



"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."

The **WORD** and **WORK**

"Holding forth the Word of life."

FEBRUARY, 1992

FACING SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS

- * Can We Grow? Should We? Will We?
- * Is the Restoration Plea Still Valid?
- * What Must the Church of Christ Do to be "Saved"?
- * How Should We Prepare for 2000 A.D.?
- * What Perils Face Those on the Right Road?
- * Free-lance Christians or Covenant Community?

S. B. S. TRAINING CONFERENCE 1992

"The Joy of Discovering GOD'S WORD"

THUR. MARCH 12, 7:00 P.M.

The Joy of Discovery — Don McGee, Louisiana

Testimonies from students at the School of Biblical Studies and other schools in the Kentuckiana Consortium of Restoration Colleges

Congregational singing, and special singing by the chorus of Southeast Church of Christ, Louisville

FRI. MARCH 13, 7:00 P.M.

First Session: "MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO STUDY"

How can we inspire people to seek the Lord for themselves? How stimulate them to actively search His Word instead of passively listening with little concern? How help them experience the joy of discovering the Lord Himself in His Word?

Workshop for workers with CHILDREN: Ben and Linda Rake
For those working with YOUTH: Bill and Ann Taylor
For those working with ADULTS: Don McGee

Second Session: "TRAINING PEOPLE TO SERVE"

Key ideas here are Application, Training, Obedience, Service, Doing—not just hearing or theorizing. Practical projects and hands-on experience: how can we use these and other ways to lead people from mere knowledge to actual experience?

Workshop for workers with CHILDREN: Jan Rake, Tammy Miller
For workers with YOUTH: Jim Schreiner, Barry Fowler
For workers with ADULTS: Some elders from Southeast Church of Christ

ALL MEETINGS AT BUECHEL CHURCH OF CHRIST,
2105 Buechel Bank Rd., Louisville

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

FACING SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS

If No Revival, Then No Survival

Alex V. Wilson

More and more Christians have come to believe that unless the Lord God intervenes mightily, both our country and many of our churches face disaster—soon! Chaos seems to be breaking out in our nation's morals, politics, government, economy, education, and families. And by and large, we Christians seem devoid of power to *stand up* to the evil forces pressing against us, much less to *make progress* against them. And this is especially tragic because of enlarged opportunities to take the Gospel into many parts of the world which formerly were shut off by concrete walls and iron curtains.

So this month we continue discussing difficult, sometimes distasteful, topics. We began in Dec. with articles about "Should churches merge? Should churches close?" Then last month we asked, "Can the downward spiral occurring in many churches be stopped and reversed, by God's power?" Six preachers replied to that question, you may remember. Two more give their answers this month. We had hoped for more, and a few others promised to send their contributions but have missed our deadline. We plan to run them next month, *along with the views of others of our readers if you will send them!* This invitation is not to preachers only, nor men only, nor adults only, but to any interested believer in Christ (whatever your church affiliation) who has something of merit to share with us.

One reader thought last month's articles were so important that he xeroxed fourteen copies of them to distribute at his church and several others nearby. That still wasn't enough, so he phoned and ordered twenty more copies to be mailed to him first class! We believe others also agree that these are urgent, top-priority matters. They deserve much prayer, study, discussion, and no doubt repentance too.

Last December a number of leaders among "Conservative Christian Churches" issued a call to prayer, spurred by the critical times in which we live. We say "Amen" and Bravo" to their plea, and gladly append it to this editorial for your consideration. It was first published, I believe, in *Christian Standard*, and has since appeared in several other publications. Let us read, and heed. Our problems are not too big for our living Lord Christ.

An Urgent Call to Prayer

A number of Christian leaders have joined together to call our brotherhood to prayer. It is not a moment too soon. We face unprecedented opportunity, but it is accompanied by unparalleled challenge.

If we are to obey the Great Commission of our Lord, we must have His blessing and do so in the strength of His power.

Last fall a group was discussing how to plant churches and grow them. They came to this conclusion: "Let's pray and encourage others to pray with us, and God will direct His church." Out of that simple meeting, this call for prayer was born. Others met with these folk at the recent North American Christian Convention. They had a "concert of prayer."

The blessings experienced that evening prompted them to issue this call. We urge you to join us.

This is not an invitation to participate in some project or promotion, but simply to pray. Can you imagine what the Lord would be able to accomplish if one million brothers and sisters in the Christian churches/churches of Christ became serious about prayer?

The question today is not, "Do you believe in prayer?" but, *Will you pray?* We hope you will say, "Yes."

A PRAYER COVENANT

Will you covenant to join other Christians across America and round the world in a season of prayer? Jesus has said, "Pray . . . the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers" (Luke 10:2).

I. *Pray for personal renewal.*

All of us are imperfect in our walk and in our prayer life. Personal worship needs to be strengthened. A deeper sense of mission to fulfill the Great Commission is appropriate for every member of the body of Christ.

II. *Pray for an awakening in the churches.*

Some congregations are growing and reaching out, but every congregation can do more about reaching its full potential of service. Some congregations are lukewarm. Some congregations are stone cold dead. An awakening to the Great Commission is a need in all the churches.

III. *Pray for laborers.*

The result can be worldwide evangelization!

* * * * *

Here We Grow Again!

Jerry Carmichael

A song in the gospel music field asks several questions. Can He? Could He? Would He? Did He? The answers came back at the end of the verse—Yes, He can, He could, He would, and He did! We see in those answers that Jesus can, could, would and did save us.

Can we grow again? Should we grow again? Will we grow again? Did we grow again? Questions are asked frequently and one word changes the whole meaning of the question. Can? Should? Will? Did we grow?

Leaders within our brotherhood of churches are seeking answers to questions such as these. I hope that all can agree on the following answers: Yes! Yes! Maybe! ???!

Can we grow again? Yes, we can if we put our minds to it! Nehemiah and the people of his day built a wall because the people

had a mind to work. They could build a wall through diligent efforts and they did. We need a wall of church growth about our congregations and our brotherhood of churches that will keep out all enemies of the cross of Christ. Growth comes from work—a good four-letter word! Growing a garden takes a lot of hard work, not just sitting on the porch or under a shade tree praying for the garden to grow. Growing a family takes a lot of work. Growing roses takes a lot of pruning, fertilizing, watering, and other care. Why shouldn't we work to see our churches grow? We just cannot sit back and pray for growth! We must put our hand to the plow. Then we can grow.

Should we grow? Again the answer is definitely yes! The Lord wants and expects growth in the church. He expects growth in a body of believers as they reach out to their community and bring others into the fold. God desires the church to "grow in grace" as we meet the challenges of the world around us. The church must grow in spiritual depth as it grows in numbers. Are our churches growing spiritually? If we are not, great numbers in attendance will not mean a thing, nor will additional mission points. It only looks good on paper. The growth factor has to include spiritual depth of the church's members.

One of the problems affecting our growth is the attitude that if we attend on Sunday morning we have done our spiritual duty for the week. But growing Christians and churches are those who take advantage of every opportunity to grow in grace and in knowledge. If spirituality were to be measured by duty only, then most of us would be on the list of growing Christians and churches. But if we expect to grow we must be serving God out of love, not duty. Duty worship is pharisaical, worshipping because we have to. Real worship is that which comes from a heart of love for God and our neighbor. Jesus said that those were the first and second commands of importance. Yes, we should grow in love, even if we disagree with someone or if we interpret a matter in a different way. We should be able to say like they did in the early centuries of the church, "see how they love one another!" We allow divisions and matters of opinion to separate us rather than allowing them to draw us closer together in love.

Will we grow again? To adequately answer this question I would have to be a prophet. Since I'm not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, I would have to say that God only knows, maybe we will! If growth principles are put into effect we will see the positive answer. If we sow the seed, and someone comes along and waters, someone later comes and pulls the weeds and thorns that Satan is growing around the churches, then we will see the spiritual produce in the world's market. God will give the increase—maybe thirty, maybe sixty, or maybe a hundred fold growth.

God's increase comes as a result of His own efforts, coupled with ours. For too long we have sat back and prayed for God to raise up laborers, and we still recline in our easy chairs! We must put feet on our prayers by being willing ourselves to reach out to the lost, or those struggling as Christians. I remember a story about a lad who heard his Dad praying for God to provide for the missionaries.

The lad said to him, "Dad, I wish I had your money!" "Why?", the dad responded. The boy wisely said, "I'd answer your own prayer!" Perhaps we have to be the one to answer our prayers and concerns for growth and then we will see growth in our brotherhood. We cannot expect others to do our work! God has put the burden of work on our shoulders. Leaders in our churches (ministers, elders, deacons, teachers) must make a commitment to God's church and to the brotherhood or we will continue to decline. Perhaps we need to evaluate our own personal commitment to Christ and His church.

Did we grow again? Time will tell the answer to the fourth question. Did we grow in grace this year? We will know in December. Did we grow a new congregation as a mission point or due to a growth so great that a congregation divided in order to grow greater in that town? Did we add additional ministers from our Bible college? Did we challenge elders and deacons to grow and did they accept the challenge? Did we start a new Sunday School class this year? The end of the year will give us the answers.

If we did grow, we will hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." If we did not grow, we will say, "Woe is me!" After all is said and done, usually more is said than done. But God judges our actions and deeds, not just our words. We can have the right doctrines, the right motives, the right methods, but if we don't get the work done, then we will receive the judgment of God by not reaching out to one of "the least of these my brethren." Perhaps we are receiving His condemnation now because we have been unwilling to stretch and grow. Perhaps we have settled down with our truth, trying to protect it, and let the whole world around us die in Satan's lies! Truth is only effective when it comes in contact with those who need to hear it.

May God challenge our churches, leaders, and every member to spiritual growth as the Lord tarries. It takes commitment and hard work, coupled together with the grace of God!

Terminally Ill or Seeking Healing?

Name Withheld by Request

1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV) "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." Why is there such an epidemic of churches closing today? God is not making us grow. So we can blame Him? So this is His will? No, and yes, but not His perfect will by any stretch of the imagination. It is not His preference that a body of believers diminish and eventually go separate ways.

Our Lord is not unrighteous. He will not reward our shortcomings. But there is sin in the camp, brethren, and it takes several forms, but it is different only in detail and symptom.

I say this only because I plead personally guilty, and I have been guilty for many years. This particular sin is very difficult to recognize. It is so acceptable. It is so comfortable, and seems almost becoming to me as I tolerate it. Indeed, it can seem SO-O-O righteous.

Yet, this very sin was one of the most intolerable in Jesus'

estimation when He became flesh and dwelled among us.

"How can the Lord do without such scriptural churches as ours?" we say. "How can He allow them to go down the tube?"

What makes "us" scriptural? Is it our a cappella music? Is it our faithfulness to the scriptural system of leaders, i.e. elders and deacons? Is it our fervor to keep the ladies quiet in our services?

Our perception that we are "scriptural" churches does not seem to come from our hot pursuit of new ways to obey the Great Commission. Our "scripturalness" does not appear to be due to our giving ourselves to fervent prayer. We do not seem to adhere very strongly to Jesus' admonition in Matthew 18 to go first to my offending brother in secret. While we quickly make it clear that we do not condemn to hell a faithful Baptist or Christian Church brother, do we not, within our hearts, wonder why the poor ignorant fellow does not see the light and, thus, consider him a second-class citizen of the Kingdom, and so "hate" him, falling prey to 1 John 4's warnings?

What are those details that make "us" distinctive? Do we have a real humility before Abba Father, or are we so sure that we know all of what He wants in our lives that communication with Him is pretty well unnecessary? Are we outstanding in our love within our congregations, or are there personal squabbles over little things that should never separate brothers and sisters? Do we seek fervently God's best desires for our lives as individuals, or do we fall prey to standards and patterns? (The writer of Hebrews has much to say about this.)

Do I ever seek God's *rhema*—His personal loving directive to me as I personally read His *logos*—His word which we all see as vitally important?

We have been a very mission-minded group. Where are our *recent* laborers sent into the fields? Yes, praise God, there are some, but far fewer now when actually there should be more than ever.

Is our problem—yes, our sin—that of pride? Do we have a "name," but are not very much alive anymore? Are we independent of God's grace instead of relying totally on Him? Are we growing away from His loving arms instead of depending fully upon Him?

Jesus prayed four times in His personal prayer to the Father (John 17) for unity among His followers. Is our pride dividing what unity we have left? Has our pride instilled faithless fear in us rather than productive trust?

In 1913, a cute little four-year-old looked up at her mother on a busy corner of Fourth Street as they were about to cross. "Me hold me own hand," she very curtly said to her mother. She reports that her mother was rather quick to react, applying with great vigor the directives of Proverbs to her beloved daughter.

Don't we need to repent of our immaturity, our foolish pride, our worship of "our" group when we need so much more to worship our Lord and Savior? Are we taking a hard spanking without learning anything?

Troubled churches need the truths of Revelation 2 and 3. Does our Savior stand at the door and knock, a knock that is too often unheard or unheeded?

IS THE RESTORATION PLEA VALID?

Cedrick McElwen

I get the impression that many members in the Churches of Christ no longer believe that the Restoration Movement's historic plea is correct. Many think it is naive at best to continue to advocate this time-worn position. In order to discuss this, it is first necessary to try to focus on some identifying characteristics of the restoration plea. The reader is asked to understand that this article does not intend to discuss the most important characteristics of Christianity, but only those items which historically set us apart from one or more other groups. We recognize that this is something that changed with time and location.

I have selected seven distinctive attributes of the Stone-Campbell movement as it moved through the last and most of this century: (1) opposition to authority of a church hierarchy above the congregational level; (2) taking the Bible as the sole authority for congregational and individual conduct; (3) opposition to requiring ordination by a supra-congregational body; (4) opposition to extra-biblical teachings such as infant baptism or requiring special spiritual experiences (such as "praying through") to attest to being saved; (5) baptism into Christ by immersion; (6) a cappella singing in congregational worship; and (7) teaching that a saved believer could turn his back on Christ and become lost.

The reader is invited to answer whether each one of these distinctives should be believed and supported today, or whether those who stood up for these doctrines were misguided.

I think most readers would agree that God's word is our authority rather than the decisions of bishops presiding over a number of congregations. We might not be as united on the question of creeds. We all would likely oppose a rigid, written creed used to enforce the power of a hierarchy, which is probably closer to what our spiritual fathers experienced as they saw error and were hindered in expressing their views. Most of us still think our historical views on written creeds and Bible authority are wise. Neither the leaders of the Stone-Campbell movement nor most of us would condemn an individual merely for being in a movement which had a hierarchy above the congregational level, though we would judge such a system to be wrong and unwise.

The central dynamic of our movement is the conviction that the Bible is the sole authority regarding proper teaching and guidance for both the individual and the collective congregation. It may be that we were so successful in spreading this view that it is no longer a

distinctive in American Protestant denominations. Our group was not unique in this position, but we were probably on the forefront in applying the idea.

I have never heard anyone in our movement advocate infant baptism, spending days and weeks begging God for a special religious experience as a sign of salvation, or requiring speaking in tongues as a sign of salvation. We still believe these are wrong and harmful teachings.

I fear that many no longer believe in conducting baptism in the way it was done in the Bible. All of you ready to embrace the evangelical world in full fellowship should understand that the evangelical denominations will rarely tolerate speaking of baptism as connected with salvation. Using Bible language will be censored and taken as sufficient evidence of your having fallen from grace. Even those who believe in eternal security will judge that you are damned if you say that sins are washed away in water baptism. Instant bigotry will arise to misrepresent the views of the Restoration Movement. Terms like "baptismal regeneration" will be heard as they make a straw man out of simple Bible belief. You will be falsely accused of attributing the power of salvation to water or to the human action of baptizing in a type of "works salvation." This is not to say that we don't need to sit down and listen to each other more carefully than we generally do, in order to dismantle erroneous perceptions on both sides. I still believe in speaking about baptism exactly as the Bible does without apology.

A cappella singing was the practice of the church of the first century and of the Catholic church through many centuries, and it was the mode of congregational music in the early Restoration Movement. It is certainly all right to worship in this way and no one can deny that it is proper. The question is whether it is also an option to have instrumental accompaniment. Views are changing on this question quite rapidly. I do not think that fellowship should be broken over this question. My position is that I would prefer that innovators had not divisively introduced the instrument in a Kentucky congregation many years ago.

I am not sure just when the church collectively indentified its position as being opposed to eternal security, but whenever that was, it was a proper position. The scriptures abound with statements attesting this view, and only by forceful twisting can these passages be denied. Nothing can separate us from God, except our own choice. God has not denied us free will on this decision.

OUR INTERACTION WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

As I think about our interaction over the years with "denominational" believers in Jesus, I don't have a good feeling. I don't see love, gentleness, appreciation and sympathetic listening on our part. Maybe I am remembering strident voices of writers and influential editors. Was there a time toward the end of the last century or early in this century when ugliness began to prevail? Have we been found wanting in the eyes of God because of our smugness? Has God re-

moved blessings from us because we had a proud and unloving attitude? *There is a difference between being right and having a right heart.*

Did we make the legalist error of replacing the person of our Lord with a "system" of teachings? Did we commit the sin of Pharisees in taking pride in being saved by our having and obeying the correct unwritten creed? If so, we did not rely on our Lord's righteousness for salvation.

If we did these things, as some writers claim, then we need to ask forgiveness, have a right heart, correct our action, and pray that God will give us leaders with His vision to lead us in His righteousness. It should humble us to consider that God may sometimes have given us leaders we deserved.

Was the Restoration Movement basically a unity movement? Attempting to answer this question illustrates the difficulty of determining what transpired in the past. Some of the historians who write are not entirely objective. Some recent writers are committed to unity in the present, and use their representation of history to try

Distinctives are not the center of our message or purpose

to convince us that this was the true nature of our history, and that we have fallen from this enlightened view. I think there may be sufficient evidence to substantiate that the Restoration Movement was a unity movement. Read the "Declaration and Address" of Thomas Campbell for evidence of this.

The fathers of our movement did try to reform the denominations they were a part of, but inevitably they were ostracized, and generally had no choice but to move out, although some still fellowshiped their former brethren to the extent they were able. As the movement grew there were attempts to unify with Baptists and other fellowship groups. There was hope that renewed Christianity might spread through all churches and nations bringing the prophesied millennium. Some with ecumenical goals today again hope for a golden age brought on by a combination of religious and secular views.

The reader will make his or her own judgement about whether we have any worthwhile distinctive pleas to offer today. Of course, *distinctives are not the center of our message or purpose*; our purpose is to please God and have His heart develop within us as our motivation for life. I still believe that we have valid distinctives which we must stand for, but that we should always continue to listen, learn, appreciate, and love other believers who demonstrate by their holy lives the sincerity of their faith, though they may never share all of our distinctives.

From the pen of a discerning veteran editor comes a bold challenge to us—a call to humbly repent. While some of his accusations are less true of us than of some others (thanks to our heritage of grace), we still need to hear this disturbing message.

What Must the Church of Christ Do To Be Saved?

Leroy Garrett

Even if we do not hear it as much these days, *What Must One Do To Be Saved?* has long been a favorite “big meeting” sermon among our people, and rightly so, for it is a question right out of the Bible. In giving that title a twist and asking what the Church of Christ itself must do to be saved I am not of course referring to the personal salvation of its individual members. Surely many of the most faithful Christians in the world are in the Church of Christ, and I am not in this article questioning in the least the genuineness of their faith.

I am rather asking what the Church of Christ as a church or as a denomination, if that term is allowed, must do in order to be “saved” as a viable witness to the Christian faith in today’s world. What must it do to escape extinction in the decades ahead, or if not extinction, relegated to an insignificant southern or Tennessee-Texas sect? What must it do to save its own people from boredom, mediocrity, and irrelevance? What must it do to escape from its legalistic, sectarian, and isolationist past (if indeed this is a correct assessment) and become a meaningful part of the larger Christian world?

I speak as part of the Church of Christ when I ask what we must do to be liberated from our depressing self-service to being joyous servants of others for Jesus’ sake?

Some will doubtless insist that there is nothing to do and that my question is both inappropriate and offensive. I would urge such ones to realize that when it comes to “being what the church ought to be” in the world we have not made much of an impact. Who pays any attention to us? Who listens to us? In what ways have we made any real difference in our world? Not only are we not growing but we have actually decreased in members by the tens of thousands in recent decades. Our typical service is sterile, routine, and boring. Many if not most go to church more out of duty than out of joyous expectation. Our young men are going into business rather than into the ministry. Foreign missions are on the decline. The most revealing sign of all is that too few of our people are joyous, fruit-bearing Christians. Some of our more candid leaders concede that we are dying on the vine.

Others may respond to this by saying that these are true of other churches as well as of us. That may be true, and it might also be said that as far as the West is concerned we are now in the post-Christian era, that where Christianity was once strong it is now dying. A new Christian age may emerge again in Asia and Africa, but it is dead or dying in the West.

My answer to that is that each church must endeavor to save itself from decadence. I am concerned for Churches of Christ. There are others working for renewal among the Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and all the rest, and I wish them well. The best way for us to save each other and become the one Body of Christ together is for each to save itself. We can help all other churches to become more like what God wants them to be by becoming what God wants us to be. I like the prayer of the Chinese Christian who prayed, "Renew your church, O God, beginning with me."

Moreover, I am persuaded that we in Churches of Christ have been guilty in ways that most other churches have not. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, true, but some of our sins in Churches of Christ have been particularly grievous, and it is these that we must overcome if we are to be saved.

In this article I will mention one of the most important things that we must do without delay.

We must confess that we have been wrong about some things.

This should begin in our assemblies and among our own people. From them it will reach out to others. We must first show some tough love among ourselves, including soul-searching repentance as a people. It will be wonderfully liberating when we can honestly say, "We have been wrong," and in the long pull it will be encouraging to our people and will give them hope of our eventually becoming a more responsible and spiritual people. It will also gain us the respect of our neighbors. I know, for I have seen it work when visiting other churches I have occasion to confess that we in the Church of Christ have often had a wrong attitude. It always impresses those that are at first critical, especially when one from the Church of Christ is in their service as a visitor, which itself is shock enough!

The sin that we must confess is our patent refusal to have anything to do with other churches and other Christians. In the old days we attacked other churches from the pulpit and mailed out tracts condemning "denominationalism," implying of course that we were not a denomination. On the radio we "skinned the sects" and we debated anyone who had the nerve to take us on. We soon gained the reputation of believing that we were the only true church, the only faithful Christians, and the only ones going to heaven. We succeeded in causing other believers to resent us if not hate us. When they showed such resentment our response was that they didn't really want the truth. In rejecting us they rejected God himself!

In recent years this "skin the sects" attitude has declined. We are now more mature, better educated, wealthier, and more responsible. Sociologists would say we are moving from a sect-type church to a denomination-type, which is typical of religious bodies our age. But we are almost as sectarian and exclusivistic as we have ever been. We are now more subtle, more benign in our sectarianism. These days we may not talk about other churches and believers the way we once did, but we still have nothing to do with them. It is as if other churches did not even exist. If it is a joint Thanksgiving or Easter service, no matter how glorious a service it may be, you can count on the Church of Christ having nothing to do with it. Even

if it is a joint community effort involving all the churches, such as a campaign to help the homeless, we will not be in on it. It is now common knowledge that if the Church of Christ does anything it does it alone. The Church of Christ has nothing to do with other churches and other Christians (period!)

I am thankful that I can tell people in other churches that this has begun to change. We have numerous churches that are breaking out of this debilitating sectarian syndrome, but they are still far too few, and they are often labeled as "liberal" by the others.

We can be saved from sectarian exclusivism without compromising any truth we hold. Our preachers can belong to the ministerial alliance and we can join "the denominations" in a Thanksgiving service without approving of any doctrine we consider false, just as we can read a commentary written by a Methodist (as we do) or sing hymns written by Roman Catholics (as we do) without approving of any error practised by those churches.

How can we be the salt of the earth and the light of the world when we have nothing to do with anyone else? Our people spend all their lives in our congregations without ever having heard a minister from another church in one of our pulpits. Most of our people never attend any service of any other church unless it be a funeral or a wedding. We are supposed to be a people who believe in and work for the unity of all Christians—that is our heritage!—but how can we be a witness for the oneness of all believers when we isolate ourselves from all other believers?

There is only one answer to all this: We must change our ways and confess that we have been wrong. We are wrong when we imply that we are the only true church or that we are the only Christians. We are wrong when we suggest that people have to belong to what we call the "Church of Christ" to be saved and go to heaven. We are grievously wrong when we believe that if people are "not of us" they are going to hell.

In order to believe that we are right we do not have to believe that everyone else is wrong. Jesus warned his disciples against a self-righteousness that assumes that if others are "not of us" they cannot be doing the work of God (Mk. 9:38 - 39). Our own pioneers never thought of themselves as the only Christians and the only true church, forging the motto, "We are not the only Christians, but Christians only."

Our preachers and elders need to say it before our assemblies, *We have been wrong!* I am positive it will have a revolutionary effect for good. There is nothing we could do that would be more liberating for our people. And our leadership would be surprised as to how many would say they never believed that way anyhow!

While we are at it we must confess that we have also been wrong about instrumental music. I concede that this will be hard for us to say, but it must be said if we are to be saved. In coming clean of our partyism we must strip off what we are so widely noted for—not so much our good works but that we believe it is a sin to use instrumental music.

And that is what we must confess, not that we sing a cappella, which of course is all right, but in naming something a sin that the Bible does not name a sin, and for making the use of an instrument a test of Christian fellowship. We have something like 3,000,000 sisters and brothers in the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ who share our heritage, who are "Christians only" and who have been baptized just as we have, but whom we reject because they use instrumental music.

This is our sin, and this we must correct if we are to be saved. We must make it plain that while we choose to sing a cappella it is a matter for each church to decide for itself, and that we will no longer condemn others when they differ with us on this and we will no longer make it a test of fellowship. Some of our people can even say that for *them* it would be a sin to have an instrument in that it would violate their conscience. That too is OK so long as they do not impose their opinion on others, making a law where God has not made one.

But again our leaders will find when they at last announce that they will no longer condemn others because of instrumental music that most of our people never believed in doing that in the first place, especially our younger people. Only recently in a large Dallas area Church of Christ a class of sixty young marrieds were asked by the teacher for a show of hands of those who found instrumental music to be a problem. Only a few raised their hand. Several surveys in recent years reveal that among the rank and file of our people instrumental music is a non-issue. And yet it is one of the main reasons why we have been stereotyped as sectarian and antiquated in the eyes of the world.

We have been wrong about some things! It would be a glorious proclamation, and it would cause folk to pay more attention to the important things we are right about.

—From *Restoration Review*

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The following two articles spell out two extremes we should avoid. The 1st is being so inflexible we become irrelevant. The 2nd is being so relevant and need-centered that we mix up our priorities or even dilute the gospel. Read on. . . —Editor

HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR 2000 A.D.?

Terry Bell

Henry and Rhoda are Scandinavian. When they moved to California, they brought with them their love of gathering wild mushrooms. On one particular mushroom gathering trip to the foothills, they returned home carrying baskets overflowing with delicious mushrooms. Wanting to share their bounty, they threw a mushroom party for all their friends. They prepared mushrooms in every conceivable manner. There were mushroom crepes, mushroom souffles, and mushroom omelets to feed the guests. The party-goers ate until they were no longer hungry and the left-over mushrooms were promptly fed to the family cat.

Near midnight the guests began to collect their coats and purses to excuse themselves from the fun evening. Suddenly there came a scream from the kitchen: *The Cat!* Rushing into the kitchen the guests found this poor wretched beast thrashing, kicking, crying, her sides heaving, and apparently dying in a most horrible way. The obvious conclusion? Poison mushrooms!

Everyone piled into their cars and dashed wildly to the emergency room.

Soon the guests were stretched out side by side—having their stomachs pumped. A wretched experience! What a way to end a party! Exhausted and trembling they straggled to their cars and drove back to Henry's and Rhoda's to pick up their belongings.

As they began to leave for a second time, someone remembered the poor cat. The group tiptoed toward the kitchen and inched open the door preparing themselves for the ghastly sight. On the floor was the cat, lying silently . . . with eight new kittens.

This true story was told by Tom Sine, in his book *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, to illustrate the pain involved when we misread the signs. The church must be alert to the importance of reading the signs correctly. Jesus said, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"

Jeremiah was equally caustic when he reprimanded the leaders of Israel for not recognizing the seriousness of the plight of their people, "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14, 8:11).

When David chose his chief administrators, he chose men who "understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chron. 12:32). What the church in every age needs is leaders who understand the times and know what the church should do. Those who would keep the church bound to the culture of the 1950's or 1960's do the body of Christ great harm. A modern day church can reach a twentieth century crowd with a first century gospel but not with 19th century methods. What are the signposts telling us?

Signpost # 1: The Church Must Be Receptive to a Certain Amount of Change. To speak of the church changing to meet culture sounds heretical to many people. To be sure, this does not mean that our doctrine should change to identify with cultural trends. It does however mean that methodology has never been sacred and thus can change. The reason the New Testament provides us almost no methodological structure is so we can be free to adapt to changing times. The message doesn't change, but the methods may.

Prior to the American Revolution, the largest denominations were liberal (i.e. Congregational and Episcopal). In 1780, the era of the American frontier changed the cultural setting of our nation. Attention turned away from Europe and to the West. Baptist, Methodist, and Restoration churches dominated the religious scene because they adapted to the frontier culture. In 1760, the Baptists and Methodists

were unknown. By 1860, they were the largest American church groups because they creatively instigated strategies and methods to reach the people.

Our culture has again changed. From the frontier, we settled into a rural agrarian nation. From rural, we became an urban-industrial, and now, urban-hightech. The farm is more than a place. It is a mindset. The methods of the 1940's will not work today. A new culture has grown up among us, a sight and sound generation raised on Sesame Street. We can change our methods or we can die. It's sad to see some churches canonizing unwritten and outdated strategies at the expense of lost souls. If it is appropriate for our missionaries to adapt culturally when they move to India or Africa in order to reach a different culture, it is surely appropriate for us to do so here in America, where this different culture is growing up right under our noses.

One of the saddest faults that can befall a church or an individual Christian is a sense of arrival. It is rightfully perceived by others as arrogance. *There is nothing more tragic than Christians who think they've gone about as far as they can go, done everything that needs to be done, grown as much as they need to grow, and have arrived.* To say that "we don't need to change" is to say we have arrived.

About three hundred and fifty years ago, a shipload of travelers landed on the northeast coast of this nation. The first year they established a small town site. The next year they elected a town government. Then the third year that town government decided to build a road five miles into the wilderness to the west of their town. By the fourth year the people tried to impeach their civic leaders because they thought it was a waste of public funds to build a road five miles westward into wilderness! Who needed to go there anyway. A preacher friend of mine summed up the story this way:

Isn't it amazing that people who could see three thousand miles across an ocean just four short years ago were now not able to see five miles across a continent! Some historians suggest that they had lost their pioneering spirit. Their leader had died and they had lost touch with their pioneers. Their spirit of adventure and discovery was gone.

Moving toward the year 2000, our churches will not only require a receptivity toward change, but a second signpost is also evident.

Signpost #2: There must be a commitment to spiritual leadership. Church leaders must be more concerned about the leading of the Spirit than the trends and fears of the brotherhood.

This will require a new look at autonomy and independence. Some students of church growth are telling us that people are now and will be moving away from the mainline denominations toward independent congregations. While this should position us for an influx of new growth, the reality is that it will not unless changes are made. While we may deny our denominational image, the world knows differently, if they know us at all. Most of us have settled in with this reality not so much in words but in actions. High level congregational decisions are often made not so much from a genuine

sense of God's leading but rather from brotherhood tradition or from fear of what our sister congregations would think.

Coming to grips with congregational autonomy may force us to take a new look at the old question of "who's in and who's out?" The judgmental arrogance of "we're the only one" must be replaced by a realization of what God is doing outside our ranks.

As the church moves toward the year 2000, we must become increasingly aware of the religious world around us. This will necessitate an end to the isolationism and blindness of some in previous years. A presence in the religious life of our communities does not mean blanket endorsement of their doctrines. The Church of Christ, if it is to survive, must have a presence in our communities. A twentieth century flat-earth society will do no one any good. In 1991 on the desert sands of Saudi Arabia, American troops lined up alongside Syrian troops. Does this mean we gave blanket endorsement to the terrorism generated from Syria? Absolutely not! Interaction does not mean endorsement.

The church of the year 2000 will need to be deeply concerned about being Spirit led as opposed to tradition led. Intimidation from outspoken critics outside our congregations is more akin to teenage peer pressure than New Testament Christianity. The questions for us then (as now) will be: Who's going to call the shots? Who's in charge? How can we truly be God's church? Where is He leading us now?

The decade ahead will no doubt be turbulent, but with God's leading, productive.

—From *IMAGE* magazine by permission

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SALAD BAR SANCTUARIES

Elwood McQuaid

Yuppies have finally had it! Bad marriages, barren lifestyles, and children adrift in a culture devoid of coherent values have caused many from the affluence-is everything generation to go looking for a better way. Consequently, thousands of baby-boomers are pouring through the doors of America's churches, hoping to find an answer for emptiness in religion.

Their arrival was not unexpected. During the late 80's, trend analysts, such as the Barna Research Group, were saying, "Adults of the baby-boom cohort have apparently 'burned out' on contemporary culture . . ." and would soon be turning to religion. In an editorial written for *Moody Monthly* in 1988, I reported that if the phenomenon did develop, "denominational affiliation will not be the big issue for these families who will drop in with shopping lists in their hands. Their question will be: 'Which church can most efficiently meet our needs, as we conceive them?'"

Our fear was that churches would scramble to respond to their hunger by creating *salad bar sanctuaries*, catering to tastes conceived

by the newcomers, not by those charged to feed them the truth. Unfortunately, the fear was well founded, for many churches are doing just that.

In an extensive article entitled "A Time to Seek," *Newsweek* examined the current climate "where brand loyalty is a doctrine of the past and the customer is king." Among the telling quotes are:

- "Instead of me fitting religion, I found a religion to fit me."
- "Each individual is the ultimate source of authority."
- "Unlike earlier religious revivals, the aim this time . . . is support not salvation, a circle of spiritual equals rather than an authoritative church or guide."
- "In their efforts to accommodate, many clergy have simply air-brushed sin out of their language."
- "Having substituted therapy for spiritual discernment, they appeal to a nurturing God who helps His (or Her) people cope. Heaven, by this creed, is never having to say no to yourself."
- "One preacher is apparently proud of the fact that he "had banished hellfire and damnation. And he's dropped many of the terms of Christian theology. 'If we use the words redemption or conversion, they think we're talking about bonds.'"
- "They inspect congregations as if they were restaurants and leave if they find nothing to taste."
- "They don't convert—they choose."
- "Church Growth Movement experts judge a minister's accountability not by his faithfulness to the Gospel but whether 'the people keep coming and giving.' By that measure, the most successful churches are those that most resemble a suburban shopping mall."

Churches that are stocking their *spiritual salad bars* with "divine dude ranches," bowling lanes, aerobics rooms, and self-help centers in the hope of quelling spiritual hunger by giving people what they themselves demand are making a tragic mistake. Ultimately, they will send them away with a deeper hunger than when they came. But not simply hunger—theirs will be hunger with despair, because the games they found in church will be, in the final analysis, as empty as those they wished to leave behind.

But there is resounding good news in all of this. Spiritual hunger is a reality—an awareness that something is badly amiss. And while we must face the fact that many will reject a gospel that refuses to cater exclusively to self-conceived "needs," a remnant will respond to the message of true spiritual life in Christ—life that will deliver the hunger-quenching abundance promised to redeemed sinners.

True "gospel churches" must seize the opportunity to deliver the message and strive to meet legitimate needs through programs relevant to evangelism, edification, and strengthening the church body. Churches with such focus and balance will reach the remnant and do it faithfully, while there is still time.

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Which Way for the Church?

Part One

J. Robert Ross

At this moment in history our greatest need is to *be* the church and not to *talk* about the church. In talking about the church we may condemn our failure—including specifically *my* failure—to *be* the church.

Whether or not the church becomes a dynamic reality in our time depends upon our decision regarding at least two alternatives which confront us in this last decade of the second millennium A.D. In one sense these alternatives are not new, any more than the difference between night and day is new. But the particular forms in which the alternatives appear and the need for a personal decision in regard to each of them is always “new” to each generation. In other words, we cannot depend upon the choices made by Peter, James, and John, or Luther and Calvin or Alexander Campbell. *Each generation of professing Christians must decide whether it will be (1) a religious circus or the servant body of Christ, and (2) a collection of free lance Christians or a covenant community sharing a life and death commitment to each other.*

A RELIGIOUS CIRCUS OR THE SERVANT BODY OF CHRIST?

In the New Testament the church is described as the body of Christ, an organic unity vivified by the Holy Spirit with individual members each serving in his or her unique manner according to the specific gift which each receives from the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). In other words, the church is a functioning organism whose purpose is to continue the ministry of Christ in the world through the particular ministries fulfilled by each member of the body. Today, however, we are tempted to turn the church into a religious circus with “the minister” serving as ringmaster and star performer in the center ring. There are a few supporting performers in the side rings: the song leader, the “elders” who “preside” at the Lord’s table and the “deacons” who “serve” the emblems. But the church as a whole sits in the bleachers as passive spectators. And they are not even permitted to cheer a good performance. The only response they can make is to shake the preacher’s hand at the door on the way out.

Returning home one Sunday from their local religious circus a certain family was commenting on the Performance. Dad said he was so bored with the sermon that he slept through most of it. Mom asked if everyone had noticed the short miniskirt on the elder’s daughter. And big sister said her high school choir could sing better than the church choir. About that time little brother chimed in, “I thought it was a pretty good show for a dollar.”

Well, sometimes the show is lousy, sometimes pretty good, and if you can hire the right ringmaster and one or two super stars you can attract really big crowds to the Sunday morning performance. But whether the show is good, bad, or mediocre it is still a religious circus. And that is not church. Church is *not* what happens on

Sunday morning. Our language betrays our misunderstanding of the New Testament reality. When we say, "Let's go to church," we evidently mean "Let's attend this week's religious performance" or, even worse, let's go to a certain *building*, which we call "church."

This does not mean that the assembly of the church on Sunday morning and its celebration of the resurrection life and power of Jesus is not very important. On the contrary. It is essential to the life of the body. But what happens Sunday morning must help the church become the servant body of Christ. Otherwise it does more harm than good.

And what does it mean to be the servant body of Christ? Primarily this means a revolution in our concept and practice of ministry and "church work." We have fallen into the habit of calling one or two men our "ministers," and we understand they are supposed to do the ministry of the church. Indeed, they often become defensive if a spectator makes an effort to become a performer. But according to the New Testament concept of ministry, ministry is a function of the entire body and a function of each individual believer. To minister is to serve, to be involved in what the New Testament calls *diakonia*. This ministry or "priesthood" of all believers is sometimes attempted on the model of big business. The managers (i.e. paid ministers) decide what needs to be done, and then they recruit "workers" to fill the slots they have in their particular organization. But according to 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 the ministry of the individual believer depends upon the particular spiritual gift which he has received from God. Apart from the power of the Spirit, apart from His leading and equipping the individual believer there is no true spiritual ministry. Indeed, the church is no longer the body of Christ apart from the functioning of individual members exercising their particular gifts for the building up of the entire body. Membership in a body implies a function within that body. And that function in the body of Christ is determined solely by the Holy Spirit. "There are varieties of service (ministry), but the same Lord; . . . To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:5,7).

In the second place in order to escape being simply a religious circus we must come up with a more biblical understanding of "church work." When the preacher talks about "church work" we all know that he is referring to washing the communion cups, teaching VBS or standing at the communion table on Sunday morning. True, these things have to be done, but this is *not* the work of the church. These things may be necessary to facilitate our corporate worship or our teaching programs. But the *work* to which Christ calls the church is a ministry in and to the world for which He died. To love our neighbors, to visit the prisoner, to feed the hungry in Bangladesh and preach good news to the oppressed—this is the work of the church for it is the work of Christ Himself which we continue as his representatives on this earth. Thus we must decide: shall the church become a religious circus or will it be the servant body of Christ on earth?

[To be concluded next month]

The PERIL of the RIGHT WAY

R. H. Boll

If it is a great privilege to be simply New Testament Christians, it is also a responsibility and carries its particular peril. The peril of the possession of truth lies in the temptation to spiritual pride and pretense. But pride is always fatal. God resisteth the proud—and if there is any form of pride uglier than another it is spiritual pride. It seems that the more of truth a man has, and the further he advances in spiritual knowledge, the more he needs the grace of God to keep him. If we claim to be simple New Testament Christians, we must hold such high position very humbly. "Be not high-minded, but fear." For haply we will be caught saying, "I thank thee Lord that I am not as other men—or as this poor sectarian." Or perhaps we shall be exalted overmuch, over our knowledge ("for knowledge puffeth up"), and look with contempt upon the ignorant; and who knows but we may even with unconcealed joy point out the blunders of the erring. Yea, we may become censorious judges of others, and in blinding pride forget our own estate and fancy ourselves "rich and increased in riches," the while, if we but knew it, we are "miserable and poor and blind and naked." Like the Pharisees in their pride of legality, so may some today in their pride of doctrine "trust to themselves that they are righteous, and set all others at naught." Nothing so dries up the spirit, nothing so quickly sours the milk of human kindness; nothing so hardens the heart and destroys love and mercy as just this spiritual pride and pretense of knowledge and correctness. God forsakes people like that. Like He passed by the Pharisees and took up the publican and the harlot; like He set the Samaritan in better light than the Jew; like He rejected Israel and took up the Gentiles—the proud religionist today will open his eyes in amazement when he beholds the true election of God, and what strangers He chose to number among His own. Be assured there will not be a boaster in all that flock!

PRETENSE

God hates pretense. If a man would find favor with Him, let him come down off his high perch, and deal truthfully with himself and his God. Let him realize his lowly condition, and instead of trying to commend himself to the Lord by any goodness or merit of his own, let him come empty-handed, broken-hearted, in conscious need, and simply confessing his lowly estate. The Lord never turns down such hearts. But the proud He knoweth from afar. They come in for scant attention on the part of God. The hungry He satisfies with good things, but the rich He sends empty away. "Are we also blind?" said the Pharisees to Jesus. "If ye were blind," He answered, "ye would have no sin." If you had been honestly blind and had acknowledged it, I would hold nothing against you: there would be only compassion and mercy and help for you. "But now ye say, *We see*—your sin remaineth." You claim to be able to see—well then, I hold you to the claim you make for yourself, and I will require

of you all that your assumed position involves. I expect of you fruit equal to your profession, and hold you guilty for the lack (John 9: 40 - 41).

WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?

Alas if it is thus God judges where shall they appear who openly boast their righteousness in doctrine, who while assuming to themselves the high name of Christ speak with contempt and scathing judgment of those who have not seen the way so clearly. It would be just like God to make of such a people a laughing-stock in the eyes of the world—to let all men see the hollowness of their religious pretense, and to bring to light all the lovelessness of their carnal hearts, so that their boasted unity-plea will turn to their reproach!

What say I then? That it is immaterial whether a man is a simple Christian or not? Or that it were perhaps even better if he did not try to take such a position? That a sectarian is as well off as one who is a Christian only, after the New Testament pattern? *Far from it!* That would be to discount the word of the Lord. For though all are not Israel who are of Israel, it is not as though the word of God had become of none effect. We must seek and hold and prize the truth without compromise or carelessness, if we would please God. But if with the truth there does not also come a deeper humility in thankful recognition of the grace of God; if with it there is not also the love that weeps and prays and suffers for the help of the weak—our better light means only greater condemnation. If we can find it in our hearts to glory over the failures of others, if we can set ourselves up as standards and patterns of orthodoxy; if we have no tears nor earnest prayers for those who have not found the way, but biting criticism and loveless judgment, had we not better never have seen the Light? Lord, make us to see thy ways, and grant us a humility as of little children, without which no one shall enter into the Kingdom of God!

THE CHRIST PARTY AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Two men may claim to be “of Christ,” and one be right, the other wrong. At Corinth they had the beginning of sects (1 Cor. 1: 12). Some said, “We are of Paul”; some, “We of Apollos”; some, “We of Cephas”; some, “We of Christ.” There was a Paul-party; an Apollos-party; a Cephas-party; and also a Christ-party. “Is Christ divided?” asks the Apostle. They all claimed Him, of course; but with the one party it was Christ according to Paul, with the other, Christ according to Apollos; with another, Christ a la Cephas. Then there was one contingent that with some pride, no doubt, claimed to be of the Christ-party. Indeed it would have been the one and only right thing for them all to abandon their sectarian names, and to have been “of Christ,” all together. “Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized unto the name of Paul?” You were not? Then bear the name of Him who went to the cross for you, and into whose Name ye were baptized. But that was not the position of that little Christ-party at Corinth. They were not “of Christ” in that universal sense for which Paul was pleading: they were “of Christ” as a party in opposition to the other parties. They did not belong to the “of Paul”

party: they belonged to the "of Christ" party. Manifestly they used the Name of Christ for a party-distinction, and for a sectarian appellation. It was possibly that judaizing party that boasted of going past the apostles to Christ direct for their doctrine, who thus appropriated the name of Christ to themselves, and claimed especial, if not exclusive rights to it. The apostle himself had to remind them that he and the rest also had a bit of share in Christ. "If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that even as he is Christ's so also are we" (2 Cor. 10:7).

Now in the things I am saying my chief point is this, that I am not a member of the church of Christ in a party sense—as though there were a church of Christ as one among many others, a religious party among religious parties; distinguished from and opposed to other churches, such as, say, the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc. I belong to no such party. I am not a member of a sect among sects. I am a member of the church of God or of Christ in that universal sense in which the New Testament uses that term—the Body to which *all* the true children of God belong—even all those who have truly become God's children, and have been added to Christ by the Father's hand, though they may have failed to see all things clearly and though they be held in some grievous mistake. And when I call upon men to come and stand for Christ, it is not to ask them to leave one sect or party for another; to lay down one sectarian designation for another, though it be a scriptural one; but to stand together upon the universal New Testament ground as the children of God united by one Spirit, in one faith, one hope, one baptism; nor yet to interdenominational union, but to undenominational oneness in Christ.

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The Church House and the House Church

Jim Carter

Although I can't recall hearing the phrase lately, it used to be common, at least among our people, for the congregation's meeting place to be called the *church house*. I suppose that particular expression was the result of two facts: (1) We had been taught that the building was not itself the church, and yet (2) there it was. . . you had to have some way to refer to it. Anyway, I have always sort of had mixed feelings about the church house. As a tool, I'm sure we should be grateful for adequate, air-conditioned, functional facilities. I'm pretty sure, in fact, that it is appropriate for us to have as much interest in the appearance and the maintenance of the church property as we have in our own.

But I guess I don't really believe in religious real estate. Do you? I understand that the purpose for which we meet is sacred and holy. I acknowledge that architecture can sort of make some settings more worshipful than others. I can even stretch enough to use the word *sanctuary* sometimes. (I wish it didn't sound quite so much like *mortuary*.) Still, I believe that a building made with hands regardless of what you call it, is a building made with hands. As to the question

of where God resides, everywhere seems to be the best and basic answer. We are, however, specifically told that His temples are not made of wood, stone, nor steel, but that we ourselves are, both individually and collectively, His dwelling place. Fantastic! Wonderful enough to call the earth to be silent before Him. Just like individuals, organizations can become possessed by their possessions. It happens all the time. To think that just because we have built a fancy church house we have built or improved the church of the Living God is pretty serious self-deception.

But *house church*, now that's another thing altogether. I don't know why. Maybe it shouldn't be. But most of us know that some dynamic is present when we meet in private homes that seems almost impossible to experience in our public buildings. I think the early church meetings must surely have most always been held in homes. Everything we are told about them so indicates. I wonder how much bearing this factor alone had on their intimate bonding, their energy level, their ability to draw near to the Lord and to each other and to impress their pagan neighbors with the quality of their fellowship. I'm not thinking that we should liquidate all church owned property and meet only in small groups or rented buildings. I do think that we have paid a high price for our real estate. The good things mentioned above can also be cultivated of course, in Spirit-led church building meetings, but there is definitely something special about home fellowships. I'm sure that they ought to be a part of the activity of any congregation no matter how big they are or how much church property they have.

Well then, beginning next week our fourth Sunday night meeting will be held not at the church house but in three house churches. We're trying to make them as geographically convenient for as many as possible. However, as someone told me before I came here, some of you are pretty far out!

—Brookvalley Church, Atlanta

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

A friend of mine says that the Roman Catholic Church began with Peter and the Church of Christ did not begin until much later. Is this true?

Your friend probably is convinced that his statement is true and may feel that history bears out what he says. This, however, is a good example of the misinterpretation of facts and a misunderstanding of the nature of the church of Christ.

At Caesarea Philippi Jesus promised, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). On the first Pentecost after His resurrection, the church was born—that assembly of people called out from the world, saved through faith in Christ, their sins forgiven because of His shed blood. From that day until this the church of Christ has been

in the world, and He promises that it will not be destroyed (Matt. 16:18). That church was not Roman Catholic, was not Baptist, was not any other denomination, and was not the Church of Christ in any denominational or sectarian sense. It was simply the Lord's church and embraced all of those who were saved. As others were saved they were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47).

Except for sin and the work of Satan, there would never have been any of the factions, splits, corruptions, etc., that have plagued the church. But even in the New Testament times there began to be corruptions of doctrine and of life that showed up. At Corinth a number of problems developed (See the Corinthian letters). By the time Revelation was written there were churches of different degrees of faithfulness and unfaithfulness (See letters to the seven churches, Rev. 2 and 3). One church was faced with being removed from those belonging to the Lord (Rev. 2:5); another was to be spewed out of His mouth like luke-warm water if there was no repentance (Rev. 3:14ff.). History shows that such unfaithfulness to the Lord continued in those early centuries and a variety of doctrines grew up. There were those who were false prophets posing as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15), those who were ignorant or honestly mistaken, those who were deceived and corrupted by the errors that arose. It is not hard to picture churches in one area falling victim to a prevailing error while churches in another area remained relatively faithful to the Lord.

Gradually there grew up a power structure contrary to the pattern found in the New Testament. The early New Testament churches were congregationally independent and were bound to each other by love and mutual interests, but leaders began to develop who exercised authority over several congregations. Later churches of an area came under some leader's control. In short, we have the hierarchal system developing. And with the power system came considerable doctrinal change. It is really at this point that the so-called Catholic Church had its origin. Originally one body, the Catholic Church was divided between East and West and resulted in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies. There was no pope until a system developed which made a single ruler with such power possible. In truth the Catholic Church—both Roman and Orthodox—was a result of corruption and unfaithfulness on the part of a multitude of churches.

We do not claim to know the judgment of the Lord with respect to all the churches involved, but it seems very likely that in many cases the corruptions had become so bad that He had disowned them as churches of His. However, churches unfaithful to the Lord and disowned by Him do not necessarily cease to be. They go on with religious activity. (This can be seen in the modernistic churches of our day.) They may point back to a historical connection with the New Testament, but that historical connection does not guarantee faithfulness. There is *some* truth in the Roman Catholic claim that they are the descendants of the apostles and the New Testament church, but the claims are greatly exaggerated and misinterpreted. In order to be honest they should also add that the

Catholic Church which had developed by the fifth or sixth centuries was very different from the church of the New Testament. No claim for historical ties means very much if in the process there has been a serious drift away from New Testament teaching.

Although there were congregations which were never a part of the Catholic Church, this latter body dominated the scene. Modern studies of church history deal almost exclusively with the Catholic Church during the period from its formation until the Reformation. Very little is known of those independent churches. During the Reformation era, especially as a result of Bible translation and its wider distribution through printing, several men began to see the corruptions of the Catholic Church and to try to reform it. They were unsuccessful in those efforts and were excommunicated. They continued to preach and to propagate the truths they had seen, however, and as a result several of the modern denominations arose during the period. As noble as their work was, the Reformers saw only some of the errors. Views quickly crystalized. As more needs became evident, more divisions resulted. Then in England, and later in America, men began to arise who proposed, instead of reform, simply going back to the New Testament teaching and establishing churches like the early church. This came to be known as the Restoration Movement. It was out of this movement that we have the "Church of Christ" of today. Hence, if we see this as only another denomination and speak of it in a denominational sense, there is *some* truth in the contention that it came late in history. The ideal proposed by these men, however, places little emphasis on historical continuity and sees the church in a truer light, that of her relationship with Christ. The ideal is a return to the undenominational and pure church of the New Testament.

Far too much stress has been put on the historical ties as proof of relationship with Christ. This can be seen in a theoretical illustration. Suppose the natives of an island found a New Testament but had no other exposure to the rest of mankind. And suppose they began to read and became convinced of the claims of Jesus Christ, became believers, baptized each other, began to meet together for worship and in other ways followed the New Testament. That would be a true church of Christ. Later discovered by the world, these believers could not trace a historical line back through churches to the New Testament church. When did that church of Christ begin? In a historical sense it began whenever they became Christians and God did His work in their lives. But that Body to which the Lord added them began in New Testament times and their ties to it span the centuries.

The word of God is likened unto seed (1 Pet. 1:23). If we could find a few grains of wheat that had grown in Christ's day and had been carefully preserved and if we were then to plant it, we would have the very variety of wheat that grew in His day. Suppose some of the same crop from which the seed came had been planted in that early day and the process repeated down through the centuries with cross-breeding and possible change. Which grain would have the best claim to being like the wheat of Jesus' day?

Would the preserved grain be any less wheat because it had only grown late in history?

The church springs into life wherever the Word of God is believed and God does His work. In the final sense, it is God's work and not man's. The Word may lie dormant for centuries and then create churches of the Lord without apparent historical ties, or it may be proclaimed from generation to generation and the resulting churches will be aware of certain historical ties. But it is not the known historical ties which make the church. The history any church needs to be concerned about is that of being vitally linked with Christ and the church for which He died. No matter how many historical connections can be cited, that body which has drifted from true faith and commitment to Him has no righteous claim on Him.

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Major Lessons from Minor Prophets

God's Marvelous Answer

Ernest E. Lyon

(Habakkuk 2:1 - 5; read the passage first)

In verse one, Habakkuk says he will do what a watchman for a city did—take his place of watching where he could see (hear) clearly God's answer. He was going to wait patiently, expecting an answer from God. He expected to be able to see clearly what God was doing and to be able to tell that to others.

God's answer to Habakkuk's second complaint is far more complete than His first answer. In it we have the Lord telling Habakkuk a great truth that still startles me to see in such a neglected prophet. We will spend most of this article on that statement in verse four.

God points out in the beginning (verse 2) that what He is about to say is something very important and that many would want to know it. Habakkuk was to write down the revelation (vision) and make it so easy to read that those who read it will then run to tell others. He then immediately points out that the ultimate purpose of this revelation of His will was pointing especially to the "end"—apparently a time far off from Habakkuk's time. And it was to be something so important that Habakkuk should wait for his answer regardless of how long it would take. That does not mean to imply that the time was uncertain. God knew the time and that time would arrive exactly when it should. God wanted to be sure that those who told His revelation would understand it before telling it to others. That is good advice for our own day. It is fine to have a desire to tell others when you first believe the Word and are saved, but be sure that what you tell is correct. Take no chance on misleading others. Incidentally, if you will turn to verse 14 of this chapter you will see how far in the future still that "end" is.

The judgement of Babylon is not to wait for that "end." Four fifths of verses four and five are given over to speaking of the arrogant one and one short statement over to the great truth we have been speaking of. The rest of the chapter is not exclusively on Babylon, but it is for nations like Babylon on through the ages.

Verse four shows the great contrast between those who work for their own good and those who live for God. I would like to discuss first the first part of the verse along with verse five and then return to the wonderful statement about "the righteous" that closes verse four. That fourth verse divides all mankind into two groups, the "arrogant," who are called by several names and the "righteous," who get that way by the great principle that is shown throughout the Bible (not just the New Testament).

Pride is the first thing considered—"he is puffed up." That is a very suitable beginning, for pride is behind every defection from God, from Eve and Adam to the present. Some of the other problems come up in verse five, such as wine, arrogance, restlessness, greed, and never being satisfied regardless of how much he has acquired. Have you known very many people who become rich and are satisfied with what they have, or powerful people who are satisfied with the power they possess?

Babylon, the prime target of these things, truly had all these sins. The final downfall of Babylon, you may recall from the book of Daniel, was because of pride, desires that were not upright, wine, and all of these. Just think of all the captives Babylon had taken (verse 5) and the drunken scene at King Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5).

"THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY HIS FAITH." What a contrast in that statement to the condition of Babylon and other nations since and before. But who is God speaking of here? Surely not righteousness on the part of the natural man, for "there is not one righteous, no not one." The righteous in the Bible are always those who receive righteousness by faith in the Lord. It is strange how many Christians feel that living by faith is a doctrine only in the Christian Scriptures (the New Testament), even though they may have read or heard the statement in Genesis 15:16—"Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." And this in spite of Paul's statement in Galatians 3:9—"So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

But the worth of this passage is by no means confined to confirming the matter of faith and making it more specific as faith in Christ. This short statement from what is often considered an obscure prophet, is taken as the theme of three of the most important of New Testament books, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

Romans 1:16, 17 are the key verses of the entire book of Romans. The quote from Habakkuk is in verse 17, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" Romans then goes on to give the background of unrighteousness of all men and in 3:21 begins the long exposition of the *first two words* of that quotation—"the righteous." It shows how that righteousness comes only through faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ,

putting trust (faith) in His dying for us as the way to have our sins forgiven and our place assured in heaven. To show fully what I mean we would have to go over all of Romans at least from 3:21 through the eighth chapter. That book is considered by many to be the most profound letter ever written, more profound than any philosophical dissertation or book that has ever been written. If you read my many articles on Romans in this magazine, you may recall that my favorite verse of that book is (in an "explanatory translation" of 3:24): We are "declared righteous without a cause on my part by His unmeritable favor through the buying back from the guilt and power of sin that is in Christ Jesus."

The Galatian Church had been led astray from the teaching of grace that Paul had given them in their own power. In 3:11 Paul again quoted this verse from Habakkuk to show that "*will live*" means not to live in your own power but by faith in the Lord, Who supplies all our needs, not only to start in salvation but to continue on. So he here emphasizes *the second pair* of Habakkuk's words as the central teaching of the book.

In Hebrews the writer had the task of showing Hebrew believers that they had come to a greater savior and everything else is greater in Christ than in the Law. He doesn't quote Habakkuk's expression until 10:38 and slightly changes the quotation: "my righteous one shall live by faith." You recall that the next chapter shows faith as it was exercised by Old Testament heroes, trusting God for everything. Just before quoting Habakkuk we find the following: "He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry." In the period until He comes those who are righteous because of their faith will live by that faith, not by the Law.

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," says one of our hymn writers. How like Him, and Him alone, to take six words from a rather obscure prophet, about whom we know so little, and build three of the greatest books in the Bible around those words! He is wonderful, indeed, praise His Name!

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Protracted Meetings in the Early 1900's

Conclusion

Florence Olmstead Collins

("Cousin Homer" is the late Homer N. Rutherford, who preached for many years in Lexington, Kentucky.)

Protracted meetings were usually conducted by a team of two: an evangelist and a song leader. In Pa's early preaching days, the format was for the song leader to conduct a period of worship in song. Then the evangelist delivered the main message. Following him, an "exhorter" spoke, making an additional appeal. Sometimes this was done by a third person, but most often by the song leader. Pa

soon eliminated the practice of having an additional exhortation. He feared some people might feel pressured and make a decision prompted by emotion only.

Early in Pa's career, while preaching in brush arbors, Cousin Homer Rutherford was his partner. Cousin Homer had the round face and short build of his mother. His ready giggle brightened any situation. He had also attended Potter Bible College and knew the Bible well. He led singing and delivered exhortations.

One morning, Pa decided to stay at home and let Cousin Homer conduct the whole service. Years later Pa told me, "Homer should have been preaching regularly. He has an appealing delivery. I knew he could do it if someone got him started." He got started that morning, and didn't quit until the infirmities of age stopped him more than 70 years later.

Cousin Homer had a way of combining preaching and worshiping with music. When appropriate, in the middle of a sermon, his full, mellow voice would break out in song. Sometimes he spiritedly sang one verse, then asked the congregation to sing with him.

One of his favorites was:

"I believe the good old gospel
For it is the sinner's friend.
I believe the good old gospel
From beginning to the end."

Then the worshippers joined in:

"I believe it —hallelujah!
I believe it —hallelujah!
Power of God unto salvation to my soul!"

With so many humans being involved, mistakes in the work of saving souls were bound to occur in protracted meetings. One such error was committed by Pa when he preached at Locust Grove. His sermon was on the infallibility of the scriptures. It was his custom to step down from the pulpit while still speaking and walk back and forth on the level with the audience, making his summary and final plea. This night, as he left the rostrum, he picked up his black morocco book, and waving it over his head, forcefully declared, "This is God's everlasting, inerrant word! How can any human put his own thoughts above those divinely recorded in this book?" He continued to elaborate on that statement. All our family, amused but nervous, were wondering if he was going to open the book and expose that it was not the Bible. It was his loose-leaf notebook of sermon outlines he had written. He didn't open it, and so far as we knew, no one outside the family learned of his mistake.

Another incident took place on a very solemn occasion. It happened at a baptism. Believing that one who has faith in the cross must be baptized to receive salvation and the Holy Spirit, and that only immersion is baptism, those who lived in rural areas were baptized in creeks or ponds. The crowd of observers at this baptism stood on the shore of the pond. Their emotions ran from sorrow that it was necessary for Jesus to die in their place, to gratitude that he did, to joy that the ones being baptized had accepted this sacrifice

of Christ's. The seriousness of the occasion was felt by everyone. Although it couldn't be seen by human eyes, they knew they were present where a miracle was about to occur—the miracle of a dead, sinful soul being buried, then given a new life in Christ.

Cousin Homer, who officiated, held the hand of the first candidate, an obese woman, and led her into the center of the pond where the water was deep enough to baptize her. Standing with one hand between her shoulders and the other lifted overhead he repeated the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then he laid her back into the water. Her head and shoulders went under the water, but her feet surfaced. When he pushed her feet down, her head came up. He again plunged her head under—her feet appeared. Then Cousin Homer moved her a step or two and successfully immersed her. The importance of the eternal blessings of the woman's faith prevailed over the awkward technical difficulties and the dignity of the sacred service was maintained.

Later, Cousin Homer explained that unknowingly he had been laying the woman's back across an unseen submerged section of an old fence. The rest of the fence had been removed, leaving no clue to the presence of the underwater remnant.

When about 10 years old, I took an active part in a "baptismal" service. The protracted meeting was in full swing in Franklin. The Haydens were hosts to the visiting preacher. They, along with him and Munna and Pa, were invited out for lunch. This left their daughter and me at home. Although living in town, the Haydens, as many others, had a barn lot and a barn to house cows and a flock of chickens. Having time on our hands, and the mechanics of the revival on our minds, we two girls decided to play the parts of evangelist and song leader. Following a short sermon and an invitation song, we began baptizing "converts." The baptistry was the cow's drinking trough and the candidates were chickens. One could tell their hearts weren't in it, but there being two of us, we hemmed them in, caught them and forced them underwater. It was a noisy ritual.

We dipped every one of them. Then we started on the cats. They were unsuspecting pets and easy to catch, but with their strong muscles, quickness and sharp claws, not one of them went into "the watery grave."

When our parents returned, the nervous chickens were still squawking, and because most of the water had been splashed from the trough, the cows were lowing. Investigating the reason for the pandemonium, our parents saw the many cat scratches on our arms. Assuming we wouldn't try this activity again, they were free to give vent to laughter as they applied the inevitable iodine to our wounds.

Sharing in protracted meetings was physically tiring, but enjoyable and uplifting. The amount of valuable truth I learned from them, almost by osmosis, is surprising. Later, I accepted these precepts and made them mine. I am grateful for having lived in a time when these eternal truths were an integral part of the lives of the people I knew.

VOICES from the FIELDS

Crystal Hardin

"Pine Grove Academy," Honduras, C.A.

Jan. 1, 1992

Ted left for New Orleans for the Southern Association meeting on Nov. 30. He spent several days in meetings there getting our accreditation reaffirmed. They were pleased with our progress, and awarded certification. The next thing we have to do is hire a certified librarian. Know anybody who wants to come? After the meetings, Ted visited six Christian colleges, putting 2,500 miles on the rental car in the process. He was trying to develop relationships with the personnel directors, to aid in recruiting new teachers. . .

The Christmas program for the school was Dec. 1. The little children did a musical which had the angels explaining that the old covenant of law was not enough to save, so God had to come to earth to bring man to Himself again, choosing to come as a baby so man would feel close to Him. We gave out Spanish translations of the words, but that wasn't as good as doing the program in Spanish. It is really difficult to find concert arrangements in Spanish, but we hope to do the spring program in the local language. . .

The following Saturday I went with a work team from the church to a poor barrio where a missionary is trying to start a church. Most of the men worked putting two tin roofs on houses, and the ladies shovelled concrete, putting a floor in another house. A concrete floor instead of dirt improves the health of the whole family. . .

The next Sunday afternoon we had a party for both groups of boys in our Bible clubs. [*Editor's note: These are held in two special homes for boys, deprived or delinquent.*] Alberto, who lives with us, spends several nights a week with the boys giving them Bible lessons, playing games with them, and showing them love. They are some of the neediest kids in this city. Please pray for them that they will commit their lives to the Lord, and find His purpose for their lives. Praise God that Alberto, a refugee from Nicaragua, finally has his papers straightened out after several years' effort and a lot of money invested. He now has a visa as a missionary. He hopes to go to Bible school to train as a preacher. It will be difficult for him because he only has a sixth grade education, but the Lord will enable. He also will need about \$35 each month to pay for his tuition. Pray for God's provision of these funds.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Back in Print—a Useful Tool

HOW GOD FORGIVES, by R.H. Boll, is back in print. Many have used this gospel tract to share God's grace with others. One brother in Dallas has distributed many hundreds of them, far and near!

It is 8 pages long, plus a cover, and fits into pocket or purse. Bro. Boll's main points are God forgives Abundantly, Freely, Righteously and Redemptively. A few words have been made more contemporary ("vouchsafe" is now "granted"); otherwise it is the same. The cost is 25¢ each, 5 for \$1.00 plus postage (and 6% tax in Kentucky). Order from W&W.

Christ Thrills Our Hearts

I have been thrilled all day reading the Dec. W&W about "tho Magnificence of Jesus our Lord." —Lois McReynolds, DeRidder, LA

Seeking a Preacher, Part 1

Our minister of many years, Richard Ramsey, retired as of Dec. 29. So we need someone to lead our church at Hayden Grove. We are a small rural church just outside of Amite, in the southeastern part of Louisiana. Anyone who is qualified and interested, please contact Tommy Currier, (504) 748-4522; Rt 5, Box 51A, Amite, LA 70422.

Seeking a Preacher, Part 2

The Tell City, Indiana Church of Christ is seeking God's will regarding their need for a minister of the gospel. —Allen Goffinet, 836 29th St., Tell City, IN 47586.

Pulpit Pinch-hitter Available

Tooger Smith, who has preached at several churches in addition to his schoolteaching job, is now available to fill in and preach from time to time as needed. However, he is not open to move away from his home in the Linton, IN area at this time. For more information, call (812) 659-2616.

(One feature of Tooger's ministry has been monthly sermons especially for children. Some adults have been known to get more out of them than from the messages for grownups!)

Furlough for David Brown

In late Feb., David and Colleen Brown will come to the U.S. for an unknown length of time. They have been missionaries in Africa for many years, lately in South Africa. They are presently seeking God's direction for the future of their ministry, and ask for your prayers. To have them visit your congregation, write to the Highland Church of Christ, 1275 Bardstown Rd., Louisville, KY 40204.

LADIES, Save This Date

The Ladies Inspiration Day, an annual highlight for our sisters, will be April 25. This year it will be held at the Southeast Church of Christ near Louisville. Stay tuned for more details. A Conference to Motivate and Train.

Don't miss this year's training conference sponsored by the School of Biblical Studies in Louisville. Details are given elsewhere in this issue. Note that it will be at the Buechel church this time, instead of at Southeast. Urge your elders, deacons, and all Bible teachers and youth leaders to take advantage of this opportunity. Experienced motivators and trainers will lead the sessions.

One Warning that's NOT Needed!

Several concerned Christians have recently told or written us about a threat to Christ's cause. They have been told that notorious atheist Madelyn Murray O'Haire is working to get our government to ban all reading of the Gospel on the air-waves of America. But this is a false rumor that has been spread for years; it is NOT TRUE! Who started it, or why, is unknown, but over the years hundreds of thousands of Christians have petitioned the F.C.C. to overrule O'Haire's attempts—which she never made. We know she opposes God and the Bible, but she is NOT about to get Bible reading or Christian programs off the air. We applaud the concern and work of Christians who've written to defend our religious freedom (too many believers are apathetic), but in this case it is misinformed and unnecessary. Please pass the word.

Thanks, W&W

Thanks for the "Protracted Meetings in the Early 1900's" excerpt from Florence's fine book. Let me suggest that every church that has a library put at least one copy on the shelf. It has historical value to our churches, and is written in an interesting style.

Turkey Creek, LA

The Southeast La. Fellowship in Amite was very good. We enjoyed having Robert and Joy Garrett with us last Sunday. Now preparing for a teachers' training course in Jennings to begin next week. —Glenn Baber

Tell City News:

Last Sunday in our business meeting I gave my resignation to be effective March 8, 1992. We have accepted the challenge of a new ministry as we move to the Linton Church of Christ. We praise God for the last seven years that we have served here in Tell City. We thank you for all you have done. May God lead and direct the congregation in the years ahead as we all work together for His glory until He comes again. Please pray for us that the transition time will be smooth, and we will be praying for the Lord's guidance and direction as a new minister is sought.

—Jerry Carmichael

Lilly Dale News

School of Biblical Studies Class: We are still planning a class at Lilly Dale real soon. The subject to be taught is "The New Testament Church." The teacher dates and times are still to be worked out.

Alexandria Church of Christ, LA

The South Baton Rouge Church of Christ is planning a Youth Evangelism Seminar. The theme is "Boldness in Evangelism." For more information contact David Johnson.

Acadiana Christian Workers' Clinic began Thursday, February 6th, and continues each Thursday up to March 12th. Two classes each session beginning at 7 p.m. at the Jennings church. Bro. Baber teaches methodology for "Sunday School" including preparation, materials, and communication skills. The second class is focusing on topics from 1 and 2 Timothy, featuring different speakers each night.

Kentucky Churches Support Life

Several Kentucky Churches of Christ members helped swell the crowd of 7,000 to 9,000 Kentuckians supporting the "right" of the unborn to life at the

Right to Life Rally on the Capitol steps in Frankfort.

Gallatin Church of Christ, TN

Not long ago families centered their lives around the church. Other than the family itself, the church was the center of life. Other choices in the 1980's changed this. Church became one stop in the cafeteria line of life for children. Somewhere between T-ball, soccer, music lessons and scouts the church became one stop.

I have grown increasingly concerned, as I see parents opt for such involvements for their children and retreat from children's participation in church-related activities. Our church offers a wide variety of spiritual and recreational opportunities for children. If they could be involved in each one, it would scarcely compensate for the non-Christian culture in which they live throughout the week.

Perfect Sunday School attendance is less than 52 hours a year. Compare that with the 1560 hours of TV, and 20,000 commercials seen yearly by the average child. TV is but one of many major influences in their lives.

Parents, please note these facts and heed the admonition to do what you should to have your child nurtured in spiritual truths. It will take example, discipline and earnest effort. But, since your child's soul is at stake, it WILL be worth the cost.

—Julius Hovan

From Locust Street, Johnson City, TN

Many people regard going to church services as they would a play on the stage. Because they are so man-centered, they think of themselves as spectators, with the preacher as the main performer, and if God is anywhere in the production, He is on the sidelines. How unfortunate, and how different from true worship! God is the audience, the congregation is the actor, and the preacher should be only a prompter to help the people draw closer to Him from whom all blessings flow. The worship of the Christian is offered to God the Father through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

When YOU worship, do you realize your part in the service to God you are rendering? Do you think your part the same as though you attended a lecture or a concert? Do you realize that you are meeting with God and the "ground whereon you stand is holy ground"?

special offer
special offer
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SPECIAL OFFER CONTINUES!

VERY GOOD NEWS FOR YOU:

Usually a copy of a back issue costs you \$1.00 per copy, including postage and handling. But from now through April, 1992, we will send **UP TO TEN COPIES FREE AND POSTAGE-PAID** to any church that *promises to distribute every one!* And any church that has an average attendance of more than 100, we will increase our offer to up to **TWENTY COPIES FREE AND POSTAGE-PAID!**

This offer applies only to the following issues, of which we have a good number of extra copies:

- May 1991, "Praise God with Psalms and Hymns" (worship)
- June 1991, "Your Kingdom Come, Lord Jesus!" (prophecy)
- July 1991, "Here I Come, Ready or Not!" (prophecy)
- Aug. 1991, "Principles of Good Parenting" (family)
- Sept. 1991, "Families Matter" (family)
- Nov. - Dec. 1991, "The Magnificence of Jesus Christ"
- Jan. 1992, "God's Church and Our Churches"

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