common elements among these movements. In each case, there was a profound respect for Biblical authority. Authoritative creeds were almost universally rejected. Some stressed restoration, but even those which did not pointed to the Bible as the norm by which all spiritual things should be measured.

Where state churches exist, virtually every movement insisted on separation of church and state. Congregational independence was emphasized, with each local body directed by elders responsible to God.

The belief that the church is made up of those who voluntarily determine to follow Jesus has led most restorationists to reject infant baptism. There has been disagreement as to the purpose of baptism; and while most restitu-

tionists have agreed that Biblical baptism is immersion, this has not been universal.

The Lord's Supper has usually been given major prominence, though not always observed weekly. It can be generalized that restorationists have stressed the covenant relationship in which God and Christians are united in a body of love. This has often led to the view that the church is a family in which the personal lives of disciples are intertwined.

Finally, most restorationists have been evangelistic, at least initially. Sometimes this zeal has later been lost as the body turns inward.

By this time, it is apparent that there have also been differences among restitutionists. Why should this be if we all approach the Bible on the same basis? This gets to the heart of Biblical restoration. I am personally convinced that the restoration approach is the only valid way to determine genuine Christianity. The real issue, in my opinion, is not the validity of the principle, but how it should be implemented.

To that end, I suggest five factors in the differences among restorationists which should help us understand what the restoration process involves. The first is that *every religious movement is shaped by the circumstances which give it birth*. The Waldensians reacted against the ethical sterility of medieval Catholicism and emphasized that the word must be taken to the poor. The Anabaptists, in rejecting the church-state relationship, stressed the voluntary nature of the spiritual body. The Brethren reacted against the spiritual stagnation inherent in the structure of British Protestantism and opted for an unstructured religion. Our own movement was born as a

reaction against the sectarianism of the nineteenth century and a craving for the unity of all believers.

A second factor in the distinctiveness of these movements is in their *theological perspectives*. Everyone has a theology, whether we acknowledge it or not. If our theology is unbiblical, it will affect our restoration. The Paulicians were adoptionists who believed that Jesus did not become the Christ until his baptism. Some British restorationists were Calvinists, and the Brethren were dispensationalists.

Third, *the hermeneutical approach of any body shapes its conclusions*. Our own differences can largely be traced to different ways of interpreting the Bible. Though we may agree that we should be silent where the scriptures are silent, we often disagree about what constitutes Biblical silence.

I am convinced that a weakness of restoration movements, including our own, has been inadequate Bible interpretation. Probably our movement, thanks to Alexander Campbell, has a more fully developed hermeneutic than any other movement. But like some other restitution efforts, this logical system, rooted in the philosophy of John Locke, has tended to be a religion of the mind rather than of the heart. Too often it has been viewed as another Law of Moses. The result has been disputes about cups, classes, and cooperation which miss the heart of the message we are proclaiming.

We are not alone in this problem. The Paulicians would not baptize a convert until he was 30 because that was the age at which Jesus was baptized. Some Anabaptists felt that Christians must be communists because the first disciples had all things in common. The Sandemians

stressed foot-washing and the holy kiss as legal church ordinances.

This makes it clear that restorationists have not always distinguished the incidentals from the essentials, and that we have confused custom with the core message of Christ. Traditions and customs are a part of the expression of every restitution effort. These are not wrong unless they come to be perceived as part of the message itself. Neither church buildings nor the invitation song is mentioned in the scriptures. They are simply devices, rooted in custom, which we use to enhance our work. Yet some could not worship without a building, and others would feel we had forsaken Christ if we did not sing an invitation song.

I believe it is time to take another look at how we interpret the Bible. Our traditional methods have neither answered all of our questions nor produced agreement.

Fourth, a common error of restitutionists has been that of *mistaking partial restoration for a total restoration*. E. H. Broadbent describes how this leads to sectarianism:

Sectarianism is limitation. Some truth taught in Scripture, some part of the Divine revelation, is apprehended, and the heart responds to it and accepts it. As it is dwelt upon, expounded, defended, its power and beauty increasingly influence those affected by it. Another side of truth, another view of revelation, also contained in Scripture, seems to weaken, even to contradict the truth which has been found to be so effectual, and in jealous fear for the doctrine accepted and taught the balancing truth is minimized, explained away, even denied. So on a

portion of revelation, on a part of the Word, a sect is founded, good and useful because it preaches and practices Divine truth, but limited and unbalanced because it does not see all truth, nor frankly accept the whole of Scripture. Its members are not only deprived of the full use of all Scripture, but are cut off from the fellowship of many saints, who are less limited than they, or limited in another direction. ⁹

If we are to completely recover the original faith, our teaching must have balance. If we stress the externals and neglect the spiritual, our restoration is incomplete. If our emphasis on the spiritual downplays the importance of doctrine, our restoration is also deficient.

A fifth factor contributing to differences among restitutionists relates to the fact that *they have not all had the same focus*. The focus of the Anabaptists was the church as a body of separated people. They did not practice immersion because they didn't think that external forms were all that important. The Sandemanians focused on the exact letter of the Bible, especially in church order. However, they neglected spiritual attitudes. Our own movement began as an effort to achieve Christian unity through the restoration process. To this end we have stressed the externals, often at the expense of the spiritual.

I believe that all of these movements have fallen short because they have failed to make Jesus their focus as did Paul when he declared, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). If Jesus is our focus, he will also be the focus of our Biblical interpretation. That which does not find significance in Jesus is not a part of that which should

be restored. If Jesus is our focus, we will develop his spirit and learn to dwell with one another in love.

I would like to leave you with three additional observations. First, *when we encounter others who are struggling to restore Biblical truth, we must not expect exact conformity to every conclusion we have reached over the years.* If we can be patient with brethren in other lands who are searching for truth but are still deficient in some areas, we should be understanding of others in our own land who are in the same condition.

Second, *restoration is a process, not a state.* When we decide that we have found all of the answers, we stop searching. Though we should draw on the learning of those who have gone before, each generation must restudy these great questions. When we view restoration as a state in which all truth has been learned and all answers found, our mission then becomes one of merely defending the faith. It is precisely at that point that we become sectarian.

Finally, *in the last analysis, restoration is an individual matter.* The church is a collective of saved people. It can be restored only to the degree that you and I are brought into agreement with Jesus. Peter writes, "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). When we individually return to him in the conduct of our lives, this is the beginning of true restoration.

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² Grimm, Hans, *Tradition and History of Early Churches of*

Christ in Central Europe, trans. H. L. Schug (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation), p. 27.

³ Littell, Franklin, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (New York, NY: MacMillan Co., 1964), p. xvii.

⁴ Williams, George H., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 75.

⁵ Wilcox, Thomas, and John Field, *An Admonition to Parliament (1572)* in W. H. Frere and C. E. Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes* (London: Church Historical Society), p. 9.

⁶ Locke, John, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (New York, NY: The Liberal Arts Press, 1950), p. 22.

⁷ McMillon, Lynn, *Restoration Roots* (Dallas, TX: Gospel Teachers Publications, 1983).

⁸ Wallace, Glenn, "India," *The Harvest Field*, 1958 (Athens, AL: C.E.I. Publishing Co., 1958), p. 227.

⁹ Broadbent, E. H., *The Pilgrim Church* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1955), p. 197.

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EPHESIANS 4— A FORMULA FOR UNITY

by **Ian A. Fair**

Outline

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EPHESIANS 4— A FORMULA FOR UNITY

by Ian A. Fair

I. INTRODUCTION

**Quote from Elizabeth Bowne—
“Gift From the Heart of Africa”**

Elizabeth Bowne, “Gift From the Heart of Africa,” *Reader’s Digest*, December, 1960, pp. 90ff; conversation with Duana, black Liberian Muslim: “What it mean to be Christian? Mission group in other village tell people only *they* know best way to be Christian. Black man go to different villages and wonder which white preacher have right answer. I not know how black man gonna believe

like white man if white man don't agree on what they believe' [sic], p. 208.

John 17

Jesus' prayer.

Quote from Thomas Campbell— "Declaration and Address"

"That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them.

"That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antisciptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is antinatural, as it excites Christians to contemn [sic], to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work."

II. THE TEXT

Introductory Comments Regarding Context and Message

The text for our lesson this evening will be Ephesians 4:1-16. It is imperative to the proper understanding of these verses that we see them in the light of their context

in the Ephesian letter. In the midst of the glory and splendor of ancient Ephesus, and living under the shadow of the magnificent temple of Artemis, the young Ephesian church was struggling with an acute identity crisis. It was experiencing an urgent need to understand its real glory and power. With this in mind, the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians with the intention of developing a sense of pride in the church's true glory—glory that is found in God's eternal purpose in Christ.

In clear, dynamic strokes, Paul paints a picture of the richness of the real glory and true identity of the church. In illustrating this picture, Paul demonstrates that:

- (1) The origin of the church lies in God's eternal purpose in Christ (1:1-14).
- (2) The church is the fulness of God's purpose in Christ (1:15-23).
- (3) In Christ's one body (the church), those who are dead in sin are made alive in Christ (2:1-22).
- (4) God's eternal purpose in Christ is revealed in the church (3:1-21).
- (5) The unity of the church is essential to God's eternal purpose in Christ (4:1-16).
- (6) The moral integrity of the church is essential to God's eternal purpose in Christ (4:17-6:9).
- (7) The strength of the church is the strength of the Lord (6:10-23).

There is a distinct Christological emphasis in Ephesians. All the spiritual blessings and true identity of the church are found "in Christ."

The purpose of this lesson this evening on Ephesians 4:1-16 is to demonstrate in this passage we have a clear, workable formula for unity in the church. I hope also to explain how the theme of our text—that is, the unity of the church—is essential to God's eternal purpose in Christ. It follows, therefore, that to be unconcerned about the unity of the church is to be unconcerned about the will and purpose of God. Any lack of attention to this crucial concern has significant and far-reaching implications for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

As we consider the text, we will notice that it divides itself naturally into three sections, each developing an element essential to the unity of the church. These elements are:

- (1) The spirit of unity (4:1-3).
- (2) The doctrinal base of unity (4:4-6).
- (3) The teaching role of the church and unity (4:7-16).

The purpose of my lesson will be to develop briefly the central message of each of these elements and then to draw some conclusions that will address us where we live today.

We shall endeavor to emphasize that unity is not merely a doctrinal matter, for a spiritual and emotional environment is also essential to unity. But then we shall also demonstrate that neither is unity simply a spiritual or emotional matter that arises out of the good will of Christians. Furthermore, we shall notice that growth toward the goal of unity involves the teaching ministry of the church. The principle of Biblical unity is, therefore, one that brings to-

gether each of these three interrelated elements:

- (1) The emotional or spiritual desire for unity without which unity will never be realized.
- (2) The doctrinal base for unity.
- (3) The teaching ministry of the church.

Each of these is absolutely essential to the kind of unity developed by Paul in this text.

Without intentionally becoming in any way negative, it is my observation that we, as a brotherhood, have not always acted as though we are aware of this trifold dynamic to unity. We repeatedly find the tendency among us to allow these three elements to become polarized.

- (1) There have been times when, because of certain factors and influences, we have given more emphasis to doctrine than to the spiritual environment necessary for unity. This doctrinal emphasis, although necessary at certain points in the life of the church, can be overemphasized at the expense of other factors such as the spiritual environment necessary for unity. Doctrine then becomes polarized.
- (2) Likewise, there have been times when we have been so caught up in the emotional desire for unity that we have not been concerned enough for the Biblical and doctrinal base of unity. Doctrine is then ignored.
- (3) Furthermore, it is possible that we often overlook the significance of the teaching role of the church in creating both the spiritual and doctrinal base

from which unity can be fostered. While concentrating almost exclusively on the *apologetic pole* of doctrine, little attention is given to developing the *didactic* and *maturing* process necessary for unity. We need to recognize that the didactic and maturing role of the church is a most significant ingredient in the development and maintenance of unity.

The difficulty of maintaining a balance to unity is not one unique to recent generations. It has been one that has troubled the church since its very beginning. It was for this very reason that Jesus prayed that moving prayer for the unity of his disciples in John 17:10: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee . . . so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." It was for this reason that Paul penned that great chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13. It was for this reason that John wrote so convincingly in his first epistle on loving the brethren. It was for these very reasons that our restoration fathers struggled so valiantly for the unity of all believers—a unity established solely on the firm base of the authority of God's word. It is for these reasons that we have for many years labored under the incomparable slogan, "We shall speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent."

The Spirit and Environment of Unity

Paul is aware of the fact that there can be no unity in the church without the proper spiritual environment. His opening remarks leave one in no doubt as to the serious-

ness with which he approached the subject of Christian unity. His personal reference to Roman imprisonment and careful choice of emotive words draw attention to the urgency of the discussion, and lead directly to an awareness of the fragile nature of unity. One cannot escape the dramatic power of the words, "I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you" Such language clearly reaches into the heart of every Christian and rivets attention on the seriousness of the discussion to follow.

Driving his point home with even greater emphasis, Paul explains that unity requires the most careful attention possible. The sobering words "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . ." are unmistakably intended to develop a foundation for behavior of the purest kind. In the context of this passage, however, worthiness is clearly intended in reference to the matter under discussion; namely, unity.

On other occasions, Paul uses such language in the context of moral purity (1 Thessalonians 4:1; Colossians 1:10, 3:5). It is apparent that for Paul, the Christian who is challenged to live a pure moral life worthy of the Lord will also be challenged to live a life dedicated to unity. Paul clearly places the need for a spirit of unity on the same urgent level as he does moral purity. I fear that we who are so dedicated to standards of high morality, and rightly so, are not always as equally concerned for unity as we are for morality. This is in no way meant to imply that we should take morality lightly, only that we might consider giving greater concern to the spirit of unity that Paul considered so essential to God's eternal purpose.

Paul follows this highly emotive introduction to the topic of unity with a discussion of the spiritual environ-

ment that he considers absolutely essential to the development and maintenance of that spirit of unity designed by God's Holy Spirit. I find the play on the concepts "the spirit of unity" and the "Holy Spirit" to be particularly significant. The unity brought about by God's Holy Spirit demands a spirit of unity from God's people!

The quality of unity Paul begins to describe is obviously one that is established initially only through proper relationships, for he identifies this as a spirit requiring "all lowliness and meekness." Not merely lowliness and meekness, but one of *all* lowliness and meekness! There is an intensity in Paul's choice of words, and one cannot escape the deliberateness of this choice. Unity demands no superficial attitude of lowliness and meekness, but one of commitment, intensity, and dedication.

In similar vein, in Romans 12:9-19, Paul encourages the Roman Christians to "love one another with brotherly affection" and to "outdo one another in showing honor." He exhorts them to "live in harmony with one another" and "not to be haughty and conceited." Christians are to "live peaceably with all." It is these thoughts of genuine Christian concern that go deeper than superficial lip service that Paul had in mind when he later called on the Roman Christians who were strong in the faith to *welcome* those who were weak in the faith (Romans 14,15). The ability to welcome those of conflicting opinion clearly demands a spirit of humility, love, and concern for others.

I wonder if we have seen Paul's Roman exhortation in the context he intended; namely, the context of differing opinions in serious doctrinal matters. Paul encouraged the Romans where they differed on doctrinal issues not to constantly be judging one another, but to be gracious with

one another, thereby not lightly destroying the work of God. Paul's discussion is clearly set in the context of serious differences of opinion in the interpretation of the law regarding food—a legal and doctrinal battle that plagued the church for many years. Yet Paul pleaded with the Roman Christians not to destroy the unity of the church over differences of opinion even in such critical doctrinal issues. Without question, Paul later called on the Romans to mark those who habitually caused “dissensions and difficulties contrary to the doctrine they had been taught,” but this has reference to those who sought to *divide* the church over differences of doctrinal opinion.

In the text we are considering this evening, Paul has the same concern for unity in the context of doctrinal differences. He pleads for lowliness and meekness in these difficulties. One can hardly escape the reference to the spirit of Jesus in Paul's call for *meekness!* We are clearly reminded of Jesus' gentle handling of the woman taken in adultery. There was no doctrinal compromise in the attitude of Jesus, and we cannot overlook the fundamental principle that people were more important to Jesus than a legalistic application of the law. I do not wish to imply that Jesus ignored the law or took the law lightly. What I do want to emphasize, however, is that Jesus' attitude toward people and the law was one of *gentleness* in dealing with people and their sins. Jesus' concern was for the righteousness of people and for their relationship with God rather than merely a defense of the righteousness of the law.

Paul returns to the discussion of the spiritual environment necessary for unity by drawing attention to the need for *patience and forbearing one another in love*. We should be reminded that Paul is addressing the urgent

need for a spirit of unity. He is not simply addressing human weakness or sin. He is discussing the spirit that must prevail if Christians are ever to have unity. He is well aware that Christians will never always agree—that human nature is such that differences of opinion will always occur, even differences that relate to the interpretation of Scripture. For no other reason than that of human fallibility, Christians ought to exercise patience and forbearance.

Paul concludes this section on the spirit of unity, and the spiritual environment necessary for unity, with the admonition that the Ephesians should be *eager* to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the *bond of peace*. Eagerness implies energy, zeal, serious effort, and making haste as though it were a matter of great urgency. In Paul's mind, therefore, it is apparently a matter of urgency that Christians should give themselves to the passionate pursuit of unity. This elevates the spirit of unity to a fundamental principle of serious urgency. I find it interesting in this passage that the bond that maintains this unity is the *bond of peace*, not the bond of doctrine! Doctrine is a necessary ingredient to unity, but it is the bond of peace and brotherly love, forbearance and patience, humility and gentleness, that maintains the unity of the Spirit. This, too, is a lesson that I believe we can profit from in our brotherhood. Doctrine is the foundation, but peace and forbearance are the bond of unity.

Paul also identifies the power responsible for the unity of the body of Christ. This power is the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:12,13, Paul discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in the context of the *one body*. He draws attention to the fact that it is through the action of this one

Spirit that we all become members of the one body at our baptism. The unity we enjoy in the body of Christ is not that of our own doing; it was brought about by the will of God, by the death of Jesus, and by the action of the Holy Spirit. Unity, therefore, is not a matter to be taken lightly or carelessly. It is a matter of divine activity and should be given serious attention. Because of this divine activity we, like Paul, need to give ourselves to the *passionate pursuit of unity*. We need to establish a spiritual environment in which Christians may be welcomed and in which unity may be nurtured and matured along sound doctrinal lines.

The Doctrinal Base of Unity

No less crucial to the dynamic of the unity of the Spirit is the fundamental role of doctrine. In view of the significance of doctrine to the development and maturing of unity, it is necessary that at the outset of this discussion, we comment briefly on the *purpose* of doctrine. There has always been a tendency for God's people to misinterpret the purpose of law and doctrine. This was one of the basic problems that Jesus had to contend with in his controversy with the Pharisees. The extreme zeal of the Pharisees for the law tended to cause them to focus their attention on the *form* of religion as outlined in the law, thus missing the center and power of their faith; namely, God. The Pharisees, therefore, built a "fence" around the law in order to protect it. God's people have historically struggled with this difficult problem of understanding the role of law and doctrine.

We, too, like Israel of old, often tend to focus attention on the form of religion, making doctrine the center of faith rather than the means of focusing faith on Jesus, the

true core of faith. We should always remember that as essential as sound doctrine is to proper Biblical faith, it must never be the center of faith. Jesus must always be the core of our faith. Therefore doctrine, like Scripture, must serve the purpose of directing, instructing, and focusing faith. In other words, doctrine must never become the end or goal of our faith, or in fact the power of our faith. It must always and only be the means of directing or focusing our faith on Jesus, the real power of our lives. "Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

With this understanding of the role of doctrine in mind, Paul introduces his arguments on the doctrinal base for unity in the body of Christ. Each of the doctrinal elements he introduces is directly related to the unity of the church. The relationship, however, is more than one of a merely doctrinal *foundation* for unity. There can be little debate over the fact that a doctrinal base is essential for true unity, but Paul's reason for including these elements goes beyond merely supplying such a base. The reason he includes these is because they relate inextricably to the *logic* of unity. These elements are intrinsically of the kind which, if accepted, will lead to unity. This is their logic and the reason that Paul includes them in this discussion.

It has been observed by some that in this text (Ephesians 4:4-6), we have the sum total of the doctrinal base for the unity of faith. In other words, in this passage we have all that should be considered a matter of faith and fellowship. This I hope to demonstrate is unfortunate, misleading, and somewhat simplistic.

While we should readily agree that these seven doctrinal

principles do constitute a solid base for unity, we have to recognize that there are other factors in Scripture that the inspired writers also considered to be fundamental or essential to fellowship and the unity of believers. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul considered a pure moral life to be essential to true Christian fellowship. Christians are to have no fellowship with brethren given to immorality. He commands, "But I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of a brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:11).

In another discussion on unity and fellowship, John argues that unless one is willing to confess the divinity of Jesus, he can have no fellowship with the Father. "This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father" (1 John 2:22,23). Confession of the divinity of Jesus is one of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. There can be no unity of believers if there is no unity of confession in the divinity of Jesus, yet there is no mention of confession of the divinity of Jesus in the text before us. Some might argue that this is what Paul had in mind when he mentioned "one faith." This might be true; but, as we will shortly demonstrate, I doubt that this is the case or in fact the meaning of the expression.

The point that I wish to make is that we can so finely define the Ephesian text to suit our own ends that we do an injustice to Paul's intention, to the text itself, and to the Biblical faith. I do not believe that it was the intention of Paul to lay down in Ephesians 4 the absolute definition of, or absolute foundation for, the unity of faith. His purpose seems to be to indicate the *necessary logic* that lies

behind his claim that there must be unity among God's people. There can be little debate on the essentiality of these doctrinal elements for Christian unity, but the principal point that Paul is making is one concerning the *logic* of unity. Notice with me the thrust of Paul's argument. Lying behind the unity of the Spirit, there is *one Holy Spirit*. This should be obvious, for we are all baptized into the one body by the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). If there were two Holy Spirits there could be two bodies, but all Christians know this to be false. Since there is only one Holy Spirit, there can, therefore, be only one body. There is an *inherent logic* to Paul's argument, and the logic leads unswervingly to his argument for unity.

Because there is only one body through the action of the one Spirit, there can be only *one hope*. Likewise, there is obviously *one Lord*. The one Lord Jesus died in order to bring Gentiles and Jews together in the *one body* (Ephesians 2:16). Two Lords would imply two bodies! Consequently, if disciples are believing in the one Lord, there can be only *one faith*. Two faiths would lead only to two bodies, and thus demand two Lords. This would destroy the unity of the Spirit who, through the *one baptism*, brought us into one body! We should certainly interpret this passage in the light of Paul's argument in Ephesians 2:11-22, where he argued that God has reconciled both Jew and Gentile in one body through the cross of Jesus. There is, therefore, in this reconciliation only one faith—not one for the Jew and another for the Gentile—and this faith is the faith that centers on Jesus.

The logic that explains the inclusion of these elements connects them inextricably to the unity of the Spirit. Paul's reason for including these elements is that they are

each integrally related to the principle of unity and thus support his arguments for unity. The rationale for including them is, therefore, their *logical relation to unity* and not simply that they form an exclusive foundation for unity.

Although it would be convenient to have a "quick fix" to the sensitive problem of Christian unity, there is unfortunately no simple one-time capsule that solves such a crucial and difficult problem. For a people who are deeply committed to a Biblical faith, only *careful and prayerful study of the word* can reveal answers to such significant concerns as the doctrinal requirements and essential foundation to unity.

What we have thus far discerned from the text in Ephesians 4 is that Christians must be *driven by a passion for unity*, that this passion for unity must be in the *spirit of Christian love and peace*, and that it must be related to a *sound Biblical doctrinal foundation* that logically connects and maintains this unity. There can be no true unity of believers in the absence of either a spirit of unity or of a sound doctrinal base to unity.

The Teaching Ministry of the Church

Paul's closing comments on the subject of unity relate to the fundamental responsibility of the church in producing the spiritual environment necessary for maturing Christian unity. Paul begins by discussing the "gifts" that Christ has given to his church. As a victorious king, Jesus shares with his people some of the spoils of his victory. In this instance the spoils, or "gifts," that he gives his servants all relate to the significant ministry of *teaching*.

Paul clearly argues that the gift of *teaching* is one of

the *essential ingredients* in the development of the unity of the Spirit. Each of the “gifts” he describes—namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—is a *ministry of teaching*. These are not offices or positions of honor; they are ministries, services, and each in its turn emphasizes the *teaching role* of the church. Without a powerful teaching ministry, the church will never mature in unity into an effective servant body. It will never be able to take its place in God’s eternal purpose. It will never be knit together in love in a manner that makes bodily growth possible. It will never be able to “build itself up in love.”

These teaching ministries, Paul writes, are for the purpose of equipping the saints for the ministry of nurturing and maturing the church to where it eventually attains the desired unity of the faith. It seems obvious, therefore, that unity is to be the goal of all believers, that it is a matter of growth and maturity, and that we are all in the process of growing toward that goal. Might this imply that Christians will not always evidence perfect unity of opinion, but that even in this imperfect state they should manifest patience and forbearance, granting one another time and opportunity to mature? Within a spiritual environment conducive to growth, and based upon a sound doctrinal foundation, the teaching ministry of the church goes about its business of working with Christians who need to grow, who might be struggling with doctrinal uncertainty and questions, slowly assisting them to mature toward the goal of the unity of the faith intended by God for his people.

Paul was as well aware of the dangers of false teaching as any of our present “heresy detectors.” He was well

aware of the real danger of being tossed around by any wind of doctrine. He was well aware of the dangers faced by a young and immature church and the cunning and deceitful wiles of some who would destroy the beautiful unity of the faith through false doctrine. His solution to the problem, however, was a teaching ministry in which the teachers "speak the truth in love" and lead the immature to unity through their teaching ministry and personal example.

What the church needs today is less of the divisive spirit of the "heresy detector" that has plagued us for the past half-century and more of a spirit of Christ with a passion for unity. We do not need a spirit with little regard for sound doctrine, but neither do we need a spirit that focuses with doctrinal myopia on the form of religion with little concern for the spirit of unity. We do not need defenders of the faith and doctrinal purity who are driven by a divisive passion for doctrine. What we need are faithful teachers of the word who will build upon a solid Biblical foundation of doctrine, but who do so with a passion for unity. We need teachers who can understand "the spirit of unity in the bond of peace." We need to heed the admonition of Paul to "welcome those who are weak in the faith without disputes over opinions" and to "bear with the failings of the weak." We do not ignore false teaching, however, but teach in kindness and love to overcome doctrinal uncertainty. If we could but learn the spirit of Romans 14 and 15—to be slow to judge, to walk in love, to pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding, and to welcome those who are weak in the faith as Christ welcomed us—we might come closer to being an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:20, "I pray . . . that

they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Concluding Remarks on the Text

Working from within the framework of the text before us, we conclude that the unity of the church can, therefore, be brought about only through a *powerful passion for unity*. It must be built only upon a *solid foundation of biblical doctrine*. And it can be fostered and matured only through the *faithful and patient teaching ministry of the church*.

III. SOME OBSERVATIONS REGARDING PRESENT PROBLEMS WITH UNITY

The Life Worthy of the Calling of Christ

As disciples of Christ, we naturally strive to live lives worthy of our Lord. We readily recognize that this has deep moral connotations. It is unthinkable to us, as it was to Paul when he penned his letter to the Corinthians, that immorality of any kind should be found among us. Yet somehow we have arrived at a point where we are intolerant of immorality, yet tolerate division. Indeed, in many cases we have fostered division through a brittle and harsh attitude.

It has been my observation that in recent years we have become a people plagued by a divisive spirit rather than driven by a passionate desire for unity. Unfortunately, this is also how many in the broader world of Christian religion see us. We are clearly perceived to be effective debaters of doctrine rather than passionate proclaimers of the unity of the Spirit. We are driven more by a passion to

defend our interpretation of doctrine than by a passion to work through our differences of opinion in a spirit of love and mutual concern. We seem to have more "defenders" of the faith than we have teachers of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We seem to have lost Paul's passion for unity and have wandered from the basic concern of our restoration heritage. Somehow we seem to equate walking worthily of Christ only with moral concerns and have lost sight of the fact that Paul considered unity to be a sign of the worthy life.

Let me make myself absolutely clear. I am in no way suggesting that we should have unity at any cost, that sound doctrine has no place in the Spirit's plan for unity. What I am calling for is a concern for unity that is sensitive to all three of the elements necessary for unity. Walking worthily of the Christian calling of necessity demands being driven by a passion for unity.

Gentleness and Forbearance Not Always Present in Our Brotherhood

Paul knew well the difficulties experienced by the Pharisees and Sadducees—especially their differences over the interpretation of the law. Sometimes we fail to realize that we, too, are like the Pharisees and Sadducees; that is, human. We believe in our conceit that we have perfect knowledge of the truth, and that everyone who differs with us is sinister and heretical. I believe with the deepest conviction that in the Scriptures we do have the truth and that the truth can be known. But I also know very well my own limitations and the fact that I can be, and am, often wrong in my understanding and application of the truth.

I desperately seek to understand the truth; but in my human limitation, I often fall short of the truth. What I need is your forbearance, love, and gentle correction. What I often find, however, is a spirit among us which is almost in total disregard for such sentiments when dealing with doctrinal problems.

There is a vast qualitative distinction between a person who is honestly seeking the truth, but is wrong, and a person who is heretical and seeking to divide the church, who is factious and determined to destroy the truth. I am afraid that we, as a brotherhood, have not always behaved in a manner that demonstrates that we understand this distinction. Consequently, we often tend to see brethren who disagree with us in the poorest light, thus giving to ourselves the right to dispense with patience and forbearance. We are not very good at providing the spiritual environment in which unity can be nurtured and matured. Because of differing opinions in doctrinal matters, we have become brittle and divisive. Our apologetic and combative disposition inhibits our ability to bear patiently with brethren who differ from us.

The Tendency to Polarize the Doctrinal Base

One of the most serious problems we find among us is the tendency to polarize the doctrinal base of unity at the expense of the other two fundamental concerns of unity; namely, the spiritual environment and teaching ministry necessary for unity. Because of this polarization of doctrine, we have tended to be more apologetic and argumentative in our discussions on unity rather than patiently

teaching in a passionate spirit for unity. Because of this we have, like the Pharisee, misunderstood the true role of doctrine as the means of directing our faith toward maturity in Jesus. We have often made doctrine the focal center of our faith rather than doctrine serving to focus our faith on the true core of faith; namely, Jesus. We have become a people more engrossed with the form of religion than with the core of religion. This does not mean that we should become unconcerned over the form of religion—only that we should examine our focus and priorities.

IV. CONCLUSION

We have already noted that in the sensitive problem of unity, there can be no easy remedy that waters down the doctrinal base for unity. We urgently need to pay attention to careful Biblical study and interpretation. We can never reduce the doctrinal base to unity to a simplistic brief formula. True unity can only be brought about by serious attention to Biblical doctrine.

But there must also be a driving, burning passion for unity in the spirit and bond of peace. No unity will ever be possible as long as we overlook the gentle spiritual environment that must prevail if unity is to be nurtured and permitted to mature. This environment must be one of patient, loving forbearance that manifests the spirit of meekness and gentleness of Jesus. We must remember that unity is fostered by the teaching ministry of the church in the bond of peace and that it is the bond of peace that binds unity, not the bond of doctrine. Doctrine is the basis for unity, but it is the loving gentle spirit of peace that is the bond of unity.

It is only when we realize that we are consuming our

energy in a factious spirit that we will be able to channel that energy into a passionate concern for the lost of this world. It sadly seems that some of us are more concerned for defending the faith and dividing the fellowship than we are in seeking the lost.

When will we realize that the fields are white to harvest, that the enemy is the world and not our own brethren, and that the unity of the Spirit is essential to the church's being able to fulfill its role in God's eternal purpose?

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A CHRIST-EXALTING RESTORATION

by James S. Woodroof

In late February of 1965, my wife and I and our four children loaded the 1964 Rambler Wagon with all it would hold of people and possessions and began the long journey to Christchurch, New Zealand—a strange city in a new country in another hemisphere, opening up a whole different world; one for which, mostly, we were unprepared. Swept along by idealism, the excitement of new beginnings kept us fairly well buffered from the realities of overseas mission work. Not even the sight of Louine, seven months pregnant with our last child, trying to climb those 66 steps from “F” deck on the British ship *Oronsay* could lessen my enthusiasm, though it might justifiably have put a temporary damper on hers.

We were really naive. Years later, after we returned to the States, a sister in Christ said, “Oh, Brother Woodroof, what faith you had to go all that distance to live and preach the gospel.” I replied, “No, Ma’am; it was sheer ignorance. If I ever go back, it will be by faith!”

Of course, we had convictions and good intentions. I remember the first piece of printed material we prepared and placed in mail boxes in that part of the city. It was entitled “The True Church.” It had enough Bible references (no scriptures, mind you—just references) to drown the most eager Bible student. I would venture to say not one recipient read that piece. Eventually we

learned to letter-box nothing that could not be read between the mail box and the wastebasket.

"The True Church" pamphlet was just the first of several such efforts indicating that, when it came right down to it, we did not know the message we should be preaching. We knew a lot of true things, but we did not know the message. We knew a lot of interesting things, but not the ultimate message that melts the heart and brings sinful man back to God. The realization that we had gone 10,000 miles to preach the good news but did not know the message was the most rude awakening I ever had.

It was during those turbulent years of transition that I came to know and love Jesus Christ, and to discover "in the Gospels the power to do what was in the letters." During those unsettling years, I concluded that if following Jesus Christ should mean I would die and go to hell, if he were there with me, that's all I would ask. I had made up my mind I did not want to be anywhere Jesus wasn't!

As I look back on those New Zealand experiences¹, I see in them a microcosm of the American Restoration Movement as a whole. This movement, of which the Churches of Christ and the Christian Church are heirs, had in its beginning those same qualities of freshness, idealism, and naivete. The excitement of new beginnings swept that infant movement across the frontier like a strong wind behind a prairie fire and caused the impotent religions of the tired past to take notice. In the 30 years prior to the Civil War, the new movement had multiplied many times over and had grown to be the sixth largest religious body in America. Optimism regarding the possibility of a unified Christendom was reflected in the title of Alexander Campbell's periodical, *The Millennial Har-*

binger. He felt a new day was dawning.

But somewhere in the years that followed, something happened—something that has caused us to be the very thing we originally opposed (divided over human creeds) and to oppose the very thing we originally tried to be (a people free of human creeds). Whatever it was that happened, it is significant enough to have caused this and other lectureships in recent months to re-examine unity and to refocus restoration. There are stirrings indicating a willingness to reflect, re-evaluate, and reform.

But before these stirrings will amount to more than a passing fancy, we must be convicted that somewhere along the line we took a wrong turn. We will never make the necessary changes in our course until we recognize what we have been doing that has been counterproductive to our being a Christ-exalting restoration. Lest we be offended by the thought that we might have made a wrong turn, let us be aware that we are not the first or the last restoration movement the world has seen, nor are we the first or the last restoration movement to take a wrong turn at some point in its history.

The restoration in the time of Ezra (ca. 538 BC) is a case in point. Though it became visible during the time of Ezra and is usually identified with him, the seeds of the movement were sown during the Babylonian Exile.

Deprived of the temple and its cultus, exiled Israelites had to be content with the dream of its restoration and the reality of the Book of the Law, which they had been able to take with them into exile. During the Exile it was the law which became the center of Jewish religion and

supplied the pattern of Jewish life; and it was to remain ever afterward the soul of Judaism. ²

The emergence of those religious stirrings can be seen in the post-exilic event recorded in Nehemiah 8. Having returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile, Ezra called all the city together at the Water Gate and read the entire Torah. The people stood in reverence from morning until evening. The hearers were so convicted of the need to pattern their lives after the Torah that they responded with tears, amens, praise, lifting of hands, bowed heads with faces to the ground, and a declaring of the day as a day "holy to the Lord your God" (Nehemiah 8:5-10). That occasion seems to have served as the formal beginning of a restoration movement in Israel.

But the very restoration movement which began so nobly with Ezra eventually produced the sect of the Pharisees (the "Separate Ones") in the time of Christ. The picture of this sect portrayed in the Gospels is anything but favorable. Somewhere after their noble beginning they made a wrong turn, the consequences of which were so devastating as to render the Pharisees the object of Jesus' harshest criticisms. He called them, for example, "hypocrites, sons of hell, liars, whitewashed tombs, blind guides, fools, and sons of the devil," among other things.

Jesus told them the wrong turn had been made at the point of their perspective on the Scriptures: "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39,40). They had become enamored by the written Word but oblivious to the Living Word.

This error seems to be the Achilles' heel of most restora-

tion movements at some point in their history. I fear that we, in what is known as the American Restoration movement, have fallen victim to the same weakness. We have searched the Scriptures, thinking in them we have eternal life; and, not realizing it is HE who is the life, we have failed to come to him that we may have life. We, like they, became enamored by the Written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word. To illustrate this:

First, *we need go no further than the running debate between the "Word Only" brethren and the "Spirit Indwelt" brethren.* Which position is more representative of the movement at the present is not easily determined. It has occupied a place in writings and debates almost from the inception of the movement. This can be seen as early as Campbell's debate with Rice and as recently as Guy Woods' debate with Blakeley in June of 1985.³ Our brotherhood generally has opposed the more extreme positions of pietism, but even the moderate affirmation that the Spirit himself indwells the Christian calls forth sufficient opposition to indicate the traditional, if not the prevailing, position of our movement.

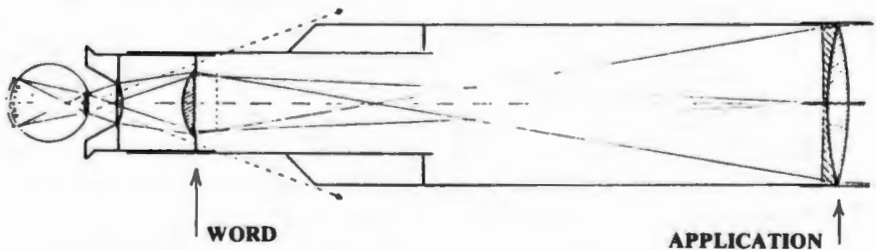
Second, *we became preoccupied also with a nineteenth-century rationalism borrowed from the Scottish Common Sense philosophy*—a system having much in it to commend, but one which, if the tail starts wagging the dog, deteriorates into little more than a glorified Aristotelianism and enshrines logic as the know-all, end-all of doctrine.⁴ This philosophy has come to full flower in recent years in certain segments of the church. But when Aristotle's logic replaces Christ's perspective, we have made a wrong turn.

But this philosophy predates the Common Sense Move-

ment and the American Restoration Movement. Eusebius tells of those who . . .

*. . . treat the divine Scriptures recklessly and without fear. They have set aside the rule of ancient faith; and Christ they have not known. They do not endeavor to learn what the Divine Scriptures declare, but strive laboriously after any form of syllogism which may be derived to sustain their impiety. And if anyone brings before them a passage of Divine Scripture, they see whether a conjunctive or disjunctive syllogism can be made from it . . . they forsake the holy writings of God to devote themselves to geometry.*⁵

It is as though we have tried to discern the divine application of the Word by merely a meticulous dissecting of the Word. But this method has brought us only mass confusion and division. It is like trying to see clearly through a telescope with one lens missing.



Not only does one's perception of the Word become unclear or inverted, but one's perception of himself becomes distorted as he "trusts in himself that he is righteous and despises others."

Third, *we have been content to major in reactionary theology, occupying ourselves with the task of fine-tuning the religious world around us, while minoring in or ignoring the task of formulating and verbalizing a positive message of good news that would meet the needs of the unchurched.* This is illustrated by a curriculum catalogue offered during the mid-1970s by one of our leading schools of preaching.⁶ In that catalogue, many courses were offered which would equip the student preachers to combat various false doctrines, but not one course was offered in the life and teachings of Jesus. When this was pointed out to the school, immediate change was made; and the current curriculum contains a more balanced offering of Christ-exalting courses.

How you answer the following question will indicate what place reactionary theology occupies in your own life: "Where do you feel more qualified: (1) conversing with a religious person about the various doctrinal differences between his group and ours; or (2) sharing with an unbeliever the reasons you have come to faith in Jesus as the Son of God?" My guess is you'll feel more qualified in area (1). Most people in our movement would. Our roots are sunk deep in the soil of doctrinal correctness, not in the area of faith-sharing. The Restoration Movement of which I have been a part has been a doctrine-exalting restoration directed at the intellect of the religious rather than a Christ-exalting restoration directed at the heart of the unchurched. I believe any candid assessment will agree.

Fourth, *also over the years we have majored in "effect" material instead of "cause" material.* (I refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as "cause" material since it is they

that record the life of Jesus who is the cause of, and the power behind, all the good that follows; and Acts and the Letters as "effect" material since it is they that record the results of Jesus' life on the lives of those who follow him.) Reflect for a moment on this question: "Where has our preaching majored for the last century or more?" A simple test will help us determine the answer. Below are four boxes, each containing a name signifying a portion of the Scriptures. Mark "X" on the box representing the part of the Scriptures from which came most of the sermons you have heard preached from our pulpits during your lifetime.

Old Testament	Revelation	Gospels	Acts and the Letters
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The chances are good you put your mark on the section entitled "Acts and the Letters." I have conducted the above test among members of the church the world over; and, without fail, the majority (usually up to 90% of those polled) responded that most of the sermons they heard preached in our pulpits took their texts from Acts and the Letters. How could this have happened? Did we intentionally ignore or try to minimize Jesus' exalted place in our movement? I don't think so. I think we have *assumed* Jesus was firmly anchored in our minds and hearts and in the minds and hearts of the people to whom we were going with our message. Having made the assumption, we felt free to spend our time and efforts doing the fine-tuning we thought necessary to bring our hearers to the degree of doctrinal purity we felt we possessed.

I myself am a case in point. For years I served as a “follow-up man” for Billy Graham. It was not official, of course, but nonetheless real. Billy Graham would come to town and preach Christ, bringing people to the point of faith and repentance. He would leave them thinking they were at that point in Christ and needed only to identify with a denomination. Many were the times I would pick up right where Graham left off and fine-tune his message by emphasizing only baptism to those people.

Well, did they not need to hear baptism? Yes, but the general impression people received of us as a church was, “All you teach is baptism.” And the overall effect such a practice had on me as a preacher of the gospel was that I ended up being only a “half-gospel preacher.” And the second half at that, of which Paul says quite disturbingly, “Christ sent [him] not to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17). I had no more right to preach only the last part of the gospel than Billy Graham had to preach only the first part.

There is much good preaching that ought to be done from all parts of the Scripture, and I heartily encourage all such preaching. However, the Old Testament is but a *pre*-flection, or a shadow, of the glory of Christ revealed in the Gospels (Hebrews 10:1). Acts and the Letters are a *re*-flection of that same glory. But the actual glory of the Lord is revealed in the Gospel records themselves. And we have not been a people who majored in the Gospels. Thus, we have not been a people who majored in the glory of the Lord. Until we do, we will not be a Christ-exalting restoration.

This will explain any power lack or nourishment loss. You won’t get much nourishment eating the shadow or the

reflection of a ham sandwich, will you? Neither will you get any power plugging an electric motor into the mirrored reflection of a power outlet.

So it is with our lives individually and with our restoration movement collectively. Plugging into any part of the Scriptures except the Gospels, expecting to find power there, is like plugging an electric motor into a mirrored reflection of a power outlet. A mirror is intended only to reflect where the real thing is. So does the Old Testament (and Acts and the Letters and Revelation) reflect where the power and glory of the Lord is. They testify of him (John 5:39,40). But we must come to HIM if we want life.

A Christ-exalting restoration will plug the lives of people into the Gospel accounts first. Then, having been plugged into the life of Christ for our power, we can walk triumphantly through the rest of Scripture and through life, confident we can "do all things through Christ who strengthens us" (Philippians 4:13).

Our only hope of being part of a living, life-giving movement is to be called back to the exalted Christ who lives and breathes in the Gospel records. Our life will come from "turning to the Lord." The expression "turn to the Lord" is taken from 2 Corinthians 3:16. In the preceding verses (2 Corinthians 3:14,15), Paul points to the crucial point at which the Jews made their fatal error in their rejection of the Christ.

But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds.

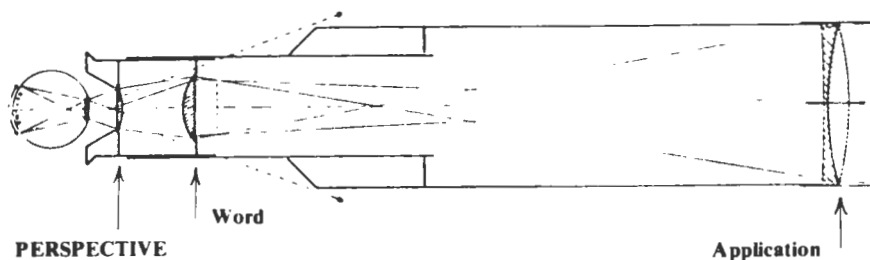
This observation by Paul parallels the statement by Jesus in John 5:39,40, thus underscoring the seriousness of the matter. Both Jesus and Paul identify the fatal error exactly alike: improper perspective in regard to Scripture (John 5:39) or the Law (2 Corinthians 3:14,15). The Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day seem to have regarded the Scriptures as an end in themselves instead of the means to the greater end of seeing God.

Jesus and Paul also both identify the means of correcting this error. Jesus said if the Jews would "come to him, they would have life" (John 5:40). Paul says, "When a man turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (2 Corinthians 3:16). The Jews of both Jesus' and Paul's day were focused on the Scriptures when they should have been focused on Christ. "But," someone says, "don't you have to read the Scriptures in order to see Christ?" Yes, but the Jews of Ezra's restoration movement ultimately made the mistake of looking *at* the Scriptures to see the *written* Word instead of looking *through* the Scriptures to see the *Living* Word.

Could it be we have made the same mistake? A seemingly innocent change in the original wording of the great hymn "Break Thou the Bread of Life" may so indicate. In the original wording, the eye of faith cries out longingly, "Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord." Being uncomfortable with the thought expressed in "beyond the sacred page," a recent revision among us has restricted that to read, "*Within* the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord" ⁷ (emphasis mine, JSW). Perhaps they both are expressing the same thing, but it makes you wonder what the revisionist was trying to say. May it be, either way, "My spirit pants for THEE, O Living Word."

Jesus must become the lens that is often missing in restoration movements intent on adhering to the written Word. The idea of adhering to the written Word is noble, but it is fraught with as many problems as there are people viewing the Word unless a common perspective can be agreed upon. The veil of blindness, misunderstanding, preconceptions, prejudices, biases, and the like is presently aborting our attempts to effect a restoration. We have argued and debated the written Word with skills and knowledge unsurpassed by any contemporary religious movement. In the process, we have “conquered kingdoms . . . stopped the mouths of lions . . . escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, become mighty in war, put to flight armies of aliens . . . etc.,” only to be “killed with the sword” of internal contention and “sawn asunder” by one another into about 24 formal divisions.

The veil clouding our understanding can be removed if we will agree to “turn to the Lord” and let the Lord Jesus be the lens through which we view the written Word. Just as it is necessary to look through the Word to understand the Lord, so must we now turn and look through the Lord to understand the Word. Jesus must become the lens or the perspective through which we view every doctrine.



One of the first and most prized possessions that turning to the Lord will restore to a tired and splintered restoration movement is freedom. It is not incidental that Paul observes, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Flavil Yeakley, in an address to the preachers of the Boston area in 1985, listed five ensuing identification marks common to primitive restorationism. The last of the five is that "restoration movements usually come to the place where agreement on issues is made the test of fellowship."

We have been at that point for years. It is time we found a different way to deal with each other. I propose we turn to the Lord and allow him to show us a new way of treating our brother with whom we differ. I propose that we demonstrate the flexibility he advocated when he said, "Love one another as I have loved you"; "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"; "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone"; "As you would that men should do unto you, do so unto them"; and, "Judge not, that you be not judged." These teachings, coupled with Jesus' prayer for unity, brand division itself as the cardinal sin.

Furthermore, if we would be so bold as to recapture the vision of unity which characterized the pioneers of this movement, we must allow Jesus to show us a new way of treating those Bible-believing, God-fearing, Christ-loving people who share the bulk of our convictions and our back-to-the-Bible emphasis, but do not share our particular restoration heritage. Many recent indigenous groups, like ours from its inception, are trying to order their lives according to the Word. But they "do not follow with us" (Mark 9:38-41). When we look at those people as adversaries and forbid them to do their "mighty works in

the name of Jesus," we are looking at them through the eyes of John, not Jesus. I believe Jesus would say to us, as he said to John, "Do not forbid them,"

" . . . for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward" (Mark 9:40,41).

A Christ-exalting restoration will restore unity where there has been division, mercy where there has been judgment, freedom where there has been bondage, zeal where there has been lethargy, sight where there has been blindness, and life where there has been death.

We are being challenged to come to know Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:28-30)—his person, his personality, his perspective, his purpose, his perfection, and his power. Elders, teachers, deacons, preachers, and servants—one and all—must develop a thirst for the Lord that sends us daily into his life to walk with him on the road of life . . . to sit with him by the bed of the sick . . . to weep with him over sin . . . to see with his eyes . . . feel with his heart . . . serve with his hands . . . watch him in the cool of the evening with a Nicodemus . . . feel his fatigue as he sits by the well . . . sense his anger in the temple . . . his patient training of his stumbling disciples . . . his keen wit with his adversaries . . . his mercy with sinners and his kindness toward the downtrodden and the outcast. We must agonize with him in the garden and feel the weight of the cross . . . the burden of others' sins . . . the loneliness of

abandonment . . . the pain of death . . . the triumph of resurrection . . . his joy at going home to his Father. We must, at all costs, come to know HIM!

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up into glory!*

“Great indeed . . . is the mystery of our religion” (1 Timothy 3:16).

Thus, coming to know Christ, we can lift him up in the classroom, in the pulpit, in the counsel chamber, in the home, and at work and play. We can be a “Christ-exalting Restoration.”

We can lift up Christ (2 Corinthians 4:1-5) in our methods, “renouncing disgraceful, underhanded ways” . . . in our motives as we “refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word” . . . in our manner as we “by open statement of the truth commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” . . . in our message, “for what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord” . . . and in our ministry, “with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake”; for Christ in us is our only hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

And then, finally, let us step out of the way, stand behind the cross, and become lost in the wonder of amazement as we watch the King of Glory come in. It will happen.

A little child can witness it. After preaching at the College church in Searcy for months, off and on, from the

Sermon on the Mount, and having come to the last paragraph where Jesus speaks of the wisdom of hearing and heeding his teachings, I found myself at a loss as to what to say in regard to that section. I felt completely powerless. I finally decided I would just read the entire Sermon on the Mount, without introduction, comment, or concluding remarks. I prepared thoroughly so I could get completely out of the way and simply let the Lord speak. The hour came. I read. The people listened with rapt attention, as though thankful for the unclutter. The assembly dispersed, unusually quiet and thoughtful. A little eight-year-old girl stood behind her dad as he drove home. After a few moments of silence, she said, "You know, Daddy, that's the first sermon I ever understood."

And, once again, Jesus took a child in his arms and blessed her (Mark 9:36).

And he who lives forevermore says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Thus, each one of us becomes a microcosm of a new restoration that begins in our own life and spreads to others, as . . .

" . . . we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit"
(2 Corinthians 3:18).

AMEN.

¹ For details, see Woodroof and Payne, *Struggles of the Kingdom* (Struggles Publishers, 344 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA 01803).

² Pharisees, *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962, Vol. 3, p. 775.

³ See *Campbell-Rice Debate* (Lexington, KY: Skillman and Sons, 1844); *Woods-Blakeley Debate* (Marlow, OK: Unpublished), June 1985. See also Z. T. Sweeny, *The Spirit and the Word* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Co., 1919); Foy E. Wallace, *Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit* (Foy E. Wallace Publications, 1967).

⁴ See David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Quest For A Christian: America* (Nashville, TN: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. 38; John D. Hannah, *Inerrancy and the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 361-365; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), pp. 151 and 152; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 14-16).

⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5. 28. 13ff.

⁶ *Curriculum Catalogue* (Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, TX).

⁷ See *Songs of the Church* (Howard Publishers, West Monroe, LA 71291), p. 51.

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THE FUTURE OF OUR HERITAGE

by Reuel Lemmons

Amid the religious revolution now breaking in both Protestant and Roman Catholic ranks, there is emerging a general craving for the lost power and prestige of the church of the first century. Many movements have attempted to eliminate the human elements and accentuate the divine. They have met with varying degrees of success. One of them was the Protestant Reformation. Another was the Restoration Movement, and it, too, has met with varying degrees of success.

I am assuming that "our heritage," as used in the title to this lesson, has reference to that human movement in history known as the Restoration Movement. If I were speaking on "our heritage" as Christians, I would take an entirely different approach. The Restoration Movement and the church of Jesus Christ are not one and the same thing. One is a human movement in history to recover the other. In a literal sense, it is beyond our poor power to "restore" the New Testament church. That church needs no restoration. It was bought and perfected by the sacrifice and purchase power of Jesus Christ our Lord, once and for all. When Nehemiah found the law in the rubbish of Jerusalem, he did not restore the Law; he simply rediscovered it. We, likewise, can do no more than rediscover the church as it is revealed in the New Testament. That, the Restoration Movement attempts to do.

In an attempt to set before the world such a most noble

motive, we must, ourselves, eschew all sectarian bias. This is almost, if not altogether, as hard a task as rediscovering the real New Testament church. Denominational bias, including our own, is incongruent with New Testament Christianity. Under the banner of Restorationism, we have no right to the relatively narrow view of any religious sect. Total religious objectivity has never been attained by any reforming group in all history. It is difficult to believe that we can accomplish what none others have done. It is all but arrogant to claim that we can. And yet, we do. We claim to have discovered anew the New Testament church, and we claim that we are pointing all men to it. It would be a double tragedy if we were to consciously or unconsciously slip into either denominationalism or sectarianism ourselves. Sectarianism is fully as bad as denominationalism—maybe worse.

We pay tribute to the Restoration Movement in America. While the mechanics of carrying out a Restoration of the New Testament church have been imperfect, and have sometimes resulted in abortive efforts, the aim and purpose of that movement were certainly ideal. In the first half of the eighteenth century in America, there was a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm for restoring the simple dignity, work, and worship of the New Testament church. Denominational doctrine and dogma was beginning to lose its hold on the enthusiasm of the people as the Protestant Reformation began to show signs of age. Experience had proven that instead of producing the freedom that its leaders had boasted, the Reformation simply transferred servitude from Roman Catholicism to one of the Protestant sects. While Protestantism had corrected many of the errors of Roman Catholicism, it had brought

over many of the errors with it. In addition, the denominations had developed their own distinctive sets of errors. We must not make the same mistake. One of our shortcomings is that we have never been able to entertain the thought that as denominationalism brought over some of the errors of Romanism because they were not burning issues at the time, so, also, have we brought over some of the errors of the denominations in which we have our historical roots because they were not burning issues at the time. Some of our views of the mission and method of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit constitute examples that could be offered. We have simply not done our homework in these areas.

Our attempts at Restoration were not, and are not, perfect. We must keep working on them. However imperfect our attempts might have been, it must be admitted that the aim and ideal of the movement were most noble. Our sectarian splits are undeniable evidence that our efforts at restoration were not, and are not, perfect.

It should be emphasized right here that, should we be successful in reproducing the pattern of the historic New Testament church, the pattern alone will not suffice. As the body is but the temple in which the spirit dwells, so the form and government of the church is but a part of the whole. It is necessary that we have both the historic and the spiritual patterns of the church of the first century to be identified with it.

Any similarity, or things held in common, between this presentation and the group known in America and around the world as the church of Christ, is simply a witness to the success in human efforts at the restoration of the church as God planned it, and as Jesus would have it.

In this, we frankly confess, we believe that they have been, to an unprecedented degree, successful. At the same time, we acknowledge the incompleteness and imperfection of their human efforts.

As movements go, the Restoration Movement is a relatively new experiment. It is nothing like mature. It is only 150 years old. It would be a mistake to assume that we have, overnight, discovered all truth and that if the world would know the truth, it can come to us and get it. We still have a lot of learning to do. Considerable refinement of a noble ideal is needed.

The intolerance of any dissenting view, so characteristic of all movements, is equally characteristic of ours. As movements mature, their adherents learn that many of the things they first took for granted are not true. The original Calvinistic doctrines, once assumed to be infallible, have, under 400 years of subjection to the crucible of debate and reason, been largely abandoned. We have made similar adjustments under more careful examination of our faith and practice. The one cup, one class position, once held by all of us, has largely been abandoned. The anti-college and anti-intercongregational cooperation positions have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Prayer meeting and Sunday School have been accepted, and now both of these are being doubted as the cure-alls they once were thought to be. There is no evidence to indicate that positions we now hold on a number of subjects will be the positions we will hold a hundred years from now when we have learned more. This is the history and the experience of all human movements. Let me repeat here that the Restoration Movement and the church of Christ are not one and the same thing.

But, where do we go from here? What is the future of our heritage? I am not a prophet, and my view of our future as a movement may be as imperfect as my understanding—and your understanding—of exactly what the New Testament church is and how it functions. We may in the future change our views on both subjects, as we learn more. Every time we open the Bible, we run the calculated risk of learning something that we did not know before. If that is not true, what is the object of study? If we learn a single new thing, we are obligated to walk in the light of the new truth we have learned or else live hypocritically thereafter. If we are to progress, we must keep all our options open. We must be fluid enough to walk in the light of any new truth we may learn. The alternative is the same as it has been with all other religious movements. When they quit learning and quit changing to conform to their increased knowledge, they congealed in history and died there. So will we.

There is so much in the Bible about love and peace and unity that we feel that being baptized into Christ should automatically endow us with these inalienable rights. I wish that were so. But it is not. We must strive for love. We must strive for peace. We must desire unity. We are not doing that very much right now.

In the early days of the Restoration Movement, its leaders were so elated over the reception their teaching received that they thought the whole world would soon be converted and that Jesus would surely come and set up his kingdom. Alexander Campbell published a paper called *The Millennial Harbinger*. It is perhaps good that many of us were not born yet. We would have insisted on withdrawing from him and warning all the brethren against

him. Campbell, incidentally, held several views that would be totally unacceptable to us today. Movements do change as they mature.

Early in Campbell's life, if I do not misrepresent him, he felt that his mission was to unite all the sects in one glorious, undenominational body called, simply, "the church." Very soon, however, he found that errors in doctrine, which were strongly entrenched, interfered with universal unity and union. The great Campbell debates crystallized "sound doctrine." A trauma developed between unity and doctrine. Universalism would ignore doctrine, and legalism would ignore unity. These problems have been with us all our days. To insist on unity with disregard for doctrine opens the gate to all kinds of liberalism. To insist on doctrine with no regard for unity results in all manner of division and strife.

Heirs of the Restoration heritage are still plagued with this problem. Armies march under banners, and movements proceed under slogans. Early in Restoration history, the slogan developed, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent." Whether right or wrong, this was, at first, a universally accepted slogan. As the trauma between doctrine and unity became more acute, some brethren saw the slogan as too restrictive and legalistic. They turned to another version. They said, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are free." Although division was some time in coming, this difference in attitude toward the Bible and the authority of the Bible in areas of silence became the basis for the first great division in the Restoration Movement. The disciples, using all the freedom their slogan allowed, went one direction and we, using all the

restriction our slogan demanded, went another. Around the turn of the century, these different directions became divergent paths that emerged in history as two completely separated segments of what once was a single brotherhood.

The disciples followed their path, bringing in many nonscriptural innovations until there was a division among them, as some reached the point where they would not follow their own slogan to its logical conclusion. They felt that they had to draw a line somewhere, and they said, in effect, "This far will we go, and no further." We had said that long ago. And so division came to them. We now have the Independent Christian church and the Disciples. Their division came over following their own slogan to its logical conclusion.

But how about those of us who took the other path? Our experience, and thus our history, is even less illustrious. In our attempts to legalistically bind our slogan, we insisted on measuring each other by our own iron bedstead. All who were too short we stretched. Any who questioned the right of the measurers was disfellowshipped. We splintered. As the other path led to unrestrained liberalism, our path led to legalistic slavery. One is as wrong as the other. There will always be a tightrope-balancing act as we try to equalize the pull of liberty and law. We have made our slogans the basis of our division rather than the Scriptures the basis of our unity. This, incidentally, is why I like it in the middle of the road: there is a deep ditch on either side.

Let us note in passing that we are still one brotherhood—though a divided brotherhood. Any man or woman who has undergone the new birth is a child of

God, and as such is my brother or sister whether I like it or not. I had nothing to do with making him my brother. That was the prerogative, and product, of God almighty. I am incapable of changing that. Even my repudiation of my brother cannot unbrother what God has brothered by fatherhood. One may be filling himself with husks that swine do eat, but he is still my brother. And my Father recognizes that, whether I do or not. If I think my brother is in a pigpen, I am obligated to try to get him out of it—not repudiate him and leave him where he is.

We are today, largely because of our application of our slogans, a fractured—and to that extent sectarian—body. Rigidly applying that part of the slogan, “Where the Bible is silent, we are silent,” we have outlawed Sunday School, located preachers, congregational cooperation, and two score other things. The result is more than two score sects or splits in what should be a united brotherhood. We are, today, spending our energies largely on opposing each other. Missionary zeal and world evangelism have been left unattended while we straighten out the kinks in each other. We present to the world and to ourselves the sorry spectacle of a group of people who preach the unity of all believers in Christ and practice division zealously.

There seems to have been in the past few years a decided trend toward extreme legalism. The Bible says much more about liberty than it does about law, and we say a lot more about the law than we do liberty. Both groups have fallen victim to their slogans, and neither are as careful with the Scriptures as they ought to be. We who claim to be silent where the Bible is silent are not really as silent on many things as we boast that we are. The average congregation, regardless of its boasts, does just about what it wants to

do when the occasion arises in areas where the Bible is silent. Witness church staffs, prayer meetings, Bible classes, secret sisters, ladies' Bible classes, and dozens of other practices upon which the Bible is totally silent. It all adds up to the fact that all of us do a lot of things about which the Bible is totally silent. I believe everything the Bible says about strict observance of the teachings of Jesus. I know that the Bible says, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock."

I also know that Jesus said, "Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

I know that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," and, "The word that I speak unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day."

I also know that John said, "Whoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." I also know that these verses have many times been too legalistically applied, with total disregard for what both Jesus and John said about being united and loving one another. We are prone to apply these and many other passages in a legalistic manner which the text itself does not support. It is just as great a sin to bind where God has not bound as it is to loose where God has not loosed.

The plagues we suffer today are brought on us by our own maneuvering, just as Israel's were. When they had wandered the wilderness until hope for deliverance was dim, and memory of the fleshpots of Egypt was bright, Israel lost its direction and spent its time in murmuring. Then it was God that "sent fiery serpents among them,

and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.” It seems to me that much the same condition exists among the Israel of God today. We have a brotherhood plagued with fiery serpents who bite everybody in reach, and the pollsters tell us that “many of the people of Israel have died,” leaving us with a fast-shrinking, nonevangelical church.

Something simply must be done, or we cannot long endure. Maybe it is time for someone to lift up the Serpent anew, that all of us may look to Him and be healed rather than looking at and accusing each other. Our accusations against each other are destroying us. I believe I have less respect for elders and churchmen who listen to these accusations and draw lines against their brethren without verifying the reports than I do for the scandal mongers themselves.

I believe there are a number of things that we can do that will greatly improve our chances of surviving the crisis in which we are presently enmeshed. First of all, *how about a reexamination of our slogan?* Slogans are not sacred. Slogans are not inspired. Slogans are not infallible. We never follow them perfectly anyway. Ours may be a good one, or it may not be. If we are afraid to re-examine it, it may indicate that we are afraid we will find a flaw in it. Maybe there is one. If so, let us find it now. And let us weigh our practices and see if they are really consistent with our slogan anyway.

Second, *let us learn to more clearly differentiate between Biblical commands and our methods of carrying them out.* Often we insist on our methods, to the exclusion of any other methods our brethren may use, and we split the church over methods. No method is so important

or so essential that it is worth dividing the people of God over. The major conflicts of our day are conflicts over methods rather than scripture. The cooperation controversy, the Crossroads controversy, the direct-support controversy—they are all quarrels over how to carry out the commands of Scripture rather than over the Scriptures themselves. We have few, if any, quarrels over the Scriptures. All our troubles are over methods. We could eliminate that by insisting on the command and leaving the individual free to carry out the command as he himself sees fit in the light of his understanding of the Scriptures. Our divisions have come over the specifics of carrying out a generic command. We could eliminate that if we would.

Third, since the great Campbell debates, we have spent a century and a half emphasizing doctrine. We have examined doctrine under our finite microscopes until we are sure we have identified, circumscribed, and defined every jot and tittle of the law. Now that is not unimportant, and we have rendered the world a valuable service in this respect, but now *it would be good if we spent the next hundred and fifty years—at least equal time—on love and unity*. While we have emphasized doctrine, we have neglected unity and love. We have spent more time in knifing each other than we have in loving each other. We are overdue for a change. The Lord prayed for unity, and every apostle admonished brethren to love each other. To be in the church of the New Testament, we can do no less. We are long overdue for emphasis in these areas.

Fourth, *we can turn our attention back to evangelism*. We can change our self-centered and self-serving interests for an interest in the lost world. We can become a servant church rather than a “me first” church. We can turn at-

tention from things to souls. We can cease conforming to our society and become a changer of our society. I believe the world has a right to expect the church to stay in the soul-saving business. When we stopped emphasizing evangelism, the church began to die. It lives and thrives on the very thing we have neglected. Our local programs and self-serving church ministries are sapping the church to death. They have their place, perhaps, but not at the expense of evangelism.

Fifth, *we need to turn the church back over to the people who compose it.* We have, by church machinery, throttled a large part of the individual potential of the church. We should rediscover the priesthood of the believer and quit turning down the corners of our mouths at involvement and total commitment as if they were dirty words. I know of no Christian on earth who would claim that his involvement is as great as it should be, or his commitment as total. God forbid that these qualities should ever be despised by the people of God.

The church is people. You are the church. We do not need a board-of-directors complex. Even leaders of the church are too jealous over who calls the shots. We could turn the church back into a body with Jesus Christ as its only head and every one of us as members of that one body. We all know that this is the Biblical norm, but we are not as silent about extra-Biblical practices as we boast we are.

These five suggestions do not by any means exhaust the list; but if we worked on these first, and then others, we might really restore the New Testament church in the 21st century. They are:

- (1) An emphasis on the Bible rather than on a slogan.
- (2) Requiring adherence in matters of faith while allowing liberty in methods of carrying out the Lord's work.
- (3) Spend an equal amount of time on love and unity compared with the time we spend on doctrine.
- (4) Make the church extremely evangelistic.
- (5) Reemphasize the priesthood of all believers, and insist upon the personal commitment and involvement of every Christian.

If these five steps will be taken in the future, it will make us a people so busy doing the work of the Lord we will not have the time or the disposition to look askance at each other.

And it can be done. It is simply a matter of whether we are serious about our Christianity or merely playing at religion.

I, for one, am optimistic. I believe the brotherhood is tired of strife and quarreling. I believe it has had enough of accusation and defamation. I believe it is sick of division. For those who would like the Lord's army to be one united host, marching under the banner of the cross, I believe the wind has turned in our favor.

If the Lord postpones his return, the generation now living has an opportunity to make history. We are not God's police force to bring the heathen to law or even to make the brethren goosestep, but we are his only glorifying institution on earth. We could serve that purpose.

And I believe we will. We have more than a million

souls in America who have paid the price to accept the price that Jesus paid. And we have more than that outside the United States. This host of people did not make their choice for Jesus in vain. They represent a powerful influence, even though they are a small minority. They may be like David before Goliath, or like Gideon's 300 men facing the hordes of Midian, but they have the same advantage the ancients had. If the Lord is on our side, who can be against us?

The church is the Lord's; and as long as we let him be its only head, the body can take care of itself. We must never try to be the head; we must be content to do what the head directs the body to do. When the New Moses stretches out his rod, we ought never to be afraid to plunge into the future's foreboding sea. Its waves will stand aside the walls, and the church can pass safely through.

May some imprisoned soul on a lonely isle somewhere in the future write of us:

And after this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kindred, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." All the angels stood around the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, "Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God

forever and ever. Amen.” And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?” And I said unto him, “Thou knowest.” And he said unto me, “These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Oh, God, give us the wisdom and the strength to let the whole world see:

The New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a voice out of Heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

10

**AFTERNOON
SESSIONS**

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WHAT WILL WE FIND WHEN WE GET BACK?

by Richard Rogers

Introduction

- (1) I am thrilled to be a part of this year's lectureship. This is the twentieth time it has been my privilege to teach a class during this great week. This year is a little different from the others. Usually we study a book of the Bible together, but this year I will be trying to take us back to the first century to look closely at the church of that day.
- (2) We will probably be surprised at some of the things we see. Occasionally, we may be shocked—even scared. It will take courage on our part even to look seriously and real guts to practice what we find in this hectic, soft age in which we live.
- (3) There are several sources to which we can look to find our information: The book of Acts (historical and realistic); the Epistles (corrective and encouraging); Patristic writings (exemplary and instructive). The first three are absolute; the fourth, relative.
- (4) The first chapter of Acts lays the foundation for all that is to follow. Notice the salient points.
 - (a) *The Importance of the Individual*. This is the second book written to this one man (Theophilus) to disciple him in Christ. Twenty-five percent of the

New Testament was involved in discipling one man. When we get back to the New Testament emphasis, people—even one man—will be that important to us. *People take precedent over programs!*

- (b) *The Importance of Waiting.* These were “Type A” men, and waiting was not their main thing. They wanted to get on with the task before them, but they were told to wait! We are so often like them. We want instant maturity, instant evangelism, instant success—Hurry, Bigness, Noise. If we want power to accomplish great things for God, we will have to learn to wait. Read and meditate on Isaiah 40:27-31.
- (c) *The Importance of Witnessing.* They still viewed their ministry in the area of ruling. Jesus reminded them of what he had told them in John 15:26,27. They were to “testify”—to be “witnesses”—to their associates, neighbors, the world. And the good news was that God would supply the “power.” When we make it back to the New Testament emphasis, we will give powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel. Read, meditate, and live Revelation 12:11.
- (d) *The Importance of Seeking God’s Will.* Someone was needed to take Judas’ place with the apostles. Notice how the election was made. First, the family of believers prayed in unity as they entrusted the problem to the Father. Second, they searched the scriptures for any helpful principles they could find. Third, they tried to find God’s

will in prayer and by casting lots. Fourth, they acted in faith and moved forward with resolution.

- (e) *The Importance of Tending the Flock.* Matthias was added to the 11 apostles. Now the unit was complete. The 12 shepherds of Israel are ready for the gathering of God's one flock, Jew and Gentile, from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Read and glory in John 10:1-18.

(5) A Powerful Beginning—Acts 2.

- (a) *The Great Commission* (verses 1-13). The great plan and will of God is about to be fulfilled. Notice how it developed.

(1) In Matthew, the *work* is emphasized—*discipling*.

(2) In Mark, the *scope* is emphasized—*every creature*.

(3) In Luke, the *content* is emphasized—*repentance and forgiveness*.

(4) In John, the *cost* is emphasized—*showed his hands and side*.

(5) In Acts, the *specifics* are noted—*witness in ever-widening circles*.

- (b) *The Quotation* (verses 14-21). The day has come! The Spirit has been poured out! The day of the Lord's judgment is at hand! The priesthood of all believers has replaced the bloody sacrifices that were of little effect.

- (c) *The Gospel Sermon* (verses 22-35). Peter presented the gospel in one word: Jesus. He was approved of God, put to death according to God's eternal purpose, raised by God's power, and

made Lord of Heaven and earth. Read Acts 10:5-13.

- (d) *The Application* (verses 36-41). The facts have been presented and proved by scripture. Now they are applied to the audience. They had sinned in crucifying their Lord and Messiah. They beg for help, respond in repentance and baptism, and are added to the infant family of God.
- (e) *The Community* (verses 42-47). What a great day! The family of God is gathered and growing! Notice the characteristics we will find when we make it back to the beginning.
 - (1) *Commitment*—"They devoted themselves."
 - (2) *Reverence*—"Everyone was filled with awe."
 - (3) *Unity*—"All . . . were together and had all in common."
 - (4) *Benevolence*—"They gave to anyone that had need."
 - (5) *Joy*—"They broke bread . . . ate together with glad and sincere hearts."
 - (6) *Worship*—"They continued to meet together . . . praising God."
 - (7) *Attractiveness*—"They enjoyed the favor of the people."
 - (8) *Fruitfulness*—"The Lord added . . . daily."
- (6) The body of these lectures will be presented in topical form. We will notice five specifics that we will find when we make it back to the beginning century of the great family of God.

(As is always the case, very little originality is to be

found in my lessons. I am indebted to everything I have ever read or heard. Much of the material found here was originally found in two books by Lawrence Richards and his co-authors. Those books are *A Theology of Church Leadership* and *A Theology of Personal Ministry*. I have permission to use the material. I suggest you buy both books and study them carefully. You won't agree with everything, but you will be challenged.)

WHAT WILL WE FIND WHEN WE MAKE IT BACK TO THE BEGINNING?

Commitment

Jesus had demanded a total surrender in Luke 14:25-35. He would accept no partial discipleship. An unrivaled love, an unceasing dying, and an unpleasant alternative was His threat. Today we are in danger of preaching a cheap grace and accepting as disciples uncommitted people who Jesus said could not be disciples.

When we make it back to the beginning, we will find commitment to Christ: to His word, His work, and His body. Jesus Christ is Lord (Romans 10:9). That means He is the owner of our soul, the master of our life, and the controller of our actions. When a first-century Roman said, "Caesar is Lord," he was rebuffed by the Christian's reply, "Jesus is Lord!" It was no wonder they were persecuted. Their life, their conversation, and their very existence bespoke of an alien, strange existence. They were different because of their commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

Disciples of Christ have a continuing, deepening, life-changing relationship with God's word (John 8:31,32). Examine the life of a twentieth-century Christian and you will find very few who average reading the Bible 15 minutes a day! Today more time is spent reading the daily paper than the eternal word, and our children and neighbors learn of our lack of commitment to God and His word. Read Psalm 119:147,148 and 2 Peter 3:18.

When we make it back to the New Testament Church, we will find a commitment to the work of the Lord. Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. We will possess a driving compulsion (5:14); a new view of our fellow man (5:17ff.); a reconciling ministry fulfilled by speaking the good news to lost men (5:18-21); and a commitment to being God's fellow workers (6:1,2). In most congregations today, there seems to be an attitude that this is the work of only a few within the body. We need leaders who will equip the saints for the service of reconciliation. Will we be committed to this task or not? Read 2 Timothy 2:2.

To the saints in the New Testament era, the church was seen as the body of Christ and not just an institution. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 1:18-23; and Colossians 1:18.

When programs take precedence over people, when abilities are stressed instead of gifts, and when achievements are standards of success instead of faithfulness, institutionalism has conquered the body. When leaders view their function as one of decision-making and authority, the church has surrendered to the world's standard. The Lord made it plain that we needed servants, not commanders (Mark 10:35-45), even if they are good rulers (Luke 22:24-27). We need to spend time discovering our

place in the body and then commit ourselves to building up the body.

Allegiance

Allegiance is defined as: "1. the loyalty of a citizen to his government or of a subject to his sovereign; 2. loyalty or devotion to some person, group, cause, or the like." This attitude was manifested and urged in several relationships in the church—to God, to the body, to individuals in the body, to government, to the lost, and to weaker members (Romans 12-15). Before we notice each of these, let us look at some threats to allegiance from the book of 1 Corinthians.

- (1) *A Focus on Human Leaders* (chapters 1-4). Allegiance is sacrificed for human wisdom.
- (2) *A Focus on Group Harmony* (chapter 5). Allegiance is sacrificed for peace.
- (3) *A Focus on Personal Rights* (chapter 6). Allegiance is sacrificed for gain.
- (4) *A Focus on Christian Liberty* (chapters 7-10). Allegiance is sacrificed for disputes over freedom and propriety.
- (5) *A Focus on a "Cause"* (chapter 11). Allegiance is sacrificed for personal advancement.
- (6) *A Focus on Hierarchy* (chapters 12-14). Allegiance is sacrificed for position.
- (7) *A Focus on Doctrinal Interpretation* (chapter 15). Allegiance is sacrificed for intellect.

Allegiance to God is to be assumed! But, in light of our

present lack of commitment, we need to read carefully passages like Ephesians 3:14-21; Romans 12:1,2; and Acts 4:24-30. We need to restudy the Biblical doctrine of prayer, fasting, and worship. We will find that worship is to be in the atmosphere of love, unity, peace, acceptance, forgiveness, non-judgmental attitude, and with a goal of spiritual growth and maturity. In planning for worship, at least three things need to be remembered. First, *it needs to reflect present experiences*. Out of the reality of our shared lives, we come together to be the body and to look together in praise, adoration, and prayer to the one who is the source, center, and goal of life for us. Second, *it needs to reflect who God is by nature*. God is the heart and the proper focus of all our devotion. Third, *it needs to be addressed to God*. Even when we are speaking to one another (Ephesians 5:19), we need to direct that encouragement toward God as praise for our "one-another" relationship.

Allegiance to the body is expressed in the proper exercise of our giftedness. Read Romans 12:2-8 and Ephesians 4:7-16. The constant New Testament vision is God's people living shared lives marked by love, hospitality, and service. Note in John 13:1-17,34,35, three new things: (1) a new relationship: neighbor love becomes family love; (2) a new standard: "as yourself" becomes "as I have loved you"; and (3) a new outcome: observance of rules becomes the practice of love. Nearly all of the epistles reflect this concept (Romans 12-15; 1 Corinthians 12-14; 2 Corinthians 3; Galatians 5-6; Ephesians 4-5; Philippians 2-3; Colossians 3-4; 1 Thessalonians 2; Hebrews 10:24,25; et al.).

Allegiance is expressed even toward the world (Romans

13). We are charged to obey the rulers and to support the officials by our taxes. This is because they are God's servants on our behalf. The peace that government can bring is to be the burden of our prayers with a view to many being saved (1 Timothy 2:1-5). All of this was written during the rule of the most self-centered and self-serving Caesars the world has ever known. We can affect the world the most by following Paul's admonition to the letter.

Allegiance to the weaker brother needs special consideration. The weaker brother is to be accepted without stopping to correct him in regard to interpretation about disputed matters (Romans 14:1-12). He is not to be judged but to be built up by allowing the Spirit to minister righteousness, peace, and joy to all involved (Romans 14:13-23). The stronger is to bear the failings of the weak, to work toward unity by endurance and encouragement, and to serve the brother in Jesus' stead (Romans 15:1-13). We are competent to do this because God has filled us with goodness and knowledge (Romans 14:14-16).

God's People

When we make it back to the church of the New Testament, we will find that the believer's identity is not to be found in his function or in his possession of some "office" within the institutional structure of the local church. His significance is in his relationship to the living Lord. Many times today, the people of God do not have a clear sense of their own identity as a ministering people—each one called, empowered, and gifted by God to continue the work of Christ in their world. Perhaps some individual malaise can be found in an incorrect corporate

view. Just what are the Biblical truths concerning the body? What do we find out about God's people when we get back to the New Testament pattern?

We find a people of God (1 Peter 2:4-10). Let's view this point in outline form.

- (1) The word "people" comes from "laos." This was not a common word for God's people until the Septuagint. Let's take a look at some other words for "people."
 - (a) "Ethnos"—A people who belong to each other in virtue of a common heritage and common customs.
 - (b) "Demos"—A people in common assembly.
 - (c) "Ochlos"—A people as a mass, a crowd.
 - (d) "Polis"—A people drawn together in political unity into a city/state.

Note: None of the above are used to discuss the New Testament people. They are a people in whom the God of holiness has taken residence, in whom He walks and works, and who are in a unique way His own possession.

- (2) This concept stresses equality in the church.
 - (a) Read Galatians 3:26-28. We are "all sons (children) of God through faith."
 - (b) See Colossians 3:11. There are no national, religious or class superiorities. "Christ is all, and in all."
 - (c) Note Colossians 1:28,29. The goal of all activity is to "present everyone perfect in Christ."

- (3) In light of who we are, what then should we do?
 - (a) Call the whole community of faith together to confront their true identity.
 - (b) Show all believers that the root of their identity is in God's mighty acts and in His holy calling.
 - (c) Invite all the people of God to a personal commitment to live out their identity as His people by a responsive obedience to a god who calls each one to minister and serve.

We find a new covenant people (Hebrews 1:10; 2 Corinthians 3-5). For easy remembrance, let us view this point also in outline.

- (1) The New Covenant established: Hebrews.
 - (a) The superiority of Jesus to all Old Testament models (1:1-4:13).
 - (b) The qualifications of a priest (4:14-5:10).
 - (c) The relationship of Christ's priesthood to God's promise (6:13-7:28).
 - (d) The superior priests of the New Covenant (9:1-10:18)—freedom from sin (9:1-28); holiness (10:1-10); perfection (10:11-18).
- (2) The New Covenant explained: 2 Corinthians.
 - (a) The glory of the New Covenant (chapter 3). Christ is being formed in and revealed by each believer.
 - (b) The nature of the New Covenant (chapter 4). Christ as Lord is at work in each believer and is the goal toward which each believer strives.
 - (c) The outcome of the New Covenant (chapter 5).

We have an eternal hope! We persuade others!
 We are new creatures! We reconcile men to
 God!

Note: A grasp of our priesthood and of our identity is a necessary foundation for understanding the nature of the personal ministries of believers today. Under the New Covenant:

- (1) Every believer lives in the very presence of God, with full and immediate access to him.
- (2) God is at work within each believer, making him holy and writing His law on the transformed mind/heart.
- (3) Jesus Himself is "revealed in our mortal bodies." In essence, the Bible teaches a continuing incarnation of Jesus in His body.
- (4) Each believer is now enabled to fulfill the changeless functions of priesthood.

We find a kingdom people (Colossians 1:12,13). The "laos lives in the kingdom of the Son."

- (1) The Kingdom in the Old Testament.
 - (a) God is the universal ruler (Psalm 47:7-9).
 - (b) God will rule a kingdom on earth through the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6,7).
 - (c) God will bring peace through the coming Messiah and Kingdom (Isaiah 11:3-9).
- (2) The Kingdom in the Gospels (55 in Matthew; 20 in Mark; 46 in Luke; 5 in John).
 - (a) The Kingdom was present among them (Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15).

- (b) Note the link between the Kingdom message and the relief of suffering (Matthew 4:23).
 - (c) Notice the shift from external (Old Testament) to internal (New Testament) (Matthew 5-7).
 - (d) The miracles demonstrate Christ's Kingship (Matthew 8-11).
 - (e) There is growing opposition to the King and his Kingdom (Matthew 12-16).
- (3) The Kingdom is present in Jesus (Ephesians 1:19-23).
- (a) Power on our behalf (Luke 12:22-32; notice verse 33).
 - (b) Power through our lives (John 14:8-14).
 - (c) Power through prayer (John 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,26; Acts 4:24-31).
- (4) The present mission of the King.
- (a) Old Testament expectations (Isaiah 29:18-21; 35:5,6; 61:1-3; Luke 4:18,19).
 - (b) Gospel hints (Matthew 10:5-8; 11:4,5; 12:15-21; 15:29-31; 23:23).
 - (c) Epistle statements (James 1:27; Titus 3:1,8,14; Ephesians 2:10).

Note: Where the Kingdom exists:

- (1) There is compassion for the needy.
- (2) There is justice for the poor.
- (3) There is God's loving, transforming touch for society's outcasts: the addict, the prostitute, the homosexual, the widow, the orphan.
- (4) There is hope for the hopeless.

- (5) There is acceptance for the rejected.
- (6) There is an atmosphere of love, compassion, and deep concern.

We find a servant people (Romans 6:15-23; Philippians 2:1-11).

- (1) Old Testament songs.
 - (a) The Servant's attitude toward society's outcasts (Isaiah 42).
 - (b) The Servant is a weapon in the hand of God (Isaiah 49).
 - (c) The Servant is the voice of God (Isaiah 50).
 - (d) The Servant is the sacrifice of God (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).
- (2) Jesus: The incarnation of the Servant (Philippians 2:5-10; John 13).
 - (a) Jesus was fully aware of both His identity as God and His empowering from God.
 - (b) Yet, Jesus purposefully took a role reserved for the lowest of servants.
 - (c) Peter, in particular, was disturbed by this role reversal in which the greater served the lesser.
 - (d) Jesus explained his action as an example. He, the superior, served them. Surely, they should accept the same role to each other.
- (3) The Body: Servanthood in the New Testament Church.
 - (a) *Diakonon*—Waiting on the poor (Acts 6); communicating the gospel (Ephesians 3:7); endur-

ing trials on behalf of the saints (2 Corinthians 11:23); collecting money to meet human needs (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1,12,13).

- (b) *Doulos*—This word stresses the subjection of the believer to the Lord and to all men (Matthew 24:45; 8:9; Luke 17:7-10; Matthew 25:30; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

We find an empowered people (Ephesians 1:18-23; 3:7-13,16-19; 6:10-20).

- (1) The role of the Spirit in Jesus' ministry. He was:
 - (a) Born by the Spirit (Luke 1:35-37).
 - (b) Witnessed to by the Spirit (Matthew 3:16,17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21,22; John 1:29-34).
 - (c) Helped by the Spirit (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13).
 - (d) Led by the Spirit (Luke 4:14).
 - (e) Empowered by the Spirit (Matthew 12:28).
 - (f) Died by the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).
 - (g) Raised by the Spirit (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18).
- (2) The role of the Spirit in the apostles' ministry.
 - (a) He was their connection with Jesus (John 14:9-20).
 - (b) He was their counselor in the truth (John 14:21-27).
 - (c) He was their companion in the world (John 15:18-16:11).
 - (d) He was their contemporary voice (John 16:12-15).

- (3) The role of the Spirit in the church.
 - (a) He gives direction from God (Acts 1:8; 8:29; 15:28; 16:16; 20:28).
 - (b) He is the voice of God (Acts 28:25; 1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21; Romans 8:1-16).
 - (c) He brings transformation of character (2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:16,18,22,25).

We find a gifted people (Philippians 4:19).

- (1) The unity of giftedness (1 Corinthians 12-14).
 - (a) Unity in the Spirit (12:1-11).
 - (b) Unity in the body (12:12-31).
 - (c) Unity in love (13:1-13).
 - (d) Unity in honor and function (14:1-25).
 - (e) Unity in worship (14:26-39).
- (2) The basis of giftedness (Ephesians 3:14-5:1).
 - (a) Prayer for the whole family (3:14-21).
 - (b) Plan for unity (4:1-6).
 - (c) Power through gifts (4:7-16).
 - (d) Progress through love (4:17-5:1).
- (3) The context of giftedness (Romans 12-15).
 - (a) Total commitment (12:1,2).
 - (b) One-another relationships (12:3-21).
 - (c) Submission and service to society (13:1-14).
 - (d) Loving help to weaker brothers (14:1-15:16).

Note: The focus of all the giftedness passages is on our identity as members of a living body. Because of our identity as members of a body, we:

- (1) See the necessity of living in unity with other believers. We must live in harmony and unity, for no body can function when its parts are separated from one another.
- (2) Belong to one another and are to serve and build up one another in every way possible.
- (3) Grow as “every supporting ligament” (Ephesians 4:16) does its part. This enables each of us to identify as a minister within the body, effectively eliminating the “laity.”
- (4) Are to concentrate on developing close, loving relationships with one another. It is only in this context that the gifts can function.

The Prime Directive

When we make our way all the way back to the New Testament beginnings, we will find that our brothers and sisters lived under a commission. This commission not only was their prime directive, but it also was their magnificent obsession—*make disciples* (Matthew 28:18-20).

Discipleship involves not only the creation of life through obedient faith but also the redirection of the Christian’s life toward obedience to the will of God for his/her life so that he/she may become like Jesus. Three words need to be considered:

- (1) *Akoloutheo* denoted “the action of a man answering the call of Jesus.” His whole life will be redirected in obedience.
- (2) *Mathetes* means a disciple—“one who has heard the call of Jesus and has joined him.”

of Christians in the past but to have that new generation so grow in its relationship with the Lord that it will respond to His leading and bear its own fruit.

- (2) The need is for teamwork, not solo performance.
 - (a) All are gifted. Each one is to minister to the others (1 Corinthians 12:12-26).
 - (b) A discipling process is needed that will enable converts to teach and learn from each other rather than learning from a single leader or from a few. (Compare Romans 15:14; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- (3) Freedom to relate directly to the Head (Romans 14:7-12).
 - (a) Jesus calls us to be immersed in the reality of the world in which we live and to be taught by him "on the go," not to be "socked in" in some classroom for two, three, four, or more years.
 - (b) To protect a process of building disciples in our contemporary world, three elements must be stressed:
 - (1) A total commitment to Scripture as the trustworthy and reliable word of God.
 - (2) A total commitment to Jesus as Lord and an openness to hear and obey Him.
 - (3) A total commitment to one another so that our insights will be tested and confirmed by our brothers and sisters.
- (4) Discipling is to lead to service.

- (3) *Mimeomai* (imitate) emphasized the nature of a particular kind of behavior, modeled on someone else. See Luke 6:40. Note the following facts concerning discipling under the New Covenant.

An initiating process in making disciples will have a variety of characteristics including disciplined study, regular meetings with others, and various projects and experiences. It would need to be infused with at least the following four precepts:

- (1) New things need new ways to express them (the problem of wineskins). Read Luke 5:33-39.
 - (a) Jesus here offers no criticism or judgment on wine or wineskins. He simply states the foolishness of putting new wine in old skins. Two bad things happen: a good old wineskin is ruined, and good new wine is destroyed.
 - (b) Much of our training disciples people into roles, many of them resting on tradition and some of them resting on institutionalism (Sunday School teachers, visitation workers, Youth committee members, etc.). Instead of this, making disciples should focus on freeing individual members for growth in their own personal faith and uniqueness. *We must give priority to people, not to programs.*
 - (c) The wineskin principle is also generational. It affirms that God shapes each new generation of disciples for the society and culture in which it lives. The goal of discipleship is not to have the new generation recapitulate the experiences

- (a) The traditional approach of the church is to emphasize the goals of existing programs, offices, or structures. We lead people primarily into established projects so that stated goals may be accomplished.
- (b) The emphasis in the beginning century of the church seemed to give priority to needs, not to goals. Structures need to grow out of needs and how those needs can best be met. If we confuse structure with ministry, we will likely give priority to maintaining the organization rather than to meeting needs.

What we really need to do is to build a people who will fulfill the prime directive of making disciples worldwide. To do this, it seems necessary to give quality attention to seven areas of concern:

- (1) We must communicate a vision.
- (2) We must build a community of love.
- (3) We must learn to make disciples, not simply converts.
- (4) We must guide God's people to become slaves.
- (5) We must provide "in house" training in ministry.
- (6) We must extend freedom for response to the Holy Spirit.
- (7) We must come to a better understanding of leadership.

Servant Leadership

It is a fact denied by only a very few that there is

a leadership crisis in today's world: politically, domestically, educationally, and religiously. When Israel's shepherds became their dictators, the nation was doomed. In the second century, when the churches' shepherds became rulers, the church was doomed to apostasy. In many churches today, the shepherds have been replaced by decision-making dictators. Those churches are doomed to trouble and perhaps death. The following chart from J. Oswald Sanders illustrates this point.

(1) Natural Leaders:

- (a) Self-confident.
- (b) Knows men.
- (c) Ambitious.
- (d) Makes own decisions.
- (e) Originates own methods.
- (f) Enjoys commanding others.
- (g) Motivated by personal considerations.

(2) Spiritual Leaders:

- (a) Confident in God.
- (b) Also knows God.
- (c) Self-effacing.
- (d) Seeks God's will.
- (e) Finds God's way.
- (f) Delights to serve.
- (g) Motivated by love for God and man.

Perhaps it would be best to allow Jesus to speak on this first. His teaching, given on several occasions to his disciples, is consistent as well as revolutionary. It would do well to read Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; and Luke

22:24-27. In the passage from Luke 22, Jesus tells us what leadership is not. It is not a political power play (verse 24). It is not an authoritarian attitude (verse 25). It is not a cultic control (verse 27). Conclusion? New Testament leadership is not flashy public relations and platform personality but humble service to the group.

Jesus' examples as a leader are very revealing. What were the important principles of his leadership-development program?

- (1) The leadership of Christ focused on *individuals*. In Mark 3:14, Jesus separated the twelve to be "with him." He ministered to thousands, but he focused on these few. At the close of his ministry, he is still practicing this method. Witness the private interview with Peter in John 21.
- (2) The leadership of our Lord focused on *scripture*. He held the Old Testament in highest esteem. The Rabbis had distorted God's Word, and the Leader of leaders has come to say, "You have heard it said . . . but I say to you" (Matthew 5:21-48).
- (3) The leadership of the Lord Christ focused on *Himself*. "Have you been so long with me and you still have not known the Father? Take a good look at me because if you understand me, you understand the Father" (paraphrase of John 14:9). Compare 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9; and Luke 6:40.
- (4) The leadership of Jesus focused on *purpose*. Christ had clear-cut, heaven-sent goals for his earthly ministry and a limited amount of time to achieve them. Read John 5:30; 6:38; 7:16; 8:28; 12:48-50.

- (5) The leadership of our Lord focused on *the body*. This is seen primarily in John 17. Jesus is concerned with the immediate body of disciples in verses 6-19 and with the future disciples to be one with them in verses 20-26.

In the kingdom of Jesus and in the fellowship of his living church, leaders are servants who stoop to minister from the servant's position and bring cleansing to the Lord's body. In Matthew 20:20-28, we notice the following about leaders and leading.

- (1) *The relationship with the led.* The "ruler" is over; the servant is "among" (Luke 22:27). We cannot be servant-leaders if our position, role, or attitude tends to lift us above others and make a distinction between us and the rest of the people of God.
- (2) *Command.* Rulers "lord it over" and "exercise authority over" the led. Here is a command-type authority which "tells" others what to do and demands conformity of behavior. But we cannot imagine a servant entering the household and issuing commands. To attempt such authority calls forth one of God's powerful rebukes: *Not so with you!*
- (3) *Mode.* Command authority tells others what to do. Servants have one role in the household—to serve. Rather than tell, the servant shows. Example, not command, is the primary mode through which the servant-leader leads.
- (4) *Effect.* The "command authority" style does lead to behavioral conformity. These changes come

from the pressure of hierarchal command or peer group mores. The servant seeks heart conformity by service, slavery, and sacrifice.

- (5) *Power*. The secular leader has a wide range of coercive means to enforce response. The servant has only one power—love.

Paul presents a powerful test case in 2 Timothy 2:14-26. He describes in a powerful way how Jesus' teaching about leadership applied to Timothy as an evangelist. Consider, for a moment, a very brief outline of this great text.

- (1) How to deal with the contentious (verses 14-19)—*do not quarrel*.
- (2) How to deal with self (verses 20-23)—*flee, pursue, do not quarrel*.
- (3) How to deal with those who oppose you (verses 24-26)—*do not quarrel*, be kind to all, gently instruct, wait for God to act.

Note: A servant's *attitude* (gentleness and humility); a servant's *resource* (his life and gentle teaching); a servant's *hope* (God will act to change life).

God gives human leaders authority, but it is a unique one! It does not rest on human wisdom or power in any way. Most important, it does not imply a right to control the behavior of others. The authority of servant-leaders is one granted to built up brothers and sisters so they will be able to live out the will, not of men, but of God. What are the principles to be followed in this grand work?

- (1) **Depend on God, the Holy Spirit, instead of the**

flesh. Today we depend on buildings, budgets, boards, Sunday Schools, preachers, sermons, visitation teams, social fellowship, and multiple activity. We are so afraid that we are going to “offend” the carnally-minded or spiritually-immature that we carefully pamper the touchy saints. Caught in the whirlpool of human, fleshly church necessities, it is difficult to realize that God is not doing it—we are! Until we start to walk and live by faith and allow God to have control of the church, we will not experience the celebration our assembly could be. Our programs will continue to be little more than frail efforts of dedicated men trying to convince themselves and the world that “God did it.”

(2) Concentrate on the maturing of Christians. Read 1 Corinthians 14. We have been tricked into believing we should be “evangelizing” when we come together (when one percent of those present are non-Christians). And then “out there in the world” we are supposed to be a “separated people,” lest we become tainted by the influence of the ungodly. We are taught to avoid association with such. *A Question:* Is the purpose of our assembling together to save the lost? Or do we have our church fellowship confused with our mission to the world? The early Christian gatherings were for the purpose of edification—that each Christian should grow. Read Hebrews 10:24,25. *Believers were the main thrust of the body in its gathered aspect!*

(3) Recognize the priesthood of all believers. It is Christ’s plan for each believer to possess the Spirit (Romans 8:9); to be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14); to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16); to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); and to exercise gifts from the Spirit

(Romans 12:3-8). We are all priests (1 Peter 2:5-9). "What then, brethren, is the right course? When you meet together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a disclosure of special knowledge or information, an utterance in a strange tongue or an interpretation of it. But let everything be constructive and edifying and for the good of all" (1 Corinthians 14:26, amplified). Gifts of the Spirit lie dormant and unused because we give God no opportunity for their use. Here are some suggested environments where He might work: small study/involvement groups; friendship groups; and less tightly structured services.

(4) Build the fellowship around Christ. It is Christ who died for our sins. It is Christ who saves. It is Christ who gives eternal life. It is Christ who places us in His body and sets us apart from the world. Christ is our glorious distinctive! Read 1 Corinthians 1-4. All the activities, services, and gatherings of our fellowship will have one aim: to enhance our relationship to, dependence upon, service to, and life in the personal Jesus. It will depend on Him for its life—not on a program, preacher, building, or "distinctives."

(5) Release church life from the confines of the building. The early brothers did not need to be reminded that its ministry was in the world. There was no place else for it to minister. It knew nothing of architectural wonders, timber, and stained glass in which to gather the faithful. When the early saint heard "church," he thought of "people—my people." In the New Testament era, there were no whole bodies of people concentrating all their energies, time, and money in raising thousands for bricks and planks and for mortgages and interest (all so easily justified because "it's part of our outreach to the

community”).

(6) Build unity on the basis of love. In the church in Century One, the one thing that characterized their meetings was soul-fellowship (Acts 2:42). It was an immensely personal soul-fellowship that had as its heartbeat a Spirit-ignited, fervent, personal love. It is impossible to imagine the members of the early church going dutifully to their religious meetings as little individual islands surrounded by the cold waters of an impersonal image, sitting shoulder-to-shoulder to hear what was going on at the front, never seeing or being seen, never caring or being cared for by the people which they had met. *It was a personal church!* You knew your brother. You knew his needs and his hurts. You ministered to him spiritually and physically, and he ministered to you. *It was a personal church!* You didn't hide in your favorite pew and slip out unnoticed. You were confronted eyeball-to-eyeball. You were noticed—reached out to. *Ours isn't today!* And all the coffee we drink together, all the fellowship meals we eat together, and all the committees we sit with aren't going to make it happen. Small, intimate, sharing groups are essential to build loving, unified relationships.

Closing Note

I am praying for the kind of commitment that will make it possible to overcome the inroads of the flesh in our lives and that will make it possible for us to return. I am praying for that kind of revolutionary faith that will knock your church and mine free from the enslaving influence of the flesh and set it free to move along the highway of spiritual advance to become . . . God's Church. *Then, we will have made it back!*

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HOW TO RAISE CHILDREN RIGHT!

by Jack Exum

Every parent wants to be a better parent. Hundreds of "Do It Yourself" books have been written on the subject. What more can be said or written other than to urge each parent to *return to the basics*. Since all children are different, it would be futile to get into specifics. You'd have to write a book for each one.

So let's return to the basics—those beginning principles that are elastic enough to fit every case and to apply in every home. Nothing fancy or supernatural—just good old sound *fundamentals*.

The saying is still true: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

I. TEACH

The word "teach" is found more than 100 times in the New Testament. The disciples of Jesus were the direct product of teaching; and after being baptized, they were to be taught all things whatsoever Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

Kunta Kinte was not the first to believe in telling others of the heritage of life, for Jesus taught ages before,

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man

therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44,45).

From Christianity to customs, it's a matter of teaching. From manners to misbehavior, it's a matter of teaching. From courtesy to cursing, or religion to rebellion, it's all a matter of teaching. From obedience to obesity, or selfishness to sainthood, it's strictly a matter of teaching.

We are the product of our teaching. We emerge as the result of what we are taught. From conscience to convictions, from conversion to control, it's all a matter of teaching.

There Are Three Ways We Teach

The word "teach" is used more than 100 times in the Word. The believer's commission says, "Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . then teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). Our "roots" go directly to the simple instruction of Paul to Timothy:

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

(1) By Words

The primary way we teach is with words. Yet words alone are often insufficient. Sometimes misdefined, often misused, and often misunderstood, we continue to speak, saying words that are familiar to us but are missed by those who hear us.

Let's say you are 50 and your daughter is 15. That's

35 years' difference—and that difference is in perception and wisdom as well as pronouncement and definition. They may hear your words without true comprehension of what you are saying.

Yet, in spite of these natural limitations, the spoken and written word remains the primary power of teaching. The gospel is the power of God to save (Romans 1:16), and Peter said, "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

(2) By Example

While words, spoken or written, are primary and fundamental to teaching, there must be a demonstration of those concepts and ideas. When all is said and done, there will be more "said" than "done."

When the poet wrote, "Anyone can tell me, but few can show the way," we get the feeling that "practicing what we preach" is the real problem.

Telling alone is insufficient. Something is truly lost when the demonstration fails. On the other hand, "a good life is no excuse for locked lips." Telling is good—showing is better; and when we put them together, they form a one-two combination that is hard to beat (Acts 1:1; 1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

Paul said, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Jesus Christ" (Philippians 2:5). When you admonish your children, "Mind me!", you're saying the same thing. But how does the "mind of Christ" become us, or how does our mind become our children's? This is done by teaching truth and sincerely living the right kind of life before them.

There is no choice between word and deed. They *must*

go together!!

(3) Total Image

There is yet a third and more powerful way to teach—that's by "total image."

Without closing your eyes, picture a favored loved one. Perhaps it's Mother or Dad or sister or brother—maybe a best friend. *Whatever* they are, that's what you see!

It is not their words now that matter; it is not their example that counts; for life has a way of welding *all together* into *one*—it leaves a *total image!*

One sentence does not make a book. Word upon word, line upon line, page upon page—and, finally, the weight of the total book is there. *The total image you leave is your greatest power.*

THE FORMULA

Time + Teaching = Mind

Time plus teaching equals *mind*. Time without teaching yields only a fully developed body—out of control. If a child is to "mind me" (have my mind), he must be taught. There is no substitute for it; nothing can replace it. This teaching—by word, by example, and through total image—results in mind.

Mind + Time = Convictions

If mind comes from time plus teaching, their conviction is the result of mind plus time.

Early teaching is received on an acceptance basis. From this base, convictions are formed. What children first accept (no questions asked), they must later prove. So when

the staging area is set (mind), the testing stage will come (convictions). Mother's and Father's convictions are not good enough for sons and daughters—they *must* test them for themselves. "Faith of our fathers" is not good enough for me. I need *direct, personal* faith in Jesus myself. Without the gathering of information (mind), convictions are impossible.

Convictions + Time = Character

Using a thing on a one-time basis proves little. This is why many a beginning believer has a super amount of convictions. Yet Paul instructs brethren *not* to appoint such a one to the office of the eldership, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

We don't need "men of conviction" to serve as shepherds—we need "men of *character*."

Convictions must be employed day after day and tested under varying conditions before they blend themselves into character. The eight-year-old has been taught it's wrong to steal. The 15-year-old wonders, toys with it, and tests it. Yet years of honest living brings character.

Character + Time = Destiny

"And it came to pass" is a statement made repeatedly in the Word. It is a summation of life—of the total—the Alpha and Omega and all the alphabet in between. "Destiny" is the word that follows "character" and crowns it with life eternal.

Character does not "come to pass"—it comes to stay. This is why the early Christian could be violated, de-

frauded, dishonored, and all that he possessed taken from him, and he would still sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; O what a foretaste of glory divine!" Character begets destiny. They complement each other, for they go in the same direction.

II. DISCIPLINE

Discipline is not punishment; neither is punishment the equivalent of discipline. They have similarities but are basically different.

Punishment is usually corporal and intends to hurt. Convicts are punished—few are disciplined. Punishment is more fleshly and temporal, while discipline is more spiritual and eternal. You pay with punishment—you learn by discipline. You grow to hate and despise sheer punishment. It tends to be senseless—aimless, without a clearly defined purpose.

Discipline is the opposite. While there are comparisons, the end result is more of a contrast.

Discipline is training. It demands a disciple. It affords a teacher. Its domain is the whole world, for its classroom is life.

Daily Discipline

The writer of Hebrews speaks of "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" and the daily discipline that is offered to every child of God.

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him;

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth (disciplines) and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening (discipline), God deal-eth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement (discipline—correction), whereof we are all partakers, then ye are bastards and not sons (Hebrews 12:5-8).

“Have you forgotten,” he says, that every son is disciplined? Some more and some less, but none without any. Those who are not “*partakers*” are *rejects*. Discipline is not like punishment. It must be *offered* and *received*. It is a gift, and a gift only qualifies when it is both offered and received. Punishment is *administered*. You can punish “No. 37408” in a federal prison, but this seldom happens to one who has received Biblical discipline when he was young.

The writer of Hebrews makes the distinction clear. You may live in a mansion and have the finest food on your table; your father may offer you every luxury money can buy; but if he fails to correct you or to discipline your life, you are rejected—bastardized!

Discipline Must Be Based on Truth

A few years ago, a great tragedy was also being written. Five men—one congressman, two network cameramen, and two others—were dead, murdered by a group of dedicated disciples; and some were wounded—critically.

A religious cult was threatened, and it struck back with precise and mechanical murder. Then more than 900 of

those deeply “religious,” disciplined cult members committed suicide.

They were disciplined—but by the wrong master. They were “brainwashed”—but by the wrong physician. They had been fed *error*; and, just like the poison they swallowed, it was fatal.

Jesus said, “If the blind follow the blind, they shall all fall into the ditch.” Discipline is only good when it is based on *truth*.

Reverence and Correction

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? (Hebrews 12:9).

Reverence (respect) and correction always go the same direction. When one leaves, the other follows. Where one is found, the other stands close by. The writer goes on to say that our fathers chastened (disciplined) us after their own pleasure (according to their own human judgment), yet God always corrects us for our profit (Hebrews 12:10).

“Afterwards”

The “now” generation is not too acquainted with this word. Our kids want to begin married life with what Mom and Dad worked 25 years to get. Alcoa is not the only one that “can’t wait.”

Why get married when you can just live together now? Why not do the dope scene? No one knows what’s going to happen tomorrow! Quit school? Sure! Man, I want a

car now!

But what about waiting? Why not leave something to hope for—to look forward to? That word “afterwards” is the real key to discipline and maturity.

Now no chastening (correction—discipline) for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless AFTERWARD it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:11).

What a verse!! It tells us the full results of waiting—of correcting—of discipling.

The silliest thing you have said recently to your son was when you shouted, “Do you want a whipping?” Wouldn’t you be surprised if he said, “Yeh, Dad, I’ve been waiting all day just for you to come home where you could whip up on me!”

You don’t want to whip him. He doesn’t want to be whipped. There are two votes that often declare a “mistrial.” A break in discipline often leads to tragedy.

Words Are Not Discipline

You can teach with words—you can discipline in “training on the job.” You can hassle with words, but that’s not discipline. You can threaten, but that’s not discipline. You can shout and scream and holler, but that’s despair—not discipline.

“Then Afterward Comes”

Time reveals many things. Jesus spoke of two families. Both built on the same side of the street. Both wanted a

nice cozy home for the family.

The houses went up together. The same general material was used. Concrete was poured, nails were driven, and the final decorations were put in place.

You'd have to look twice for fear of turning in the wrong drive. The homes were beautiful and complete.

"Then afterward comes." A storm is sited and gathers in an unfriendly sky. Then it hits. The lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, and rain falls and beats upon both houses. When all of its fury is spent and people come out of hiding, the tragedy is revealed.

One house has stood; one house has fallen. One was built upon solid rock, the other upon sand. The materials were the same and the desire was equal, but the foundation was different. The results speak for themselves! (Matthew 7:24-29).

These are fundamentals we are dealing with—raw materials! These foundation stones are not luxuries—they are absolute necessities. And the toughest thing of all is to be consistent with them—to hallow them as sacred principles that cannot be ignored without suffering severe consequences.

"Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child"

This chimney-corner scripture is not found in the Bible, but the concept is sprinkled all through it.

Solomon said, "Chasten (discipline—correct) thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). Correction follows teaching as surely as day follows night. "While there is hope" means "while you can," for the day comes all too soon that the child is physically grown and the use of a physical "rod"

would be ineffective at best and unproductive at worst. Consistent correction must begin early.

Another proverb reads, "There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way, and the person who hates reproof will die" (Proverbs 15:10).

You cannot discipline your child too early. "Afterwards" is too late. Life takes over. The world does not discipline—it punishes. Broken homes, broken marriages, rebellious children, and often death itself is the futile effort of the world to deal with "those without teaching and discipline."

"He that spareth the rod hateth his own son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (many times)" (Proverbs 13:24). This proverb is the one most often quoted in "spare the rod and spoil the child." Solomon merely foresees what is later confirmed by the New Testament writers.

The words are so simple. There is nothing complex about the proverb or the King James version of it. It is not metaphorical or written in symbols. He doesn't say, "Well . . . sometimes . . . or maybe . . ." or anything about psychoanalysis or transanalysis. We have "paralysis of the analysis."

He gives a simple statement of truth. Believe it or not, it remains as a paragon of truth in child raising: "To bastardize a child, you spare the rod." (The rod refers to all corrective measures of discipline.) That's it. That will do it!

The child may be the first to recognize his position, yet sooner or later all will know. We teach or "thrust away." We instruct or destruct! We share or we don't care. We discipline or we despise. We correct or we reject. It is

either/or, with little room in between.

III. AUTHORITY

Children—Obey

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). Here is a simple 11-word command that strikes at the heart of home authority.

“Children” refers to dependents—those still living in Father’s house. If one is an infant or a grown teenager—the command is equally binding. While you would not treat a teenager like an infant, this command to obey is applied to each dependent in the home.

The patriarchal law of the Old Testament has never been done away. God’s plan from the beginning was a “father rule” plan. Society changes, yet the concept of the “father rule” for the believer’s home has never changed.

Honor

Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Ephesians 6:2).

Honor follows obedience. Obedience is always more important, for if your son learns to obey in small things, “he will be faithful in greater things.”

When children disobey parents, they *dishonor them*—every time! You cannot honor without obeying, and you cannot disobey without holding that authority in con-

tempt and disrespect. So genuine authority is little more than the afterglow of obedience that produces a deep honor and righteous respect.

Look at the pitiful example of Old Testament Eli, the high priest. He served in the temple and once a year went into the very presence of Jehovah. He offered the blood of a perfect lamb and atoned for the sins of Israel. He went into the Most Holy Place and knelt before the mercy seat.

He was a saintly priest but was a sorry father. He taught Israel the laws of God but forgot to teach his own sons. He was busy leading others to God while his own sons went to the devil.

Young Samuel revealed the judgment of God.

For I told him (Eli) that I would judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves VILE AND HE RESTRAINETH THEM NOT
(1 Samuel 3:13).

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of the high priests, were raping the daughters of Israel in the very shadow of the temple. They were rebellious delinquents—and whatever teaching they had was without discipline.

It isn't good enough to teach. Discipline and correction *must* follow. God's way must never be left in doubt.

The old Chinese proverb reads, "He who respects not father and mother respects *no one*."

How to Begin Again

How do you go back when you have failed to teach—to instruct—to share—to discipline? How do you recover the past? Where is the land of beginning again? How do you

undo knots of misunderstanding; hours of hassling; days, weeks, and years of unsolved problems?

All parents teach, and all of us have disciplined. But when that teaching is not lived well, and the discipline has been riddled with inconsistencies, how do you *begin again*?

As I have written briefly and mostly in generalities, so even *beginning again* will be overly simplified. Be impressed with the eternal principles involved. They are not easy, but they are right—and they work every time!

Determine—Agree

If you and your beloved wife, as parents, would begin again, you must determine to do so. Agree on the need. Do not look for temporary solutions, but seek the good of your children. Determine their needs—agree on them. Set the laws—the boundaries in your own heart. Agree to stand together even when the corrective measures get super-tough. The inconsistencies of the past must be left behind. The first day, the first week, the first test, will be the toughest.

“You Forgive Us—We Forgive You!”

Now call your son and your daughter—all your children. Confess your failures—the times you neglected them. Ask their forgiveness—openly! Don’t stop short of it. This is the door—the only real door to beginning again.

It will be granted; and when it is, explain all of the changes and rules that will now prevail. Go into every detail. Take time to communicate. Explain what will happen when the instructions are ignored or held in contempt!

Then stand your ground kindly, but firmly. The first day is the most important—then the second—then the third—then the fourth—etc.

It gets better as you go along. Don't expect miracles—just good results.

When serious breakdown occurs, repeat the process. Stay on track. It leads to new levels of a happier home.



A NEW LOOK AT SOUL WINNING

by Jack Exum

One By One—The Way It's Done

There are *only* two kinds of evangelism in saving souls; there are no more. These two classifications include them all. Every method can be put into one of two columns. Gadgets, gimmicks, games, and glorified programs still can be listed in one or the other column. There are no exceptions. This is the rule, and it is ironclad.

In one column can be placed all of the evangelistic plans and methods that we employ. There is *mass evangelism*. This includes the super-gospel meeting efforts, where hundreds and even thousands gather for preaching and instructions. Great good can, and is, done in such efforts. The use of *television and radio* has been a means of preaching the gospel to literally millions who would never be exposed to the simple truth of Christ. *Literature evangelism* is a marvelous way of getting the printed page (that goes on helping) into the hands of interested readers. *Correspondence course* work continues to be a wonderful tool of teaching and leading souls to Christ. *Jail and prison ministry* is yet another way of getting the message out (a way that we have largely ignored in the past). *Bible camps* have caused many to turn to Christ, for the total influence of dedication that often is found among our youth is a powerful, persuasive force in converting souls. What about *Vacation Bible Schools* and *special lectures*?

These two can be placed in the first column of "ways of evangelizing." There are scores of other methods that can be mentioned—from *Head Start* groups to *Thursday Schools*. The popular *bus ministry* must be included and takes a prominent place among these mentioned. From periodicals to bulletins, from pulpits to buses, from the prison workhouse to the coffee house—all are means and methods that we have, and are, using in our outreach of *evangelism*. All have one thing in common—*numbers*.

On the other side of the ledger of evangelism there is but one entry in the whole column. It stands alone—without the aids or helps or plans of the masses. It is the oldest and most successful of all "plans." It is called *personal evangelism*. *Emphasis in God's Word has always been placed on the INDIVIDUAL*. The great word in the Bible is "one"—one motive, one field, one baptism, one book, one teaching, one way, one truth, one life, one door, one sheepfold, one shepherd, one church, one heaven. *One! . . . One! . . . One! . . .* that's the word; and, "*One by one is the way it's done.*"

Jesus Emphasized the Individual

Jesus called them one by one. Christ emphasized the individual. He gave to the ordinary and showered all of his blessings on *one*. He selected his disciples (later to be apostles) on a one-by-one basis. "The following day Jesus would go forth into Galilee and find Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me" (John 1:43). Some of the greatest sermons Jesus ever gave were given to an audience of *one*. Think of Nicodemus (John 3). The great sermon on "living water" was given to a Samaritan woman (John 4). Luke 19 sees Jesus enter the house of Zacchaeus when all

Jericho was awaiting his arrival. Later Jesus declared, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9). The emphasis was "*one*."

Philip Followed Christ's Example

Philip, the great evangelist, was on assignment in the city of Samaria. I love this example of Philip. He was a great evangelist, for he was willing to leave the crowds and seek that *special one* who needed Christ.

The "revival" in Samaria was a complete success. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). Gospel meetings always succeed when *Christ is preached*. The mass evangelism approach is a Bible approach. Crowds heard the message, and the Word says, "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (Acts 8:6).

"And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8). What a thrill to take the gospel to a people who were generally despised and rejected! They were considered "half-breed" and neither Jew nor Gentile. They were outcasts, and then one came with the message of good hope. Sins would be forgiven and forgotten. Christ would become head of homes and hearts. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15). Philip, the evangelist, had arrived.

But the meeting was to end. The preacher would soon be gone. He would leave the vast audience for an assembly of *one*. The Spirit would call the preacher away—away to another task. The glamour will be left in the city—the big meeting—the many responses. The gospel will be taken to *one*. It was vital—urgent—imperative!

So in Chapter 8 of Acts is seen both sides of the ledger—the advance of the Kingdom through mass evangelism and the saving of a soul through personal evangelism. The meeting in Samaria went on and grew. The Word does not say this, but where Christ has been preached and salvation received and joy abounds, the process of winning others to Christ is *automatic*. *Back then, soul winning was a way of life to the Christian!*

God Uses the Christian with Enthusiasm

Let's face it—a vast majority of success in any venture is bound up in the word "*enthusiasm*." It is as powerful as the atomic bomb and as contagious as measles. Regardless of the field, whether business, art, science, or politics—yes, even religion—*enthusiasm* counts. Never underestimate its power, for it will influence and move people to greater heights and is often the final key to turning souls to Christ. It is as contagious as it is powerful and will rub off on anybody.

Have you ever heard a baby cry without enthusiasm? Or did you ever see a baby smile without enthusiasm? Of course not. Human beings are born with enthusiasm; but, in some, this yeast of life loses the power to reproduce itself. It is no exaggeration to state that enthusiasm is the most highly valued trait in the human personality. All other things being equal, enthusiasm has often tipped the scale in one man's favor. And not infrequently, enthusiasm tips the scale when all other things are *not* equal. B. C. Forbes has said,

At the base and birth of every great business organization you will find an enthusiast, a man consumed with earnestness of purpose, with

confidence in his powers, with faith in the worthwhileness of his endeavors.

The soul-winner who wishes to succeed must be enthusiastic about his work. It is vital to salesmanship, and soul winning is selling Christ.

Enthusiasm is a quality that makes a man express his belief with the intense earnestness and sincerity needed to carry conviction. Enthusiasm is the result of a strong and hearty faith in God and in the merits of Christ's proposition to the lost.

Enthusiasm is effective, first, because of its psychological effect upon the personal worker and, second, because this reacts in many ways upon the learner. The "live wire" who is brimming over with "pep" can pass along his enthusiasm just as a live electric wire carries along the current of electricity. When we earnestly believe a thing, whether or not others can share in our belief, at least they are deeply impressed with our earnestness. However "hard a nut to crack" any man may be, he is noticeably affected by another's enthusiasm and belief in himself and in the cause he carries.

Enthusiasm breaks down opposition. One may "hog" the conversation and be loud and rude in his efforts to get others to listen, but this falls far short of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm tends to break down deceitful arguments—and rolls on to victory above the veneer of human reason and righteousness. It has a beneficial effect upon temperament as well as upon manner. It cranks the machine of God's grace that gives to the Christian that inner faith and confidence which, in turn, produces great power in converting the lost. Difficulties loom large when one is tired, indolent, or timid. But enthusiasm wakes him up, and he

brushes the obstacle aside. In generating the driving force of enthusiasm, the first requisite for one with lasting love for the lost and a working knowledge of God's word is to continue the burning fire of enthusiasm and zeal. Christ needs you now!

Some Brief Re-Definitions

I don't like the term "soul winning." "Soul" sounds spooky and mystical. We are tempted to pass by people to get to one "soul." The term is fine as long as we remember that a soul sweats! The pseudo word "soul" often emits a double standard. We say a soul prays but never say, "Look at that soul cutting the grass." We save souls but never think of a soul who cries, or buys groceries, or eats hamburgers, or scrubs woodwork. Since souls are people (folks, neighbors, friends, relatives, bowling partners, coffee mates), let's see them as such. The arbitrary line between a soul and a person is false.

The word "winning" is equally deceptive. It applies pressure where there is none in the Word. The power of God to save is the gospel (Romans 1:16), and we are the clay pots in which the gospel is to be carried (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are *people teachers, gospel talkers, and word carriers*. We are the living, who were once dead (Ephesians 2:1)—walking, living demonstrations of the grace of god. *Soul winning isn't something we do . . . it's something we are!!*

My commission is not in winning but in teaching. Jesus said, "Teach . . . baptize . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matthew 28:18-20). Soul winning is "people teaching." Sometimes our most powerful influence is exerted when we are unaware that others are watching. It could be a word, a sen-

tence, a paragraph, a page, a chapter, or even a whole book. It may take a moment, an hour, perhaps a day, a week, a month, a year, or a whole lifetime. It's God loving others through us—teaching, telling, saying, showing, helping, leading, and saving! We are nothing! It is God in us that makes us something. You are not “the truth.” I am not “the truth.” God is truth!! His Word is truth; and we, like John, simply point to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Allow the Word (the evidence of God) to be the sole power of conversion (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Soul winning! Wonderful—if it refers to God-fearing, Christ-honoring, people-teaching disciples carrying his Word . . . “everywhere.”

Soul winning is life. It is *not* something we do—it is something we are! That image, that concept, that re-definition, must again be taught. It is the Lord's business being done through us. One sermon will not do it. One prayer will not accomplish it. It will take a re-direction of our total effort. Let buildings go unbuilt, but let the Lord's business be done. Leave dinners on the grounds uneaten, but never leave the Lord's business neglected. This is our *one mission*, and we must return to the basic concept and mission of the individual believer—“I am a soul winner.”

New Because It Is So Old

This “new” concept is new because it is so old. The very reason that the Word of God is so silent on the subject of soul winning is that the very life the Christian lived was the “soul winning package.” They didn't have goals—they had results. They didn't add so much as they multiplied! It was a normal day when the report was, “And multitudes were added to the Lord, and the number

of disciples were multiplied!”

It is little wonder that Christians were put to death. This was the only way that the enemy could silence the soul winner. The last words of Stephen were, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”—*soul winning!* Today you could silence the average congregation by destroying five percent of the total. Then again, you might destroy the program that operates one night of the week, and some congregations would shut down completely in efforts to reach the lost.

The Individual Believer Is the Program

No one should be against programs. But the idea that you can take what a Christian “is” and make it a program for one night in the week is ludicrous.

One may cry, “I need my soul won!”

“I’m terribly sorry, but you are too early. Our program doesn’t start until seven!”

“Are you a soul winner in the program?”

“Yes, I’m in the program, but I’m not a soul winner until seven. That’s when it starts, you see.”

You just cannot take a person who is insensitive to the needs of those about him on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday *and make him a soul winner on Tuesday night!!!*

The very reason programs fail is because only a pitiful few identify themselves as soul winners. We make 95% “believers” and 5% “soul winners”! Where are the men who can put us back on course? Where is the congregation in which a majority identify themselves with the simple term, “I am a soul winner”?

Soul Winning—Number One Guilt Trip in the Church

The temptation is to make “what you do” the standard definition of “what you are.” My grandfather used to say, “Jack, learn to *be*, then you can learn to *do*, and finally you can learn to *have*.” The “Be—Do—Have” formula has been reversed in modern times. Today we tend to teach, “Boy, go out there and learn how to get stuff, so you can do things, and then you’ll be somebody.” The later definition is manipulation. It is the basis of how evangelism has become the number one guilt trip in the church today.

“How many souls have you won?” is a question often asked. Let me assure you that the number will never be enough to the one who begins with such a question. Some even suggest a “quota” be placed on each member. Quotas, goals, advances—all are good in their place, but soul winning is not *something you do* so much as it is *something you are!* How do you measure influence? How do you register examples? How do you calculate the total effect of a godly life? Soul winning is *life*, and life is the program.

The Orange Tree

In a recent meeting in southern Florida, I found myself wandering about in an orange grove. I stopped in front of a rather young tree. I clutched it about the neck and said, “You’re an orange tree!”

“Yeah,” it replied in a rather startled way.

“You gotta bear oranges,” I growled.

You could feel the whole tree shake with laughter as the

tree replied, "Silly thing, that's my nature. If I didn't bear oranges, what would I bear?"

What if we taught "soul winning" as the natural product of the Spirit, the ordinary fruit of the believer? What if we journeyed back to the old Jerusalem plan and just turned the church loose to "go everywhere preaching (teaching, telling, talking) the word" (Acts 8:4)? What if we took off all quotas, buried our figures, relaxed our members, destroyed the guilt trips, and began teaching that "*every believer is a soul winner*" ? What if we told parents that bringing their children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" is pure, unadulterated soul winning? What if we piled all the books on the subjects (including the six I have authored), adding charts, filmstrips, correspondence courses, and all the other methods that we have devised in this century, and just blew them up? Then we turn to each believer and simply say, "You are the plan that God has for evangelism. You are the method that he ordained. You are the book that people read, the living moving filmstrip that catches their eye . . . *you're it!* There is no other plan! There is no other method! Nothing else will work!

What would happen if next Sunday, elders would walk among the believers, catching each one by the hand and looking directing into the eyes, saying, "*You are a soul winner!*" ? What if each congregation stood and openly declared the simple truth, "We are God's soul winners" ? A revolution would take place, and a miracle of a new image would appear. The overwhelming majority of members would see themselves as God purposed them to be. They, in turn, would see more opportunities in a day than they had seen in a year—people all about them;

people who hurt and need them! Opportunities for a moment here and an hour there—listening, saying, helping, telling, and giving! If orange trees bear oranges, what do believers bear?

Then Jule Miller's filmstrips might well be used effectively! Then Ivan Stewart's O.B.S. might help someone to see their lost condition and turn to the grace of God. Then books, charts, aids, and methods of all sorts (that are good and true) might be sought and found useful.

What I am saying is this: "You don't make a farmer by putting a plow in his hand." Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you to be fishers of men." Men write books, invent machines, and devise methods, but God makes a soul winner!

I Like Popeye

I like Popeye—I always have. He would sing, "I yam what I yam, and that's all I yam; I'm Popeye the sailor man (toot toot)." He didn't hide anything. He even smoked his pipe in public. So I ate all the spinach I could find. I was the human "garbarater"; and if there was any spinach left on anyone's plate, they would say, "Just pass it over to little Jack. He'll eat it." Popeye was strong, and I wanted to be like him. He was my model, and I wanted to follow him. Mrs. Whetstone, my third-grade teacher, nearly ruined my day when she explained in health class that there are no nutritional calories in a ton of spinach. I didn't believe her; I just kept on eating it. I could see myself mighty and strong. It was just a matter of *spinach and time*. The image of *being* was the important thing.

Are You Ordained?

When I was a lad of 16 years, I was called by the leaders of the Quitman, Georgia, congregation to come and preach for them. The appointment was just for Sunday morning. I had tried to preach three times, and the unanimous report was all three were rather trying! For some reason I felt like the state evangelist.

I arrived in Quitman early. There were just two buses a day—and the first was very early in the morning. I was early and walking the sidewalk, rehearsing the lesson to be presented. A rather overstuffed English-style lady approached me from the opposite direction. I eased into the hedge (she demanded most of the walk on her own); and as she passed, she saw the oversized family Bible in my hand.

“And what are you doing here in our city?” she said, recognizing me as a stranger.

“I’m here to *preach the gospel of Christ*,” I replied, almost in a shout.

She pulled her monocle to the full extent of the chain, and peering through a rather enlarged eye, she said in an English tone, “Are you ordained?”

I can fully understand her surprise at hearing a young boy claim to be a preacher, having spent some years as a missionary in the British Isles. A minister in England would be a man of great experience, having been through a seminary and serving a number of years as an intern.

“Ma’am, *anyone that has so much truth down them that they can’t keep it down them is ordained!!!*” I really didn’t know any other answer to give. Maybe I just stumbled upon a truth that needs to be taken out of mothballs and put back in circulation.

“Do you know some truth?” I asked of a young lad sitting before me.

He nodded in the affirmative.

“You’re ordained!” I replied.

Then, moving on to the next person, regardless of age or experience, I asked the same question. Each would affirm the truth they believed, and to each I replied, “You’re ordained!” We’ve forgotten to ordain everybody!! We ordain elders and dedicate preachers and receive deacons; but the average believer, the ordinary disciple, we leave without a *mission*. If we do not teach and stand for the truth that we now have, that very truth will be taken from us. *Ordain every member in your congregation as soul winners!!* The method is not so important as the man. Then turn your people loose on the helpless dying world about them. Let them go to their relatives, neighbors, bowling partners, and coffee mates. Let the people *out* of the church house! Unchain Jesus from the pulpit! Put him back into the lives of the people. Give them the old-time religion where Christ lived and breathed and walked and talked through his people. God is still on the throne, and Jesus still has the power to save. The soul winner still has his mission on the earth.

A number of years ago, while living in northern Ireland, I wrote a poem about two trees. It expresses in the main what I have tried to say today. Read it slowly and carefully and allow your full imagination to play upon the verses. It speaks of soul winning.

TWO TREES

About the year our Lord was born, two little

trees began to sprout. Said one to the other, "When we grow up, I wonder how we'll come out?"

"Oh, I'm gonna grow tall and straight, and point all men to God; what greater ambition could one expect from a product of the sod!"

So they both began to grow with the heavens as their aim; they smiled at all the sunshine, and licked up all the rain. They drank in all the dew that fell, and the snow of many years sent them soaring to the skies, far above their peers. Thus when thirty summers passed, and people came their way, they would always stop and point and look, and the trees could hear them say, "What fine trees, so straight and true, they point to the sublime, just look at those leafy branches too; they must pray all the time."

Now the trees rejoiced in reaching their goals and shook hands on a job well done; for now they were first-class winners of souls so they just leaned back in the sun. Suddenly they heard from the forest glen, the rumble of danger, the footsteps of men. With axes and chains, they were searching the hill for one special tree to cut for the mill. They stopped at the foot of the youngest tree; he cried in horror, "Oh, God, not me!" Yet hardly before he had finished this part, he felt an axe cut deep into his heart. He fell to the earth with a terrible sound; it felt so strange to be prone upon the ground, no longer a place with pride on the hill; the Lord sternly whispered, "Little tree, be still."

They made out of him a fishing ship, and launched him in the nearby sea. He could not understand it till one day, came the man of Galilee. The crowds were so vast, they all wanted to hear the message of truth; they pressed to get near. Then, the Master of all turned his head to the sea; and with a great shout said, "Bring the ship to me."

For the first time the big stately tree began to see good in the tragedy. For the axe and chains were only the plan to root out ambition and bring in the man. So often the Master would leave the shore; and from the little ship implore, touching the hearts of many a sinner; the cut-down tree had become a SOUL WINNER.

Oh, what happened to the older tree you ask? Why, it was cut down for a different task. Strange, this tree was destined to be the old rugged cross throughout eternity.

There needs to be some reshuffling in the church. Church leaders who lack vision and courage ought to be replaced. Preachers who are constant troublemakers should not be used. Members whose lives are ungodly and who are stingy with their money and time ought to be admonished and disciplined! We need far more spiritual devotion. We need to stretch our minds and hearts until they are big enough to embrace the whole world of confused, lost men and women. We need to take to the world the only thing that will save it from self-destruction: the saving power of the gospel of Christ. The world needs the church, and the church needs an enlarged view of its chal-

lence and how to go about meeting it.

God has always used men of vision—for with their vision is found courage and dedication. Jesus said, “Lift up your eyes and look upon the fields, for they are white already unto harvest” (John 4:35). Before we can become soul winners, we must first lift up our heads and look to the east and west, north and south, and see the vastness of the work and the greatness of the challenge.

Consider where the church will be 10 or 20 years from now. Some are thinking of this question and striving to provide the answer. Will our children be faithful and carry the gospel to their generation? This question *must* be answered by each generation.

Let us cease to count the number we have gathered and see how many are still left in the world. Soul winning! It's not what you do; it's what you are!!!

DEALING WITH BITTERNESS

by Jack Exum

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31,32).

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

Bitterness is the result of life—not the cause of it. It speaks of the condition of the heart, the state of the mind, and the direction of the life. These seeds of evil are usually found within the *unforgiver*. Bitterness is the brackish backwater of life that is *unreleased*. It is the unanswered question; the unhealed wound; the hurt in the mind that never seems to go away. It is a life committed to torment and calls to mind the old Persian proverb: “When you go to bury your enemy, dig another grave for yourself—both of you will get buried!” Show me a bitter spirit, and I’ll show you an *unforgiving heart!*

Forgiveness is to “grant free pardon to an offender and to cease to feel resentment toward him.” Forgiveness is not a law—it’s pure grace. It is granting pardon that is often undeserved by the one who has sinned against you. They hurt, and then ask you to help! Forgiveness is a grace of God—a trait that is rather unnatural to man.

Forgive and Forget?

Sorry, but we are not made that way! If you could forget it after you forgive it, you could forget it before you forgive it! Deal with life and then you will not have to strive to forget it—*you will learn from it!* When forgiveness is granted and the gift is received (and all resentment is dissolved), what is there to forget? It is victory time for all involved. It is a time to rejoice in the healing power of this marvelous grace. This is no time to forget. To the contrary—remember it; and in such reflections, deepen your love through it. When pardon is granted and all resentment removed, there's every reason to remember and no reason to forget.

“But what if he won't repent? Can I forgive one who will not ask?”

You can keep forgiveness *ready!* If it has been four seconds, or four minutes, or four hours, or four days, or four weeks, or 40 years—when the knock comes to your door and the request for forgiveness is made, you can smile and say, “It's been waiting for you all the time!” Forgiveness is a gift, and it is not complete until it is received. God purposed forgiveness for every man, and he is just waiting for man to “ask.”

A Catholic bishop was asked how he forgave a heinous crime that was committed against him during unjust imprisonment. It was almost too horrible to mention. He thought for a moment and began shaking his head in the negative.

“There is no way that you can forgive such a sin,” he said, “unless you forgave it before it happened!” Was not this the spirit of Christ our master? Should not his mind be the same in us today?

What would happen in the church, in our homes, in our personal lives, if we could sincerely vow, "God, I forgive *anything* that anyone may do against me in my future days—I forgive it *all* right now!!"

The Unforgiver Is Unforgiven!

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). This is the one disclaimer to Acts 2:38! The unforgiver is (present tense) *unforgiven!* Baptism will not alter the case of the *unforgiver*. Church attendance, prayer, giving money, reading your Bible, singing hymns, taking the Lord's Supper—*nothing* will atone for the *unforgiving heart!* God cannot live in such a bitter atmosphere!

In the book of Matthew, the 18th chapter, Jesus gives a parable about the unforgiving servant. In it he tells of one servant who owed his king 10 thousand talents (10 million dollars). Since he could not pay the debt, the king commanded that he be sold, along with his wife and children, and that payment be made. "The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all" (Matthew 18:26). The king was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt.

That same servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him 100 pence (30 dollars) and said, "Pay me that thou owest." His fellow servant begged for time, but he would not hear. He had him cast into prison for 30 bucks!

When fellow servants reluctantly reported this to the King, he *recalled* that servant and greeted him with these words: "O thou *wicked servant!*" We think of wickedness

as immorality—drunkards, thieves, muggers, sexual perverts, murderers, adulterers, child abusers, and the list seems to never end. But somehow we never *include the unforgiver*. No wonder we divorce! No wonder we split churches! No wonder we are often first in line to have our head treated! *We have failed to teach horizontal forgiveness!* In our frantic effort to save the lost, one-half of the saved are tormented in the hell of a bitter spirit. God help us!

“I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desireth me; Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses*” (Matthew 18:32-35). This is why we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), and this same grace in us forgives everyone who sins against us.

Nothing Takes the Place of Forgiveness

“Let’s forget it!”

“I don’t want to forget it!”

“Why don’t you move to another congregation?”

“I don’t want to move to another congregation!”

“Then I’ll move to another congregation!”

“I don’t want you to move to another congregation.”

“Let’s go get re-baptized.”

“I don’t want to get re-baptized.”

“Come home and have dinner with me!”

“I don’t want to eat your dinner!”

“Let me loan you some money!”

“I don’t want to borrow your money!”

“Well, what do you want?”

“I want you to forgive me!!!”

If forgiveness is so easy, why don’t we do it more readily? Why do we try every human idea, every substitute, every man-made facsimile? The bitter heart has never understood the simple truth that “*nothing takes the place of forgiveness!*”

No one can rightly judge when God would turn his back on the *unforgiver*. But the teaching is there, and somewhere on that downward road the “candlestick” will be removed. The unforgiver is unforgiven because nothing can take the place of forgiveness. Our debt to God is beyond measure. Our debts to each other can be arranged for and paid in time. Thirty dollars does not compare with 10 million—it’s a stark contrast!

The message is plain: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19-21). Don’t you be a religious detective!! Allow God, in time, to justify the uneven roads of life.

Forgiveness is not an option—it’s an absolute necessity. God will heal your heart; and you, in turn, may offer that healing balm to the one who wounded you. “Forgiveness is to grant free pardon to a person and to cease to feel resentment against them.”

There are two kinds of sins: *the good sin and the bad sin!* The good sin is an offense that is innocent and un-

intended. The good sin is nothing more than the outward expression of the humanity within us all. What do you say when you step on someone's toe in a crowded elevator? "Forgive me!" "Excuse me!" "I'm so clumsy!" "Pardon me!" It is automatic. We say it before we look—before we turn. Why? Because it was "just a human error"—an innocent, unintended mistake. Good sins heal quickly. *Bad sins* never heal when left alone. If anything, they fester and enlarge themselves. Time makes them worse and sometimes "unforgivable." These are the evil sins of the heart. These sins are planned, blueprinted, thought on, and eventually executed. A deliberate turning from sin (repentance) and seeking heartfelt forgiveness is the only answer. Nothing takes the place of it!

Forgiveness Is Spiritual and Takes Place in the Heart

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matthew 15:18-20). Jesus has always been concerned with the heart. We tend to "make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter" but leave the inside full of "extortion and excess" (Matthew 23:25).

Paul writes, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1,2).

Who is instructed to do the restoring? Are elders or deacons or evangelists? Perhaps he has in mind some special membership committee or some special disciplinary team! The ones he named are “ye which are spiritual”! They may well include some or all of the above-named, but only if they qualify “spiritually.”

You may hire an infidel to build your buildings. You may have an agnostic wire it, plumb it, or even paint it. But here’s a work that is not for hire! Forgiveness is spiritual and takes place in the heart.

Mother used to say, “Kiss and make up!” Judas kissed the Lord but missed his own restoration. Shaking hands is a nice custom. Boxers do that before every fight. Forgiveness demands *more*, for it involves your spirit—the very heart of your emotions, feelings, and conscience.

Would you allow a novice to operate on your physical heart? Would you permit a beginner to do brain surgery? Paul says, “Ye which are spiritual—you do the restoring.” So Jesus said, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your *hearts* forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:35).

Doctrine is easy—life is tough! This is why a “pure doctrine diet” is unbalanced and dangerous. “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21,22).

Good ole Simon! The Old Testament law requires forgiveness three times; and in his generous heart, Simon doubled it with one to grow on. But Jesus said, not seven times, but seventy times seven. What’s the answer to that arithmetic problem? Call on one of your second- or third-

graders. We all know the answer. Write it on a piece of paper—put it on the blackboard—say it together in unison. “70 x 7 is 490!!!” Isn’t that easy?

Go learn how to do that! Doctrine is easy—life is tough! This forgiveness—this 490 times—must come from the heart. A wave of the hand will not do it. A shrug of the shoulders isn’t good enough. Shaking hands, hugging, and kissing will not do the job. Healing takes place from *inside out*.

In 1980, I had a triple bypass surgery. The head physician came by the night before. I was in a holding ward with two other patients. He stood at the door and called my name. I could tell from his searching eyes that he didn’t know me. My heart sank!

“O, there you are, Exum,” he said. Then he began to recite my credits.

“You’re not a smoker, and not obese, and your blood pressure is excellent. Get a good night’s sleep, and I’ll see you early in the morning.”

Tears welled up in my eyes. I was afraid, and then to know that the head physician didn’t have time to pull up a chair and sit with me for a moment was not reassuring. I wanted to hold his hand, to look him in the eye, and to get the feeling that he cared especially for me. He stood at the door—he never came in!

Who wants to be a number on a computer card? If a man is going to operate on my heart, I want to know him and to get that special feeling that he loves me. The heart is sacred. You don’t write poems about the liver! You write poems about the heart!

It takes *spiritual men to forgive, to restore, and to find the grace to heal*. Carnal man doesn’t have a chance in do-

ing a spiritual work.

The Unforgiven Are Helpless

Why did Jesus say the unforgiver was a “wicked man”? Why did God arrange us so that no substitute would be sufficient when forgiveness was needed? Why is forgiveness a work of the spirit and not a simple matter of mechanics? The bottom line is simple: *The unforgiven are helpless!*

When one asks forgiveness from another, it involves a serious matter. Forgiveness is a key that lets one out of a cell. Forgiveness is food for a soul that will starve without it. It is water to the thirsty, a staff for the weary. It is the *end of war* and the beginning of peace. It is like being “born again”—new life for all concerned. This is true not only of the offender, but of the offended. It heals the heart of the wounded and gives grace sufficient for the enemy—the one who wounded him. It is a time to “praise God”—to shout “Hallelujah.” The hurt will be healed, the lame will walk again—and, in some cases, the “dead will be raised up.”

This is *agape* love—God loving you through me. It is not natural to man, but it is natural with God. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son . . . And while we were yet enemies, Christ died for the ungodly.” It is natural to say, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” when God is in you and Christ stands to recognize you (Acts 7:60).

When we were young, we played parlor games. “Heavy, heavy hangs over your head.” “Fine or super-fine,” the judge would call out. “Fine” meant it was a forfeit given by one of the boys, and “super-fine” re-

ferred to the girls. The purpose of the game was this: Each one would give a forfeit of value. The judge would be blindfolded, and one by one these items would be produced and held over the judge's head. The judge would then think up some silly thing for the owner to do to get his forfeit or possession back. But alas, it was but a game.

Forgiveness is not a game. It is not a matter of judgment so much as it is a matter of grace. When we ask for forgiveness, we are not asking for penitence. Jesus says, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

It is a natural (carnal) thing to want to hurt those who have hurt you. It is altogether human to strike back at those who have offended you. "I hurt—now you hurt." "I have felt pain—now you feel pain." "I have lain awake at night weeping—now it's your turn." The "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" is left far behind in the spirit of Christ. "Vengeance is (still) mine, saith the Lord." "I will repay" is still the promise of a righteous judge.

Take an example: What if I should sin against you and your family? Let's say it is a sin that cannot be rectified. What happens when I come to your door and ask for the gift? What happens to me (to you, to us) if your answer is full and complete in the one word *never*—"I will never forgive you, *never!!*"? The evil in the answer is simple. What will happen to me? Where do I go now for relief? What doctor will take my case, or what pills will be prescribed for my ailment? I know the way to the door, to the car, to my home; but wherever I go, I will carry my wrong. "Heavy, heavy hangs over your head!" Nothing will ever be settled without your forgiveness.

There is still another question: Where do you go? Who treats your disease of *bitterness*? I shall survive, for at least my heart has found repentance. But you shall inherit all the torment, all the grief, all the pain—not only in this life, but still again in the life to come.

But what if the answer to my request of forgiveness was met with a heart full of grace? “All that is in me says *yes!* I grant to you the sweet pardon of forgiveness.” Now consider the healing that follows. A load is lifted, new life is given, and heavy breathing is no more. I can lift my head again. No longer will my pulse quicken when I hear your name. Both of us can live again!

“Consider Thyself, Lest Thou Also Be Tempted”

Remember, Paul says the case may be reversed tomorrow. You may be knocking at the same brother’s door that you forgave today, and it often happens just that way. I forgive you today—new life! You forgive me tomorrow—new life! This is why God made the rule universal, with no exceptions. The *unforgiver is unforgiven!*

Joseph—A Man Like Jesus

Of all the characters in the Old and New Testaments, Joseph, the 11th son of Jacob, would be my choice of the one person who best represented the life and spirit of Jesus. From Genesis 30 through Genesis 50, nothing—absolutely nothing—evil is said about Joseph. If you follow his lifeline, it is up and down; but throughout the story line, you see God’s providence at work. The life of Joseph would hardly be understood if you stopped it anywhere along the line.

Joseph was somewhat of a "prayer-child." "And God remembered Rachel, and God harkened to her and opened her womb" (Genesis 30:22). Life begins anew with the birth of Joseph! He was given a coat of many colors, for he was favored above his other half-brothers by his father. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age: and made for him a coat of many colours" (Genesis 37:3).

Because of his father's favor, his brothers "hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Genesis 37:4). The dreams that Joseph had, foretelling his own rise to power and greatness, only added to his problems. Predicting that his father and mother would bow down to him one day caused even his father to rebuke him (Genesis 37:10). His brothers envied him (Genesis 37:11).

Joseph was sent by his father to carry supplies to his brothers, who were tending the flocks. "And when they saw him afar off . . . they conspired against him to slay him" (Genesis 37:18). The first idea was to put him in a deep pit and then say, "Some evil beast hath devoured him" (Genesis 37:20). As Ishmaelites passed their way heading for Egypt, Judah suggested that they sell Joseph and thus be "free from his blood" (Genesis 37:26). "And they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver" (Genesis 37:27,28).

Joseph was sold in Egypt to the house of Potiphar. There again, "God blessed Potiphar for Joseph was there," and all that Joseph did proved so successful that in time he was made governor of the estate.

Legend has it that Potiphar (who was a captain in Pharaoh's army) had been castrated in a battle and could

not fulfill the sexual needs of his wife. "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and she said, Lie with me" (Genesis 39:7). When Joseph refused, it seemed to increase her determination; and "day by day" she tempted him. One day she literally tried to force her affection upon him. "He left his garment in her hand and got him out" (Genesis 39:12).

When Potiphar heard her claim that Joseph had tried to violate her, Joseph was sent to the king's prison. It was there that he was soon made "trustee" and also had opportunity to interpret the dreams of both the butler and the baker. His prediction that the butler would soon serve wine again to the king came to pass, and Joseph said, "Remember me." But he didn't remember Joseph. After two years, Pharaoh dreamed dreams about fat and lean cows and fat and lean ears of corn. Then the butler remembered Joseph.

When Pharaoh called for Joseph, he was hastily brought out of the dungeon; and he prepared himself for an audience with the king. Upon interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh, Joseph was appointed to the task of gathering the grain during the seven years of plenty. He was given a new name (Zaphnathpasneah) and a wife. Joseph was made second in command, with unlimited authority. The ring of Pharaoh was placed on the hand of Joseph, and his chariot was second only unto Pharaoh's in formal parade. *And Joseph ruled Egypt sixty years.*

From his father's house to the pits; from the pits to slavery in Egypt in the house of Potiphar; from the governor's seat to the depth of the dungeon; from the king's prison to the throne itself—*providence!*

Read on and you'll see how he treated his brothers who

had come to Egypt to buy grain. He tested them again and again. They didn't recognize him. Perhaps he had a beard. He spoke in the Egyptian language (through an interpreter). Test after test, the brothers proved themselves as having repented of selling Joseph.

Eventually Joseph could not bear any more of it. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he *cried*, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard" (Genesis 45:1,2).

What was it that kept Joseph from breaking? What caused him to persevere under the most trying circumstances? Why did he resist temptation, and with what strength did he withhold heavy judgment on his own brethren?

He wanted to grow up and be a sweet old man, and you just *cannot do that without a heavy supply of the grace of forgiveness!* He cried aloud, and everybody heard him. But what did he *cry*? What words did he utter or explanation did he give?

Since it is not written, no one knows. Permit me to venture a guess: And Joseph cried, "*Now I know, O God I know . . . The many years have come and gone. I haven't understood a one of them, but now I know!!*"

God help the bitter spirit, for it will never understand life or the reason "why." Bitterness stops life, while forgiveness releases it. Listen as Joseph continues to talk to his brethren. "I am Joseph . . . doth my father yet live? I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt . . . be not grieved . . . for God did send me before you to pre-

serve life . . . to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:3-8).

"I've found the answer," Joseph was saying. "I know why it all happened! I can see the true purpose of God in it all. It was not you that sold me into Egypt, but God did it! It was God that made me a father to Pharaoh and Lord of all his house and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Does this sound like Joseph had forgiven the dastardly deed even before it was done? Can you find any bitterness in Genesis 45:14,15, which reads, "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept . . . And moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him"?

Remember the gambler's song? It reminds me of the life of Joseph. "You've got to know when to hold . . . know when to fold up . . . know when to walk away and know when to run . . . You never count your money sitting at the table, there'll be time enough for countin' . . . *when the dealin's done!*"

"But you don't know what he did to me"—*dealin's not done yet*. "But I've been hurt"—*dealin's not done yet*. "But you can't imagine how hard it is to go one"—*dealin's not done yet*. Time is on the side of the believer. Refuse to become that religious detective. Forgive as you go; and when the "*dealin's done*," look back on it all and tell me about it.

Even after Jacob died, Joseph's brothers felt that he might then take vengeance upon them. "And they sent a messenger unto Joseph saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, *Forgive*, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren and their sin; for they did unto thee evil; and now, we pray

thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him . . . And Joseph said unto them, Fear not; *for am I in the place of God*: But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. And now therefore fear ye not; I will nourish you, and your little ones" (Genesis 50:17-21).

One thing is left out in the writing of the ancient book of Genesis. In the last verse of that book it reads, "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt" (Genesis 50:26). I would have added the thought, "So Joseph died, *as a sweet old man.*"

One postscript: Before Joseph died, he said in effect, "When I die, don't you put my body in this desert sand. This is not our land. We are strangers and foreigners here. Someday God will call us out to the land that was promised our father Abraham. So just put me in a coffin and put me by the door; and when God calls you out, *lift me up . . . high and carry me out.*"

The Word of God simply reads, "By faith, Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Hebrews 11:22). Grow up and be a sweet old person in the Lord!



