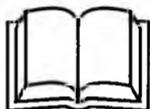


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MARCH, 2004

***WOULD JESUS
STILL PRAY
FOR UNITY?***

I TAKE THY PROMISE, LORD

H. L. R. Deck

I take Thy promise, Lord, in all its length
And breadth and fullness, as my daily strength.
Into life's future fearless I may gaze,
For, Jesus, Thou art with me "all the days." *

There may be days of darkness and distress,
When sin has pow'r to tempt, and care to press.
Yet in the darkest day I will not fear,
For, 'mid the shadows, Thou wilt still be near.

Days there may be of joy, and deep delight,
When earth seems fairest, and her skies most bright;
Then draw me closer to Thee, lest I rest
Elsewhere, my Savior, than upon Thy breast.

And all the other days that make my life,
Marked by no special joy or grief or strife,
Days filled with quiet duties, trivial care--
Burdens too small for other hearts to share--

Spend Thou these days with me, all shall be Thine;
So shall the darkest hour with glory shine.
Then when these earthly years have passed away,
Let me be with Thee in the perfect day. Amen.

* Literally, Matthew 28:20 says,
"I will be with you *all the days*."

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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If Jesus Were on Earth Today, Would He Still Pray for Unity Among His People?

Surely He would. He still wants it. We still need it. Let's think about it again.

As we did during 2003 (*Word and Work's* 95th-anniversary year), once more we look back in order to profit from the past. We need to see where we've come from in order to chart a better path for the future. The first article following this was originally presented to a class during the 1997 Pepperdine Bible Lectures, but is still valid.

Perhaps a few points should be added: First, we realize "our" side wasn't always lily-white. Occasionally words were spoken or actions taken which were not in the spirit of Christ, and were later regretted. Second, praise the Lord that in many places the ugliness has been replaced with loving acceptance in recent years. Read what Rick Atchley told the NACC a few months ago.

Third, we know that many younger folks don't care (or even know) about "those old doctrinal debates and wars." That may be good, but let's hope they won't go to the opposite extreme, and feel doctrines don't even matter at all! That's a danger as post-modernism spreads. Our Lord is concerned about both grace and truth, not one without the other. Christians will never fully agree on Biblical teaching, but we can still seek truth and act graciously.

Yet, sad to say, there are still numerous churches, preachers, and magazines which have the old dogmatism and divisiveness mentioned in our next article. Last year a friend of ours asked her relatives in another branch of Churches of Christ to pray and possibly donate to help her go on a summer mission trip overseas. The reply was, "We would never support a premillennial church, you are so wrong. We could not even pray for your trip"! How Jesus weeps.

SHOULD DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES DIVIDE CHRISTIANS?

Learning Lessons from Past "Wars," Especially the Fight in Churches of Christ over Prophecy

Alex V. Wilson

A friend of mine had been a missionary in Rhodesia for many years with some Churches of Christ. To his surprise he received an official document from another group of Churches of Christ in which he had never preached nor even visited. It announced that they were dis-fellowshipping him! Why did those congregations declare him unwelcome and in fact excommunicate him? Because of his beliefs about Biblical prophecy!

Around that same time (the 1960s), my wife and I and some other missionaries were ministering in the Philippines with what some folks call the premillennial, a cappella Churches of Christ. (I hate labels, for they tend to build walls rather than bridges; but sometimes they seem unavoidable. I hasten to add that we do not draw lines over these issues, and we try not to give undue emphasis to them.) At one of the provincial congregations we had established years earlier, some missionaries from another sector of the Churches of Christ distributed to the members a paper entitled "Premillennialism." It was three legal-size pages in length, typed single space. Among many other assertions it claimed that premillennialism "denies that Christ is reigning now...minimizes the gospel, belittles the church, revokes the great commission, nullifies salvation to Gentiles now, and makes the first coming of Christ a failure." All of that was news to us, for each accusation was totally false as far as we were concerned. We neither denied, belittled nor nullified as we were accused of doing. The paper ended with the statement, all in capital letters, "ONE CANNOT BELIEVE THE THEORIES OF PRE-MILLENNIALISM AND AT THE SAME TIME BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST." Since there is no salvation apart from faith in the Gospel of "Christ and him crucified" -- draw your own conclusion!

In his excellent biography of J. N. Armstrong, founding president of Harding College, L. C. Sears comments: "It may seem unbelievable to many that friendships could break up over what Jesus intends to do when he returns to earth, especially since human opinions will probably in no way alter his plans. But R. H. Boll's view, that Jesus on his return would rule over the earth for a thousand years (the millennium) before the final destruction of the forces of evil, was anathema to many. In the heat of emotion some forgot all Christian love and forbearance." (*For Freedom*, by L. C. Sears, 213f.)

Debates were held -- sometimes with ugly bitterness. A number of churches split wide open. Even families experienced tension and hostilities. ("She's left the Lord's Church by marrying that premillennialist!")

Historical Background

How did such an unspeakably tragic situation arise? From around 1915-1930, Churches of Christ in various places became agitated over differing prophetic views taught among them. Historic premillennialism had been taught by various men like Lard, Brents and Harding. Dispensational premillennialism was spreading at large; the Scofield Reference Bible had been published in 1909 and a number were finding its literal interpretations attractive -- had not the Stone-Campbell movement always stressed letting the Bible mean what it says? Others still clung to the optimistic post-millennialism which Alexander Campbell had usually espoused. But after World War I, the depression, etc., many turned from that position to amillennialism (or more accurately, "realized millennialism": the millennium is now, between Christ's 1st and 2nd comings).

But during that period (1915-1930), though unpleasant tensions arose from time to time, almost everyone believed that such disagreements should not sever fellowship nor disturb harmonious relations between those who differed. A written debate that was published in *The Gospel Advocate* in 1928 between pre-mill R. H. Boll and a-mill H. Leo Boles demonstrated this fact. In the closing remarks by Boll he said, "The avowed purpose of this debate was, not to mark lines and partisan distinctions, but...to foster good will and brotherliness....To my honored respondent, Brother H. Leo Boles, I wish to express my gratitude for all kind and brotherly utterance in the course of the discussion....I wish to express my kindest personal feelings toward my respondent."

And Boles replied, "Brother Boll and I hold many things in common --enough to fellowship each other as brethren in the Lord....I believe him to be sincere, pious, and a cultured Christian gentleman....Our differences do not keep me from esteeming him very highly as a brother in Christ Jesus."

But during the 1930s a different spirit arose and became widespread. In his book, L. C. Sears writes that a group of preachers was "determined to disfellowship, not merely Boll and all who believed with him, but even all who disagreed with Boll but who refused to disfellowship him. Pressure was brought against preachers, the religious journals, and [Harding College] to 'line up.' Two radical new papers sprang up to lead in the elimination of Boll and all who would not disfellowship him. Because of [J. N.] Armstrong's outspoken defence of

the Christian's freedom of conscience and freedom to teach, he became the constant target of this group [though he did not fully agree with Boll, and *never* taught about millennial views]. All the religious journals, as well as the colleges, had for months felt the pressure of the group who wanted to exclude from the church all who believed in a millennium or even tolerated those who did." (281 & 330) By 1939 a moderate editor suggested that all the pre-mill preachers agree to quit talking or writing about the millennium and related matters for some time, in exchange for full fellowship and acceptance in all the churches. He hoped that the furor would die down and that later on all "would once again be free to teach what they believe they find in the Word of God."

But Boll replied, "Would it not be adopting a bad principle which might lead to, no one knows what, extremes of official censorship and creed-making in the church, if a man in Christ had to keep silent on some parts of Scripture in order to preserve fellowship? And who could say just where the line would run, and what should not be mentioned? But as I have often stated, as a free man under Christ, I would be glad to use consideration, and in all my teaching to confine myself faithfully to the declarations found in God's word." (Sears, 278) I can testify, as one who grew up under R. H. Boll's teaching till I was eighteen, that he was loving and positive, never harsh nor combative. He urged us to be Bereans. I don't remember his ever mentioning in a sermon or class that some preachers were fiercely opposing and slandering him and misrepresenting his views. Some members at his congregation knew nothing of the conflict. Yet the bitter attacks on him continued, and the division deepened.

Why Did the Churches Fight and Split over Prophecy?

There are many different interpretations of prophetic scriptures. (See the addendum at the end for examples.) But Christians have disagreed over many other Biblical subjects too, without necessarily dividing. And for approximately a century the Stone-Campbell movement agreed to disagree agreeably on these prophetic issues. Why, then, during the 1900s did these differences lead to churches splitting up, to brothers in Christ breaking fellowship and rending the body of Christ?

To answer that question is partly easy and partly hard. The easy answer is this: it resulted from sin. "Dissensions, factions and discord" are works of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:19ff, NIV). Other translations use synonyms like "party intrigues" and "a contentious temper" (NEB), "strife" and "party spirit" (RSV), "the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in our own little group" (Living Bible). The Jerusalem Bible puts it thus: "When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious:...feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and

quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy...." And Peterson's paraphrase, "The Message," uses such blunt modern synonyms as "cutthroat competition," and "depersonalizing everyone into a rival."

Paul makes the same point in 1 Cor. 3:1-4. "...You are still unspiritual. Isn't that obvious from all the jealousy and wrangling that there is among you, from the way that you go on behaving like ordinary people?" (Jerus. Bib.) How sad it is to reiterate examples of such attitudes in our churches' history. Not only factionalism but also dishonesty and the dirty tricks of power politics were too often at work. We quote again from the biography of J. N. Armstrong. He wrote, "I have never felt that [the millennium] was important enough to teach; hence, in my 45 years of active preaching I have never spoken on the subject." Nevertheless he was repeatedly accused of being a secret sympathizer and thus a false teacher!

And that wasn't all that happened: "Armstrong's speeches over the radio and his letters answering questions were constantly misrepresented, so that he often hesitated to answer a letter. 'Some things I have written in the last few years in letters and otherwise have been ruthlessly treated, and I have been made to say or mean what I did not say and never dreamed of saying, so that I am nearly afraid to put out anything lest I be abused'.... Hundreds who believed as he did [regarding freedom and love despite disagreement] were afraid to speak out. The unchristian attitudes were reflected chiefly in the religious journals, which in turn scared into submission local leaders and preachers. "A friend wrote Armstrong, 'It seems our papers have lost all sense of justice and fairness. I've tried and tried and tried till my soul is almost worn out to see that our paper here stays on a high plane. But in spite of all this, [the paper's manager] lets the old heads slash at this one and that one, and then they edit your replies and make you say what they want you to say in reply'." (288 ff.)

Legalism: "How Can We be Saved If Our Doctrines are Wrong?"

Now we return to the question, Why did this war over prophecy and freedom to teach one's views erupt during the 1900s, when such differing beliefs had existed for nearly a century without provoking such hard feelings? And when freedom to disagree was highly prized in the early decades of our movement? There may be several reasons (some of them sociological), but it seems to me that the major cause was the increase in legalism among the Churches of Christ. Studies such as Bill Love's book, *The Core Gospel*, show that through the generations of the Stone-Campbell movement there has been a continuing decline in preaching God's grace and Christ's cross. Love concluded, "Our focus moved from Christ crucified to his church." In other words, we thought less and less about God's amazing grace and

our wonderful Savior. And we concentrated more and more on how wonderful Christ's church is (meaning "us," of course), and how right we are about its name, worship, organization, the steps required to get into it, etc. What we do for God came to overshadow what He does for us! And that is legalism.

Legalism nearly always results in sectarianism and strife. Our bitter bickering and blacklisting were rooted in the feeling that salvation depends on being doctrinally correct. "How could God save a person who believed wrong doctrines?!" And so churches were purged to keep them doctrinally pure and their members saved.

How sad that many leaders knew little of God's grace, and the assurance that comes from salvation-not-because-of-our-good-works-but-despite-our-bad-works. Perhaps you reply, "Shall we believe error then, that grace may abound?" God forbid! But if eternal life depends on knowledge that is both perfect and complete, not one of us will make it. Will the Lord save only those who hold the correct view about the 1,000 years -- whichever view that may be? Just to ask such a question makes a travesty of God's Good News.

How can we Overcome Fleshly, Unloving Divisiveness?

How can we be healed of this plague? 1st, by realizing and admitting it is sinful, nothing less. If discord and dissensions are works of the flesh, they are sins. 2nd, as with any other sins, repentance and confession are needed (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9), trusting in the mercy of the Father who stands with arms outstretched (Rom. 10:21). 3rd, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, who alone produces the fruit of love, patience, kindness and meekness. Our history shows clearly that those who were most divisive knew and taught least about the indwelling, transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit as well as about the grace of God. Only God by His Spirit can enable us to understand and put into practice such major passages on unity as John 17, Rom. 14:1-15:7, 1 Cor. 12:4-27, James 3:13-18, and especially Eph. 4:1-16 with its list of seven onenesses possessed by all true believers, and its teaching about the unity of the Spirit (which we should seek to maintain, for it exists already) and the unity of the faith (which we should seek to attain by study, prayer, and fellowship that listens with love).

4th, we must seek to tear down walls built high by legalism and sectarianism (both in our own and former generations), and build bridges in their place. We must continue to do what the brave, free minority among us did in the past. One example was R. H. Boll. For years the independent Christian Churches ("instrumental") around Chicago invited him to expound the Scriptures at their Cedar Lake conferences, and he gladly did so. When he addressed them, out of respect for him they sang a *cappella* (though he did not demand nor even ask for them to do so). Such was the love between them. He also

dared to teach in Disciples of Christ, Methodist and Presbyterian churches as opportunities arose. As long as he was left free to preach God's Word without restriction, he accepted such invitations. (So did Alexander Campbell, by the way.) As Marvin Phillips aptly expressed it, "Don't judge what I preach by where I preach it!"

A more recent example of creative bridge-building occurred in Lubbock, Texas in 1992. The elders of the Quaker Ave. Church of Christ, a non-Sunday School congregation, penned a document which perhaps ranks with the memorable documents of Stone and the Campbells. It was a letter to the elders of the Broadway Church of Christ, a "mainline" church. The Quaker Ave. elders expressed grief over the separations within the Body of Christ.

While there have been steps taken in recent years to move away from the animosities of the past, there are still settled divisions among us....We are aware of the debates and strife of the past that often led to our divisions. Most of us were not here then and we do not feel we can appropriately judge just who was responsible for the division. But we are convinced that we the living are responsible for doing whatever is possible to bring about greater unity in our day. We want you to know that we all are genuinely sorry for whatever led to division. While we ourselves may not have contributed to the original division, some of us have, in our own lifetime, been guilty of attitudes that have maintained it. We repent of that and seek the forgiveness of God and all our brethren....

At the same time, we are thankful for many good things in our particular heritage, and the good men and women who engendered and cultivated our faith....We do not renounce our fathers in the faith. We simply wish to acknowledge and embrace the whole family of God, and thereby renounce sectarianism....We want to be known as a people who love all the brethren. We believe that honest differences need not divide us, that we can enjoy sweet fellowship in all that we mutually hold dear while allowing for some diversity in interpretation and practice. Our plea for reconciliation is not by any means a repudiation on our position on Sunday Schools, but a recognition that such issues are less important than the blood of Jesus that made us one.

What we are asking from you is the right hand of fellowship in the great work of the kingdom....Let us proclaim together the grace which makes us one in Jesus.

And let us together extend the same spirit of fellowship to all other brethren....

Can't you just hear the walls that came crashing down as a result of that step of faith and love! And can't you just hear the applause in Heaven, rejoicing at the prisoners who were set free!

We have made four Suggestions for Overcoming Unloving Divisiveness: 1) Admit that it is a sinful "work of the flesh." 2) Repent, and confess to God and anyone else who has been wounded by it. 3) Seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit, by thirsting and trusting Christ for this promised blessing (John 7:37-39, Eph. 5:19). 4) Take practical steps to tear down walls and build bridges among God's people. In addition, here are J. N. Armstrong's four recommendations -- practices we need to follow if we are to preserve both freedom and unity: "It is right for each of us to [1] present his honest convictions concerning any difference of teaching he may hold. Having done this, let us leave it with that, and [2] not try to force our teaching upon each other. An effort to force always produces opposition, strife, bitterness, and finally division. What we need is to [3] love one another and [4] magnify our agreements." (Sears, 277)

There's nothing really new in these 8 principles. They are similar to what the apostles did at "the Jerusalem council" to heal tense relations caused by doctrinal disagreements between congregations (Acts 15). And they are similar to what Paul taught to heal tense relations caused by practical disagreements within a congregation (Rom. 14). And God still works through these principles today.

Some Wonderful Examples of Freedom and Unity-in-Diversity

Thus far we have mentioned many examples of dreadful dogmatism and divisiveness, and only a few instances of loving unity-despite-differences. Now we gladly look at some more cases of the latter, heart-warming variety. When Armstrong, Boll and others studied at the Nashville Bible School during the 1890s, "it was well understood that E. G. Sewell and Dr. Brents differed on the appointment of elders, on the millennium, and on other questions. So it was understood of Lipscomb and Harding, Taylor and Lipscomb, and others. Each freely discussed his side of the controversial point. That any one would consider another 'unsound,' 'disloyal,' or unworthy of the most hearty fellowship never entered one's mind. Such an idea would not have been tolerated for a second." "The thing that is now causing trouble," wrote Armstrong in later, trying times, "is this divisive spirit, this self-righteous, dogmatic, intolerant spirit, that made a determined effort to divide an otherwise united brotherhood.... As a result some have 'lined up'; some 'shut up' and others suffered martyrdom for their convictions." "It's not our differences that hurt, but our manner of differing." (Sears, 185 & 186)

In those good earlier days under James Harding and David Lipscomb in Nashville, "a regular college activity was a meeting each

Monday night in which young men discussed any questions of interest. Often on controversial questions leaders on both sides of the issue were brought in for a discussion or a series of discussions. At such times, though men spoke their convictions freely and vigorously, and emotions might run high, the meetings usually closed in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.... In such free discussions [Armstrong] was learning to differ from others even heatedly and yet with humility, to respect and love his opponent--experiences which influenced profoundly his whole life." (32f.) It was only natural, then, that in the schools where he later taught and presided, he promoted similar attitudes and activities. If only such principles of loving unity-in-diversity had prevailed more widely, instead of the belligerent "We're gonna stomp out anybody that disagrees with us" attitude that became so widespread -- what a difference there would be throughout the Churches of Christ today.

A former student of Armstrong's at Harding College told how Brother Armstrong "spent a summer at Wheaton College [a well-known evangelical, trans-denominational school] and upon his return to Harding gave a glowing report of the spiritual lives he observed among the faculty and students at Wheaton." (Letter from W. L. Wilson to *Restoration Review*, 2/88.) This reminds us that the original goal of the Restoration Movement (!), but rather to unite "Christians among the sects." After 200 years we have not gained ground but lost it, and are at minus-10 struggling to get back to square 1. To get to square 1 will be a **gain**, not a loss! But at least we're not still back at minus-40. Praise God, progress is being made.

The Teaching of God's Son

One day while our Lord was preaching, His mother and brothers arrived. Someone told Him they were there, and He replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?... Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk. 3:31ff). Those are significant words, worth pondering.

The Testimony of God's Spirit

Paul wrote, "Because you are sons [of God], God sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'" Again he wrote, "You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15.) Does it not necessarily follow that the Spirit of sonship is also the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood? Does not the Spirit who emboldens us to cry out "Daddy! Father!" to the Monarch of Heaven, also constrain us to cry out "My brother! My sister!" to all other people in whom He dwells? May we believe this. And may we experience it too -- that God may be glori-

fied, that all His people everywhere may be strengthened, and that the perishing world may be reached with His Good News.

[Final Note: The important biography of J. N. Armstrong, *For Freedom*, was published by Sweet Publishing Co. in 1969, but is now out of print. Its important lessons (not just the ones related to this article's topic) are still desperately needed. Who will reprint it?]

A natural question to follow up the preceding article:

Why Are There so Many Differing Beliefs about End-time Prophecy?

There are several answers to that question. 1st, since such a large proportion of the Bible is prophetic in nature (or was when it was written), a vast amount of study is required just to become familiar with it, much less to grasp it in depth. Depending on one's definition of prophecy, and one's interpretation of it, estimates vary from 1/6 to 1/3 of the Bible as being predictive at the time it was written. Whatever the proportion, there is a lot of material to master. 2nd, the field has many topics and subtopics: Christ's return; antichrist; the end-time great tribulation; the final Day of the Lord; the relationship between Israel and the Church; resurrection; judgment; the kingdom of God; the millennium; eternal destiny of the lost and of the saved; "signs of the times;" etc. Whew! 3rd, much symbolism and figurative language is used, especially in the apocalyptic-style writings of Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation. 4th, various schools of thought compete with one another in trying to explain such symbols: the preterists, historicists, idealists, futurists, etc.

5th, within each of the 4 major systems of interpreting Biblical prophecy (historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism), there are wide variations. Let me illustrate this point from our movement's history. While Alexander Campbell was usually a post-mill, a number of other preachers were pre-mill in conviction: Barton Stone, James Barclay, Moses Lard, T. W. Brents, James A. Harding, Daniel Sommer, and R. H. Boll, among others. All these looked for Christ and His church to reign on earth after his second coming. Yet they differed among themselves regarding the prophecies related to Israel. Stone, Barclay, Sommer and Boll all believed the Jews would be restored as a nation to the land of promise (based on passages like Jer. 33:14-26, Ezek. 37:15-28, and Zech. 8:7-8; 10:6-12) and also be converted to God and to faith in Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:22-36, Rom. 11:11-32, most especially v.26). [Notice the three different issues which have been mentioned so far.] Interestingly, Alexander Camp-

bell and Robert Milligan [both postmillennialists] believed the same as they did about Israel, and so did Jacob Creath and J. W. McGarvey--whose millennial views I could not discover. But Moses Lard believed only in the Jews' conversion, not their restoration to the land. And Brents and probably Harding believed in neither, but that Israel had forfeited all of God's promises by their unbelief and rejection of Jesus (Matt. 21:33-45). Another example of various beliefs relates to "the great tribulation" (or "distress"--NIV; Matt. 24: 21,29). Of the seven pre-mills mentioned above, only Boll (and maybe Barclay) believed in a "pre-tribulation rapture" of the church, seven years before Christ's coming to smash the Antichrist and to reign on earth. The rest seem to have believed in Christ's "post-tribulation" coming -- the historic-premill position.

Such differences in interpretation should not deter our study of prophecy. We might feel, "What's the use if there is so little agreement among outstanding Bible students?" Yet like all the rest of Scripture, the prophecies are God-breathed and profitable. Nevertheless, the differing interpretations we have seen ought to make us humble, tolerant and open-minded. Remember Brother Armstrong's advice? He counseled us to "magnify our agree-ments." That's important, and for that reason I love Rev. 11:16-18. Please read it. Despite our numerous disagreements on prophecy, almost all Christians agree with the summary statement set forth in this passage:

1) God has all power, now. 2) Some day He will "take" that power, i.e. begin to reign to a fuller extent than He does at present. He now *overrules* evil; He will then *destroy* evil. 3) He is a God of righteousness and wrath. 4) He will raise and judge the dead. 5) He will reward His servants. 6) He will destroy the impenitent. Since we agree on all these basics, let's not get too uptight about our differences. (Though of course I wish you would agree with me so you'd be right!) May our Lord give you grace and peace, my dear brother or sister in Christ Jesus and fellow-student of His Word. With John let us pray, "Come, Lord Jesus."

[For further study we recommend *The Meaning of the Millennium*, edited by Clouse, pub. by InterVarsity Press. The 4 main views are each presented by a leading advocate, with much differing-but-respectful interaction by all the authors after each presentation.]

A New Development:

HEALING A BREACH

Edward Fudge

About 1939, a group of congregations were pushed out of the mainstream of the Churches of Christ because they believed that when Jesus returns, he will reign for 1,000 years on the earth. Most Churches of Christ interpret the "millennium" in Revelation 20 figuratively rather than literally. A gracEmail subscriber in Tennessee asks how this church division might now be set right.

* * *

The history of Christianity has included some horrendously unchristian behavior -- Catholics and Protestants killing each other, Calvinists and Lutherans persecuting Anabaptists, and majorities mistreating minorities within most denominations. The persecution and expulsion of premillennial believers by the mainstream Churches of Christ is one such tragic and unholy example. It is ironic as well, since the founders of the Stone-Campbell Movement included premillennialists and postmillennialists alike, and since "millennial fever" was a major motivating factor in the Movement's inception.

In the 1930's and 40's, however, a debater-preacher named Foy E. Wallace, Jr. led a largely-successful crusade to stamp out premillennialism among Churches of Christ -- leaving in his wake a figurative trail of corpses of many godly men and women. The anti-premillennial frenzy Wallace generated in the Churches of Christ included book-burnings, McCarthy-like accusations and stranding missionaries without support in distant lands. My grandfather, W. N. Short, a missionary in Africa from 1921 until he died in the 1980s, was a victim of the purge -- not because he held premillennial views, but because he would not denounce a fellow-missionary who probably did.

The purge was doubly sad because it deprived the mainstream brotherhood of some of its most pious and Christ-centered people. The premillennial minority, from Robert H. Boll down to present-day editor Alex Wilson, have, more consistently than the mainstream, focused on Jesus, preached the grace of God and worked for unity among all believers in Christ. They also tend to exhibit a spirit of humble dependence on God to accomplish his work -- their view is clearly that God and not man must bring about the kingdom. They continue today, mostly around Louisville, Kentucky, where they have a school of biblical studies and the paper *Word and Work*.

Now would be a good time -- doctrinal differences notwithstanding -- for leaders in the mainstream Churches of Christ to apologize for these sins of the fathers against the premillennial minority, and for Church of Christ publishers, periodicals, colleges and other institutions to find ways to welcome these excluded brothers and sisters back into the family. If congregational autonomy and freedom of conscience mean anything, they mean that individuals and local churches may exist in full fellowship with each other even though they differ in understanding --concerning this topic and a whole host of others. May each one of us determine, as individuals and as congregations, to do that very thing.

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A Historic Call for

Christian Unity

Rick Atchley,
Editor of *One Body Magazine*

Note by Victor Knowles: The following is a transcript of a statement made by Rick Atchley, pulpit minister of the Richlands Hills Church of Christ, Fort Worth, Texas, at the Thursday evening (July 10, 2003) main session of the North American Christian Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Atchley, who spoke at last year's Restoration Forum in Lubbock, Texas, made his historic comments just before Bob Russell, senior minister of Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, delivered the message "Imagine God's Glory Revealed in Your Church" to 8,500 people packed in the Indiana Convention Center. The overture for unity was greeted with sustained applause and two standing ovations.

I know this has been one of the spiritual highlights of my life. I am about to explode. I don't want it to end. And I can't wait to bring more people back with me again.

All week long as I've experienced the convention I've had mixed emotions. I've been so glad that I could be here; be with you, be blessed by you. But I've also had to confess at times I've caught myself feeling a great sadness.

My name is Rick Atchley. I preach for the Richlands Hills Church of Christ in Ft. Worth. Some say we're the [largest] *a cappella* church

in America. And until just a few years ago I didn't even know about the NACC convention. And I suspect that until tonight most of you didn't know about me.

Several years ago I spent some time really searching for the heart of God, asking Him to give me a mission in the second half of my life that was so big only He could do it. And God put something on my heart.

I started it that next Sunday in all three services of our church. I shared with them that God wants me to devote myself for the rest of my life to seeing reconciliation among the *a cappella* and instrumental Churches of Christ and Christian Churches in the world.

Over one hundred years ago, we split. I don't know what that was all about. I was told when I was a kid it was about an organ. Now if you had told us it was about a steel guitar it never would have happened down in Texas.

And I can't pretend to speak for all the *a cappella* churches but I can speak for a lot of them. I know the pulpits of all of our great growing, thriving churches. I know what those men preach, I know what they don't preach. I know the faculties of our best and healthiest schools. I know what they teach, I know what they don't teach. I know the hearts of the young men and women that are training right now in our schools for ministry: the kind of churches they want to build; the kind of churches they want to be and the kind of churches they don't want to be. And I can speak for them and I can tell you tonight I believe with all my heart, in my lifetime we can have a family reunion.

Now, speaking from the *a cappella* side it seems to me we need to do most of the repenting and ask for most of the forgiving, but I'm sure some of you would say tonight that from your side there have been some things that would have grieved the heart of God too. All I can tell you tonight – if you've ever heard a sermon, if you've ever seen an attitude by anyone from one of our churches that was ugly, sectarian, or cruel, I want to tell you how sorry I am. That's not who we want to be anymore and I am going to beg you - let's not let old wounds define who we are, let's let the prayer of Jesus for One Body define who we are.

The second thing it's going to take is for us just to reach out to each other. I had no idea what to do three years ago when God put it on my heart except just to pick up the phone and call the senior minister of the closest Christian church to me and say let's have lunch and get to know each other. And it's been thrilling to me all week to have so many of you stop and say, "I've become friends with the minister of the *a cappella* Church of Christ in our town and we're doing things together now." The church where I preach has partnered with some Christian Churches to send a mission team to Uganda that is doing a

fantastic work together. And that's where it's got to start. There's no one that can pass an edict or speak for all the churches. It's going to just be you and me reaching out a hand; starting one to one with the love of Christ.

And one more thing – we cannot allow a vocal minority to deter us from seeing this dream come true.

I have taken considerable criticism from a loud but small group of people for what I've said and I guarantee you they will get the tape of tonight. I can already give you the web sites they will be on by tomorrow. I don't recommend that you look it up because toxic waste isn't good for anybody. But I am not going to spend the rest of my life intimidated by the people that lost the vision our fathers and our grandfathers gave their lives for and that, more important, Jesus gave His life for.

I can imagine a day soon when our preachers are filling each other's pulpits and speaking at each other's conventions. I can imagine a day soon when our churches are partnering together to send mission teams into the world, to do local outreaches in our city, to feed the hungry, to help the wounded in every major city in America. I can imagine the vision of our restoration forefathers being restored and the prayer of Jesus being fulfilled. For a hundred years we have served God apart ... only God knows what we can do the next hundred years serving Him together. But I know this – I know it will be more than we could ask or imagine. Amen.

BAPTISTS and CHURCHES Of CHRIST

Edward Fudge, GracEmail

I beg the indulgence of readers who are not associated with Baptist churches or Churches of Christ, as we look at those two groups of Christians, both particularly populous and highly competitive throughout the southern United States.

* * *

Baptists and Church of Christ folk have far more in common than either of them sometimes acknowledges. Right-thinking people in both places know that we must trust Christ's work on the cross for salvation. Neither group attaches any significance or value to baptism apart from faith-trust in Jesus Christ. Both groups baptize converts in obedience to Jesus' charge in the Great Commission, and both do so by immersion (Matt. 28:18-20). Both are congregational in church government and both prize freedom of individual conscience.

Alexander Campbell, a founding father of the Restoration Movement which spawned modern Churches of Christ, belonged for a while to a regional Baptist Association. He broke that connection before being expelled from it, after he inferred from Acts 2:38 that the chief purpose of baptism was the forgiveness of sins. Although Campbell saw baptism as the "formal" means of forgiveness, he did not consider it the actual or "effective" means, and he personally regarded unimmersed believers as Christians. However, his focus on Acts 2:38 (rather than the same Apostle Peter's remarks, for example, in Acts 10:43) eventually led the majority of Church of Christ folk to conclude that only those who were baptized "for the remission of sins" had received New Testament baptism.

By the 1880's, David Lipscomb, a Nashville educator and editor of "The Gospel Advocate," still received Baptists without rebaptizing them -- insisting that obedience to Christ was not only an adequate reason for being baptized but was the noblest reason possible. In 1884, Austin McGary, a former sheriff and recent convert in Texas, started a rival paper, "The Firm Foundation," specifically to oppose Lipscomb's teaching on this subject and to insist on rebaptizing Baptists. Eventually many Baptists returned the favor, arguing that Church of Christ baptism was invalid because it looked to baptism for salvation rather than to Jesus. Church of Christ folk denied the charge, of course, but the dogmatic rhetoric of their prominent debaters often drowned out their most earnest protestations.

The Baptist flock provided many converts to Campbell's movement, particularly throughout the South. When Campbell preached in Nashville, Tennessee in the mid-1800's, a majority of the city's First Baptist Church membership was persuaded to join his reformation. Little wonder that the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia labels "Campbellism" as one of two great heresies among Baptists, the other being "Landmarkism." Over the next 100 years, Baptists and Church of Christ folk frequently engaged in public debates, which usually generated more heat than light, and which often resulted in more Baptists being "converted" to the Church of Christ.

A century of antagonism and isolation hardened stereotypes of each other in the minds of both groups. Many Church of Christ folk came to believe that Baptists "do not believe in baptism," even though their historical insistence on the rite provided their name. And many Baptists came to think of Church of Christ people as those folks who "believe in baptismal regeneration." Both stereotypes were unfair, if applied to the best representatives of either group, but both caricatures found popular justification in the extreme statements of zealots on both sides.

Today, the gospel light is shining across Christendom, and there are signs of gospel renewal among these two groups as well. Many Baptists today, following the lead of British Baptist scholar G. R. Beasley-Murray, relate baptism more carefully to the gospel, rather than making it a mere requirement for local church membership. Many Churches of Christ are now clearly preaching Christ rather than baptism, still being careful to baptize those who believe on him as Savior and Lord. And many congregations associated with both groups are receiving baptized believers from the other group into full membership without requiring their rebaptism. That is a wonderful step forward, for which we all may be grateful to God.

In the light of the gospel, we must say that both Baptists and Church of Christ people have often missed the real point by focusing on something we do, rather than focusing on what God had done for us in Jesus Christ. Baptists have often talked as though the saving event occurs when we believe ("accept Christ"), while Church of Christ people have talked as though the saving event occurs when we are baptized ("obey the gospel").

Both groups are right in what they require, but both are wrong in thinking that our human activity constitutes the saving event. The saving activity which set sinners right with God happened almost 2,000 years ago, in the perfect doing and dying of Jesus Christ our representative. It does not occur when we believe or when we are baptized, though we can only trust Jesus for his salvation, a trust which he commanded us to express in baptism. Jesus died because of our transgressions and he was raised because of our justification (Rom. 4:25). He reconciled us to God in his fleshly body on the cross (Col. 1:19-22). He made atonement for sin, once for all, and he perfected forever those for whom he died (Heb. 1:3; 10:12-14).

Jesus commanded his followers to preach the gospel and to baptize believers. Baptists have done very well in preaching the gospel, but sometimes they have been careless about promptly baptizing those who believe, and in relating that baptism to the gospel. Church of Christ folk have been diligent to baptize everyone who believes, but they have often gotten the cart before the horse by passing lightly over the gospel, or by confusing the gospel with the believer's response to it. By God's grace, both groups are learning to do better all that Jesus commanded in the Great Commission. May they also learn to hold up each other's hands as brothers and sisters as they do so.

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Jesus' Unanswered Prayers

Even God's Son didn't get an instant reply

by Philip Yancey

When prayer seems more like struggle than relationship, when I find myself repeating the same requests over and over and even wonder, "Is anyone really listening?" I take comfort in remembering that Jesus, too, had unanswered prayers. Three come to mind.

As Luke records, Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before choosing the twelve disciples. Yet if you read the Gospels, you marvel that this dodgy dozen could be the answer to any prayer. They included, Luke pointedly notes, "Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor," not to mention the pettily ambitious Sons of Thunder and the hothead Simon, whom Jesus would once address as "Satan."

"O unbelieving generation," Jesus would sigh about these twelve, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" I wonder if, in that moment of exasperation, Jesus questioned the Father's guidance.

Technically, I admit, the particular makeup of the twelve does not qualify as an unanswered prayer, for we have no reason to believe that any other choices might have served Jesus better. Yet I find it comforting that while on earth Jesus faced the same limitations as does anyone in leadership. The Son of God himself could only work with the talent pool available.

Eventually, except for Judas, the twelve underwent a slow but steady transformation, providing a kind of long-term answer. John, a Son of Thunder, softened into "the apostle of Love." Peter, who earned Jesus' rebuke by recoiling from the idea of Messiah's suffering, later urged his followers to "follow in his steps" by suffering as Christ did.

A cup not removed

The second "unanswered prayer" occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane when, as Luther put it, "God struggled with God." While Jesus lay prostrate on the ground, sweat falling from him like drops of blood, his prayers took on an uncharacteristic tone of pleading. He "offered up prayer and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death," the Letter to the Hebrews says, but of course Jesus knew he would not be saved from death.

As that awareness grew, Jesus felt distress. He had no community of support—they had all fallen asleep. “Could you not keep watch for one hour?” he chided.

A dramatic change takes place, however, between that scene in the garden and what follows. The Gospel accounts of Gethsemane show a person in anguish. Afterward they show one who, more than Pilate, more than Herod, acts in utter control. At his trials Jesus is no victim; he is serene, the master of his destiny.

What happened in the garden? What made the difference? We have few details about the content of Jesus’ prayers, since potential witnesses were all dozing. He may have reviewed his entire ministry on earth. The weight of all that went undone may have borne down upon him: his disciples were unstable, irresponsible; the movement seemed in peril; God’s chosen people had rejected him; the world still harbored evil and much suffering.

Jesus himself seemed at the very edge of human endurance. He no more relished the idea of pain and death than you or I do.

“Everything is possible for you,” Jesus pleaded to the Father. “Take this cup from me.”

Somehow, though, in Gethsemane Jesus worked through that crisis by transferring the burden to the Father. It was God’s will he had come to do, after all, and his plea resolved into these words: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Not many hours later he could cry out, in profound summation, “It is finished.”

Hebrews mysteriously concludes that, though Jesus was not saved from death, nevertheless “he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.”

How many times have I prayed for one thing only to receive another? I long for the sense of trust that I see in Gethsemane. God and God alone is qualified to answer my prayers, even if it means transmuting them from my own self-protective will into God’s perfect will. When Jesus prayed to the one who could save him from death, he did not get that salvation; he got instead the salvation of the world.

A unity still sought

The third unanswered prayer appears in an intimate scene recorded by John, after Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. Jesus expands the scope of his prayer to encompass even those of us who live today:

“My prayer is not for them [the disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me.”

Disunity virtually defines the history of the church. Pick at random any year of history—pick today—and you will see how far short we fall of Jesus’ final request.

The church, and the watching world, still await an answer.

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The Value of Tradition for the Church

Nick Boone

The spirit of the Enlightenment has obviously had a tremendous impact on Western civilization. Not only did it instigate important movements in science, philosophy, and politics, it also radically changed the way people view religion. One of the most recognized Enlightenment thinkers was Renee Descartes, whose famous statement, “I think, therefore I am,” is useful for what I want to consider in this discussion, namely, the necessity for understanding how tradition plays an important role in the church, both today and in the time of the early church.

“I think, therefore I am” gives the human mind primacy over every other constituent element of humanity. Perhaps more importantly for this discussion, Descartes’ statement also implies that the human mind exists in a sort of vacuum. It has the power to create and recreate the self regardless of one’s relative position in time. Tradition can be overcome when the mind has such creative and transformative power. During the Enlightenment, “tradition” became a bad word. No longer did humanity have to rely on the ways of the past when it was obvious that the human mind could create and determine its own future. The political revolutions in America, France, and eventually throughout Europe attest to the power of the Enlightenment’s attack on tradition. In France, some revolutionaries even at-

tempted to abolish the church because of its insistence on certain traditions.

Not until recently, in the mid-twentieth century, has Western philosophy attempted to challenge the Enlightenment's attack on tradition. Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German philosopher, in his seminal work, *Truth and Method*, discusses how tradition is an undeniable element of any person's consciousness. He argues that the past is always with us, and our understanding of the past is the only way we make sense of the present; it is also the only means by which we can determine our future. Gadamer's work has been extremely influential, and his idea of what he calls "effective-historical consciousness" (i.e. that part of us that is shaped by the past and which understands the present by means of the past) can help us better understand what role tradition plays, and has played, in the church.

In Acts chapter 22, Paul finds himself in trouble with the Jews once again. He is accused of desecrating the temple, and must defend himself before a crowd of angry Jews at the temple in Jerusalem. He begins his defense by claiming his Jewish heritage, "I am a Jew," (22:3) Paul says. Note that he uses the present tense. In chapter 21, Paul underwent a Jewish purification ritual (21:26), and later, in Acts 23, Paul says, "I am a Pharisee" (23:6)—again, notice the present tense. Why is Paul so insistent on claiming Judaism when he obviously preaches against those who would force Judaism upon Gentile Christians?

The answer to this question is that Paul understands the importance, indeed the necessity, of tradition and cultural heritage. Paul does not say, "I was a Jew, but now that I've become a Christian I understand how wrong I was." No, Paul realizes that he is and always will be a Jew, and he recognizes and celebrates his cultural heritage. He claims for himself the best of the Jewish tradition—the part of the Jewish heritage that is open to God's calling, even when it carries a person into unfamiliar territories (see Abraham, for example)*. But Paul also recognizes the importance of tradition for Gentiles as well—and this is what tended to get him into trouble. He insisted that their traditions and cultural heritages were also valid, and he struggled to help his Jewish brethren understand that Christianity was larger than any one culture. It could contain multitudes of traditions and heritages within itself. Thus, Paul can claim for himself the traditions of Judaism, and he can fight for the right of the Gentiles to keep their own customs and traditions as well—as long as these traditions do not directly contradict the gospel message.

So, what can we learn from Paul as we look back at Acts from our position in the 21st century? First, we need to understand that the hu-

man mind doesn't exist in a vacuum, and that the past and our traditions necessarily shape the way we understand our world. Anyone who claims that we should completely do away with tradition doesn't understand the nature of human understanding. Related to this, we need to view Paul, not as a radical who saw no use in the tradition of Judaism in his attempt to evangelize the Gentiles, but as one who was sensitive to the needs of human beings to make sense of their world through their own heritage and traditions. Secondly, we need to understand that Christianity is bigger than any culture, and that our churches should be able to embrace people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds.

Finally, a more complicated issue regards how the church ought to deal with the changing needs of congregations as the secular culture surrounding the church changes. Certainly all traditions aren't meant to last forever. Christ had much to say against the Pharisees and their man-made traditions. It can be difficult to discern when to let go and when to hang on to the ways of the past. But this problem lies outside the scope of my argument. What I'm concerned with here is that we acknowledge traditions as a human necessity, and that we learn from the example of Paul who shows that we can celebrate our own cultural heritage while also remaining open to the traditions of other cultures—recognizing that Christ's kingdom is big enough to contain them all.

*William H. Willimon, in his commentary (*Acts*. Louisville: John Knox, 1988), makes the argument that Paul claims the best of the Jewish tradition for himself (pages 169 and 172). Actually, this entire article was inspired by Willimon's book.

* * *

“Amen” to the Above

avw

The Stone-Campbell movement at its beginnings was strongly anti-traditional – opposing many Protestant and most Catholic long-time beliefs and practices. (And often it was right to do so.) Though Barton Stone and both the Campbells acknowledged folks like Luther, Knox, John Bunyan, and John Newton as Christians – and *outstanding* ones – they deplored many traditions which had grown up among the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican and other denominations. So leaders in the Stone-Campbell movement's early generations often denounced “the traditions of the sects.”

One preacher (also president of Hiram College) tried to inject more balance into the dialogue, however. Burke Hinsdale (1837-1900) pointed out that traditions *in themselves* were not wrong. Because something has been believed or practiced a long time does not mean it

is automatically wrong. If it is not contrary to God's revealed will, and springs from godly motives, it is good and helpful.

Leonard Allen writes, "Hinsdale suggested that, though tradition easily weighs down and distorts the faith, it could also serve an important clarifying and stabilizing function. He upheld the Protestant ideal of 'scripture alone' against the Roman Catholic claim to an infallible church tradition," but then censured the Protestants for violating their own principle by practicing infant baptism and using creeds as tests of fellowship. Nothing novel in those ideas. But "what was *new* in Hinsdale's book was the recognition . . . that tradition, despite its pitfalls, served an important conserving function. Denying this meant saying in effect that 'both the individual man and the human race must begin its mental existence anew every day.' Tradition 'aids in securing a continuity of intellectual, moral, and religious life from age to age.'"

Here was his summary: **When "called infallible, tradition is a deadly thing; [when] looked upon as human but constantly deferred to and venerated, it is a barrier to progress; [when] respected but thoroughly discussed and calmly weighed, it is a source both of beauty and of strength."** That hits the nail right on the head, doesn't it?

Of course as time passes, our own ideas, routines and rituals develop and solidify into traditions. That always happens. Rarely do we oppose *our* traditions! And we need not necessarily do so. But we need to exercise close inspection of them – both their nature and our motivation. Like dynamite, traditions can help us or blow us up. Handle with care.

[Above quotations are from Leonard Allen's outstanding book, *Distant Voices*. Read it; you'll be glad you did.]

*Earlier we thought about God's family;
now let's think about human families*

Heritage Builders

Focus on the Family's Heritage Builders campaign helps parents become intentional about passing on their faith to the next generation. [Here are letters of testimony:]

- For the past five weeks, my family and I have been using Heritage Builders material you sent. My 5-year- old son went from, "Do we have to do family devotions tonight?" to, "Can we do family devotions again tonight?!" It has been truly amazing to see the transformation that has occurred. The word pictures created during the devotions are making a lasting impression as well as a foundation for future learning about our Lord. My son's Sunday school teacher recently told me that James is sharing his devotions with the class. She said his grasp of the gospel is as clear as she's ever heard.
- I'm getting requests from family and friends about how to get this material. I can't begin to thank you enough for the Heritage Builders resources. I no longer dread planning for family devotions. God has used Focus on the Family to once again bless my home. Keep up the GREAT work!
- I recently moved to the United States from Cambodia, and I used to believe in Buddha. I started listening to Focus on the Family on the radio, and now I believe in Jesus Christ. I am a single Mom with three children, and I am still waiting on God to bless me with a mate – but I will wait on Him.
- God changed my attitude from violence and anger to patience and an understanding of true love. I thank God for Focus on the Family and for all the wonderful books from Heritage Builders. You have taught me to know Him daily and my spiritual walk grows stronger every day. Thank you for showing me the way to recognize Him as my God.
- I learned of Heritage Builders through the "Focus on the Family" radio program. I thought it sounded wonderful for our family. I went to the web site and copied down a couple of ideas. When I tried them with our family, our children had a ball! The activities have drawn our family together as the world is trying to tear it apart. Thank you, Family Night guy and Focus on the Family, for helping to grow loving, godly families.

Find out about this week's Heritage Builders Activity and new resources at www.heritagebuilders.com

Log on to www.pluggedinonline.com for the latest movie reviews, video archives, music and TV analysis.

Pure Intimacy

As a Web site ministering to those struggling with online sexual temptation, *Pure Intimacy* received more than 366,000 visits in 2003. [Listen to sample testimonies:]

- *This site is very helpful and has awakened me to the scope of my own problem. Please continue to provide this help! There are so many hurting people, especially Christians like myself who need this kind of resource. Thank you.*

Porn is like holding onto a shiny rock when God wants to give you a purely cut diamond. Your articles have been helpful and a "slap in the face" coming at a time when I was slowly losing my grip. I'm 17, and I couldn't look at girls--even God-loving girls--with a clear conscience. I sought help.

I can't say that I'm miraculously cured, but God won't ever let me go. Yes, I still carry a lot of pain, but reaching out to others going through worse situations makes me forget my own complaints.

Your site should definitely be publicized more. God bless you.

- *This is a great resource. I first visited this site a few years ago, but wasn't ready to face my problem. This site helped me start on the road to recovery. I know this is just the beginning, but I now feel that I can truly overcome this.*
- *This is one of the few sites I have found on the Internet dealing with a woman's view on sex addiction. I believe that Satan took advantage of my situation when I was young; my problem started as a seed and is now a tree that has grown into every area of my life. Thanks for offering this site. Even in the dirtiest places of my life, I see that there is hope.*
- *My wife found out four days ago that I was addicted to Internet porn. Needless to say, this has brought my marriage to the brink*

of ruin. Your site has given me courage to pick up the pieces and rebuild my marriage. Thank you.

- *I stumbled across this Web site not knowing where it was leading; it's a great blessing and benefit to me. A one-time view of your site made a definite difference in my thinking about pornography and other aspects of sexuality. I cannot wait to pass this insight on to others and help my children learn to treat sex in the way that God intends. I've found freedom and forgiveness at the feet of Jesus as cast my cares upon Him and rejoice in my increased faith. There is hope for my future and healing through the blood of Christ.*

On behalf of my family and future generations, thanks a million, Focus on the Family.

To learn more, visit www.pureintimacy.org.

“Share Your Things!”

JOYce Broyles

Some unknown author compiled a list of rules that may have been made by toddlers.

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
8. If I think it's mine, it's mine.
9. If it's yours and I steal it, it's mine.

I remember when my twin grandsons were toddlers now. Shane was more aggressive than Lane when it came to not sharing. When he took a toy away, Lane just got another one. When Lane took a toy from Shane, however, Shane let us know about it!

We expect that from them at that age, because they were small and selfish. When their big brothers did the same thing, they were admonished about being old enough to know better. We expected them to be over their selfishness.

And yet, I act that way sometimes. There are a few trinkets I have from my parents or other friends that I cherish. I will not let anyone touch them, much less play with them! Other goods that I have purchased for large sums are placed above the line of vision of my grandchildren.

I rationalize that I just want to keep these things nice so that I can enjoy them and pass them on in the future. If I let children play with the items now, they will break them and not be able to appreciate them later.

So, I am not taking anything away from anyone, or stealing anything from another; I am just not sharing a few things. My time, talent, and other treasures are easy to share, but I still have to work on what is "mine."

I know that "every good gift comes down from the Father above," and I should share them. The day will come when I will not be able to keep my property any longer. As I leave this earth, all my belongings will remain here.

The most important thing to share, though, is the Good News about the Redeemer and His Resurrection. "He is Risen!" was sounded out all over the world at Easter. But I should tell that to all I meet, not just then, but every day.

Just like my "things," the good news about Jesus is something I cannot keep to myself. As I learn to share it with others, I am certain there will be a corresponding effect on my other personal effects and personal expressions.

“Teenagers! God Give Me Strength!”

“By the strength which God provides” --1 Peter 4:11

by Fred W. Schott

I was a college freshman when I first met Earl. He was my supervisor at the Boys Club where I worked part-time. The club was located in a rough area of Chicago. Earl was a committed Christian with a lovely wife and three beautiful young children. He was a wonderful youth worker. I looked up to him.

We only worked together for about a year. But, in the years since we would see each other at the national gathering of Boys Club workers. Each year we asked about each other's families and children. Earl's three children are about six or seven years older than mine.

My children were approaching the dreaded teens, and one year I asked, “Earl, what's it like having teenagers?” “Great!” he responded. “We're having a ball!” “Really?” I said in disbelief. “Really, Fred, teenagers are a lot of fun. You'll love it!” I began to grill my friend on how he and his wife are coping with dating, driving, peer groups, and all of the other things that worry parents of teens. Sensing my anxiety, my good friend gave me some advice. Because I looked up to him, I took it to heart. I am grateful I did.

“Fred, let me tell you something.” He became quite serious. “The teen years are sometimes difficult, but they are also wonderful. Teenagers are among God's most fascinating creatures. They are full of life. That life spills over into your own life. To watch them grow, mature, learn, stumble, get up, to gain a sense of who they are is one of life's greatest joys. You have to work at it, but it's great.”

“Most important, Fred,” he continued, “get rid of that sense of dread you seem to have. Start planting positive thoughts, positive predictions about what a great time the teen years will be for all of you. Your attitude and your faith in your children can make all the difference in the world. You'll be less anxious and you'll be able to genuinely enjoy your teenagers. God wants you to enjoy your children at every age.”

I went home determined to follow Earl's advice. So far it's worked! As I write our children are 15,17 and 19. (This article was written in 1987 -- but Fred still believes it, having proved it by experience). We still have a way to go, but so far it's been a ball living with teenagers! Earl was right. Teenagers are on the whole great fun and

one of life's greatest pleasures. I have shared Earl's advice with many parents in the years since.

I have also thought a lot about these things. Earl and his wife were committed Christians. I think his advice can be backed up by scripture. The Apostle Peter exhorts us to love one another and press on "by the strength which God provides." And to the Ephesians he triumphantly proclaims that God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing (or gift) in Christ." Do these statements not apply to parenting as well? Of course! Would God fail to provide the strength, the gifts, the blessing necessary to us parents? I do not think so.

Is this to say that Christian parents should have no trouble, no heartache in raising children, especially during the difficult teen years? No, we are humans. We fail. The teenagers fail. There are a lot of outside pressures on both teens and parents. We should expect some difficulties. Which one of us does not need to pray with King David, "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways"? (Psalm 25:7.) Living with and parenting teens can be difficult, but God does give strength, wisdom, and grace to help us. The importance of prayer cannot be overlooked. We must ask for these things. Peter also tells us in this same passage that "love covers a multitude of sins."

Yet, it is also true there are no guarantees, because God has made each of us to be "free agents." He will not deny free will to our children no matter how much sometimes we would like for Him to. Some children rebel or fall into very difficult situations even when they have "the best" parents.

I saw my friend only a couple of years ago at a small gathering. His two oldest were gone from home, happily married and pursuing careers. Earl, a good speaker, gave the after-dinner talk. I listened in disbelief as he told of his youngest child's chemical dependency! As he spoke he frequently fought back tears. It was obvious that the year and a half about which he spoke had been difficult years. But, God had remained faithful. Earl and his wife had received good counsel, they had prayed fervently, and God had given them strength, wisdom and grace.

Within just days of discovering their 16-year-old son's problem, they acted decisively. They committed their son, against his will at first, to a reputable treatment center. They participated fully in the family counseling and education that was provided. They prayed and sought the prayerful and active support of fellow believers.

Earl fought the tears again toward the end of his talk. Tears of thanksgiving this time. Not only had his son maintained sobriety since his release from treatment, but also had become active in local prevention programs. Now 19, Earl's son has thrown himself into helping others avoid the things he had suffered. He was being used by God to help chemically dependent teenagers and their parents. Earl could not have been more proud!

The teen years can be hard but God promises strength to do all things – even parent teenagers. Through the difficult times He will be with us. May we never fail to see His presence during the good times as well. He has blessed us with children. Pray not only that He delivers them (and us!) from the influence of the culture, but also from our own sense of fear and dread. With His guidance we can parent with confidence and experience the joy He intends for us.

VOICES From The FIELDS

Joy Garrett
May 3, 2004

Just returned to Zimbabwe from U.S.

We are back in Zimbabwe after a long air journey of three days. Bursitis in Bob's right arm made the journey more difficult than usual. It is much improved, but not 100% yet.

Senior High camp was in progress when we reached Rockwood. There were 92 pupils, 5 teachers and 5 cooks. They had 24 baptisms. They had to travel 15 miles to Mbare to baptize them. We need to build a baptistery here at the camp. The children begged for another camp in December. The Women's Camp reported 300 present and 6 baptisms. They raised funds throughout the year and purchased 60 mattresses to sleep campers; so this year despite the cool nights some of the older women campers were warmer. There was also less luggage for the trucks to transport. School Leavers camp had 153 attending and also some baptisms. So despite our absence the camps went on very successfully.

With funds several saints had contributed we purchased 35 NIV Study Bibles. We mailed them in small lots in Mail Bags at different times. Unfortunately our Bibles are not arriving. It appears someone is destroying them in USA. In the case of the first lot of 9 NIV Study Bibles only a part of the wrapping paper with the address was returned to us. Now [those Bibles were] wrapped and taped and addressed in bundles of three and mailed in strong canvas postal bags. In the second lot a brother had sent us a smaller Bible wrapped and addressed which was included in the canvas bag with the other Bibles. That

small parcel arrived but the rest of the Bibles did not! Our brethren need these study Bibles and have benefited by those Jerry Carmichael and Mike Abbotts' congregations have sent us two years ago. Theirs got through.

Continue to pray about cement. One of our brothers at Arcadia is trying to locate some suitable for concrete foundations. We are investigating about buying a vehicle, trying to find out what is available locally. Imported vehicles have customs duty of 115% we are told.

God sent good rains in this area and there is again food. Fuel is more plentiful than it was, but everything is very expensive. There are no more coins.

Tomorrow night I begin teaching Arcadia women again. It is good to see people thirsty for the word of God.

Our Email address here is rockwood@mweb.co.zw

Joy Garrett

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Woodland Bible Camp is celebrating 50 years of ministry! Plan to attend a special anniversary celebration on September 11, 2004 at the camp. Plans are for a free meal, a DVD presentation of past camp photos, praise, and a celebration service, a new camp cook book, and a new gazebo to commemorate the 50th year.

The 2004 camp week begins June 6-12 with Senior Week (with Sonny Childs). Alan Borders & Mike Abbott directing.

Senior Citizen's Week begins Monday Sept. 12th with Director Buford Smith & Committee.

An added feature this year will be Music Week with John Fulda & Paul Denny directing.

Camp Administrator, Alan Borders, would like to come and speak to your congregation about the mission, work and needs of Woodland. Give him a call at 812-847-7385 or e-mail Borderswbc@cebridge.net

Meetings:

LaGrange Church of Christ
May 10-14, 2004

Spks. Dale Offutt, Ray Naugle,
David Tapp, Bill Smallwood,
Bud Ridgeway.

Ebenezer Church of Christ
Salvisa, Kentucky
May 23-26, 2004

Dennis Pollock of Lamb & Lion
Ministry.

Central Louisiana Fellowship
November 15-18, 2004

Theme: The Church's Responsibility in the 21st Century.

A completed program will be forthcoming.

Louisville Bible College. It is with sad hearts and prayers of God's blessing that we, the Regents of Louisville Bible College, bring the news of Dr. Tom Mobley's decision to end his tenure at the school. (14 years of service) Our own School of Biblical Studies and the College of the Scriptures will miss his leadership in working to promote unity among the brethren.

Expedition Seeks Noah's Ark

An expedition is being planned for this summer to the upper reaches of Turkey's Mount Ararat where organizers hope to prove an object nestled amid the snow and ice is Noah's Ark. A joint U.S.- Turkish team of 10 explorers plans to make the trek up Turkey's tallest mountain from July 15 to August 15. For truth seekers - read Genesis 6-9.

Athens Greece. The Church of Christ Worldwide is glad to report that many are continuing their financial giving to the needs of Sophia Galanis since the homegoing of Bro. George Galanis on March 10, 2004. His daughter Emie Galanis Paschos is in constant contact with the Mission Office.

She also shares another prayer concern for her brother, Kosatas who needs a third operation on his brain. He still is without sight and the doctors are considering sending him to either Europe or the States.

If you would like additional information regarding the work in Athens or the island of Crete with Nick Tsagarakis, please contact:

Church of Christ Worldwide
P.O. Box 54842
Lexington, KY 40555

Robert & Joy Garrett...did leave as scheduled on April 25th to make the 36 hour flight back to Zimbabwe. Bro. Robert was experiencing pain in his shoulder and doctors thought necessary to operate. To miss the flight would have kept them from establishing residency, so after a shot of cortizone, it was time to fly. Do keep these servants of the Lord in your prayers as they re-adjust.

National: 3 Japanese Hostages Freed seemed to be good news but upon their return to Japan, they were greeted with "you got what you deserved" and "you are Japan's shame." They had gone to Iraq to help street children survive the war. Even Colin Powell commended them for "their bravery and willingness to risk their lives to better the world. Japan should be proud." But they defied the Okami - "higher - older - wiser." Their culture still believes in obeying those older and wiser.

Honor to Whom Honor is Due For decades Sister Edith Lale, along with her sister Mildred, ran the W&W office. They were volunteer workers, unpaid by men but rewarded by the Lord. Sister Mildred has been at home with the Lord for some years now. Sister Edith experiences the aches and pains that accumulate over the years. Yet at 98 she is still active physically, alert mentally and strong spiritually.

Louise Wells now runs the W&W office - paying bills, balancing the books, keeping track of new subscribers & also lapsed subscriptions (she is merciful, for which quite a few folks should be thankful), etc. Her health has not been too good lately, and her son David has been at death's door a time or two but mercifully pulled through both times.

When W&W or the SS quarterlies are mailed out, Louise is helped by a splendid band of workers -- Jane Heid, Helen Condra, Myrtle Higgins, and Jim Condra. All these are volunteers, paid by the Lord only. And of course we are helped by George Fulda Jr. and Sherry Jansen at the Heid Printing Co. I praise the Lord for each & every helper to W&W's ministry, including all intercessors, subscribers, those who give subscriptions to others, and donors. —avw

Hang In There: A 2004 stamp has been issued honoring children's writer **Dr. Seuss** (Ted Geisel). At Dartmouth he was voted "Least Likely to Succeed." His first book was finally published after 27 rejections. Before he died titles like *Green Eggs and Ham* sold in the millions. Among his many honors were seven honorary doctorates, including one from Dartmouth! Do you feel like a failure? It's always too soon to quit!

Cagayan De Oro City (Southern Philippines) Bro. Cyrus O. Gesulga announces the 21st Annual Lectureship among the premillennial congregations established through the Words of Life Radio outreach starting in 1980. The late Bro. Robert Boyd pioneered the work along with Bro. Gesulga and since then the work has grown beyond human expectation. It is estimated that the program this year could have between 300-500 people interested in studying the Word of God. The lectureship is being planned for April 27-29 and Bro. Gesulga covets our prayers for an effective outreach. He adds: "I still use Words of Life for the title of my radio program. We are on 8 radio stations. We have 4 stations of daily 30 minute broadcast and 1 hour every Sunday. We have 3 stations of 30 minutes every Sunday and 1 station for 1 hour & 45 minutes every Sunday." —T. Y. Clark