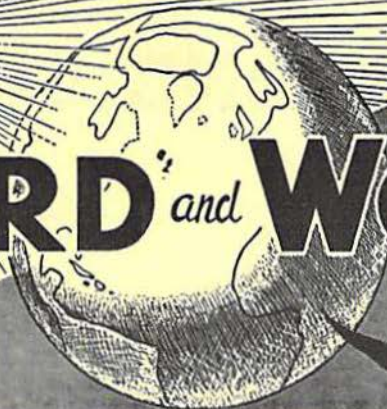


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THEME:

Unity Amid Diversity



God Isn't A Cookie-Cutter

Alex V. Wilson

A true incident told by Glenn Baber at the Louisville Fellowship Week continues to intrigue me. Members of a small Church of God in Grapevine, Texas began asking, "How can we reach our community, and influence people for Jesus?" As they considered this question, they decided they might learn some helpful ideas from a nearby Church of Christ. It was larger than their church, and apparently had developed some effective ministries. So they did a novel thing: a whole bunch of them attended the vacation Bible school at the Church of Christ. Maybe they felt VBS was the method they themselves should use for outreach, and thus they attended in order to learn some lessons.

But here is what happened. As they attended and heard God's Word taught, mutual acquaintance between the folks of the two churches grew to mutual respect, trust and love. As a result the Church of God members concluded, "Why should we have VBS when we and the people of our neighborhood can attend the Church of Christ's VBS just around the corner from us? We'll start some other ministry." And they did—a youth center, I believe—and God blessed them.

This incident raises lots of questions. Could similar steps be taken in other places? Should they? Just think how much duplication of activities occurs in countless communities. And duplication usually results in omissions, too. For instance, perhaps four Gospel-preaching churches (for we are not thinking of any other kind) exist within several blocks of each other. Suppose that all of them have small schools for their member's children, but that in their neighborhood there is no family-counseling service, nor youth center for reaching unchurched young people, nor in-depth Bible training school... yet all those activities are needed in that community. Presuming that no congregation has the personnel or money to carry on all of those ministries, wouldn't it be great if one church would concentrate on the children's school, another on the counseling for families, another on

outreach to teen gangs, and another on a Bible institute? Result: if they all cooperated, all four churches and the entire community too would benefit immensely.

Maybe you respond, "What a wild dream, totally *impractical!* It would never work, and it's a waste of time even to consider it." You may be right. But somehow it worked to some extent in Grapevine, Texas, even without prior planning. Perhaps with prayer, love and long range planning something would happen in other places too. In fact, here's an actual example told by Robert Fife. Some years back, instrumental Christian Churches in the Chicago area established the Christian Service Center in a city ghetto. Near the Center was a storefront non-instrumental Church of Christ. Because of its presence, no effort was made to establish a Christian Church at the Center. Rather, the Center's director and his wife became members of the storefront congregation. In fact, when that church later lost its lease, the Christian Service Center made its facilities available without charge. Wasn't that grand? Isn't it sad that such examples are rare? Maybe our readers know of similar cases. Why not tell us about them?

BUT IS IT BIBLICAL?

Maybe someone will respond to the previous fictional example by saying, "Even if it were possible, the idea is *unbiblical*. To cooperate like that with other churches would require doctrinal compromise." Well, I'm not considering compromise of any basic Biblical truths (such as those enumerated in Eph. 4:3-6). If working with other groups of Christians would require us to trim the Gospel message, forget it. That would be trading our birthright for a bowl of soup. But is it not possible for various churches to work together to some extent, despite differences and without compromising the conscience of any? I believe so, more often than we think, if we apply two Biblical principles we believe and teach: (1) *the autonomy of the local church*, and (2) *the rejection of manmade creeds as requisites for fellowship*. Let's look at both principles.

(1) CONGREGATIONAL AUTONOMY

That term means that each congregation is independent of control by outside people, whether it be a pope, denominational supervisor, or church council of some sort. Instead, the local church is responsible directly to the Lord for leadership, which should be exercised by locally-chosen, Scripturally-qualified elders as they wait upon the Lord. Of course that means that local churches will differ from place to place in some ways, for we don't all see things exactly alike. Nor did Christ expect us to! Nor were churches in the apostles' time alike in every way! Nor was that a sin! For example, members and leaders of the Jerusalem church were still observing Old Covenant feast-days in the temple, while churches in Gentile lands avoided such practices entirely (Acts 21:17-26). In the same way, six Churches of Christ today might all believe the one Gospel-message of salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-7), and yet differ in peripheral matters. Church #1 may decide to support a particular evangelistic ministry which church #2 decides not to back. #3 may believe Scripture justifies ordaining not only elders and deacons but also deaconesses, while #4 disagrees.

#5 may choose to participate in a local drive against pornography, while #6 does not. Yet the six congregations could cooperate in a number of ways. That is part of our freedom in Christ—to cooperate in love with other congregations even when we don't agree about everything. Each church should be both *independent* from other churches and *interdependent* on other churches.

(2) FELLOWSHIP BASED ON THE GOSPEL, NOT CREEDS

When we claim to have “no creed by Christ, no book but the Bible,” we mean nothing should be added to the Gospel as a requisite for fellowship. Fellowship depends on our fellow-salvation, which depends on a proper response to the Gospel of “Christ and him crucified.” “Receive one another, as Christ has received you” (Rom. 15:7). We rightly object to anyone’s saying, “You can be a member of our church only if you are born again *and also* agree with our interpretation of the millennium, or of eternal security, or of spiritual gifts,” etc. And since we object to having any such creed imposed on us, we also should not impose one on others. We seek to promote freedom, unity in diversity, following Christ according to our differing understandings of His will (Rom. 14).

But *unwritten* creeds are often enforced just as rigidly as written ones. Barriers to fellowship are often erected not because someone rejects the Gospel but simply rejects longstanding traditions of other people. Let’s just pretend and wonder for a few minutes. . . .

WHAT IF? . . .

Suppose there is in our community an undenominational congregation that began in the 1970’s. (Quite a few did start then.) Suppose its members believe in the Bible’s inspiration, God’s trinity, Christ’s deity, the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, Christ’s return, salvation by grace, immersion as an initial step of faith, and weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper. So far so good. But also suppose that the name on their signboard is “Christ-Is-King Assembly” or some such title. Suppose too that it is their practice to observe the Lord’s Supper on Sunday night only, for the morning meeting is always given to gospel-preaching directed at the unsaved. Suppose it has somehow become their tradition to have women take up the offering. And suppose that in singing they occasionally clap and occasionally raise their hands to the Lord, but usually do neither.

Now the plot thickens. Suppose the leaders of this group come to our elders and say they realize their need for wider fellowship. They say they’ve been too lone-wolfish in the past, but now they desire to join together with our church plus our three sister-churches (two miles, five miles and nine miles away). In amazement our elders ask what specific kind of fellowship they seek. They reply that they are thinking about things like joining our monthly church-leaders’ discussions, and our training-school (they have four young men who would like to study there, and a couple of church leaders who could teach some subjects). Also they want their young people to take part in our youth rallies and retreats; such meetings could be held at their place too when their turn comes around. And they hope to join in our camp activities too, both as campers and teachers. In short, they are not only seeking recognition as fellow-Christians but

also cooperation and mutual participation. They want to join our non-denomination! What should we do in a case like that?

I grant this is a fictional case. But stranger things have happened, once in a while. And I know of churches that observe one or another of the practices ascribed to that church. So supposing the preceding scenario took place, how would we respond?

Would we be embarrassed and squeamish, and tell them it really wouldn't work? After all, what would our sister-churches in other parts of the country think?

(But this might be a great chance to extend unity among God's people, and isn't that important? And how would Paul react to this opportunity? What did he mean when he wrote, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" On another level, what would Barton Stone or Thomas Campbell do in this situation?)

Or, in replying to the request from this fictional church, would we set conditions, and demand conformity: "We'll accept you if you change your name and change your practices to agree with ours."

(But that would be confusing unity with uniformity, wouldn't it? And do we have a creed after all? And do we truly believe in the freedom and church autonomy we talk about?)

And what about those strange practices of theirs? How can they claim to be following the teachings of God's Word?

(But actually, are not a number of our own practices the result of tradition, without specific Biblical mandate? They are not wrong, of course, but neither are they the only right way of doing things. The New Testament gives general guidelines regarding many church practices, rather than rigid rules or a detailed blueprint. We recognize this to some extent, for there are some things first-century believers practiced which we don't—the holy kiss; fully supporting destitute widows; meetings open for mutual edification and free exercise of spiritual gifts—and there are some other things they didn't practice but we do—church-buildings; Christian schools; monthly magazines!)

I don't know how the Grapevine Church of Christ responded to the Church of God's decision; Brother Baber didn't tell us. And I'm unsure exactly how your church or mine should respond if a Christ-Is-King Assembly approached us as imagined above. And I'm not urging us to throw out all our practices—if you think that, you've missed my point. But let's do examine thoughtfully our attitudes and actions toward other Christians, and our underlying reasons for them. And let's evaluate our own practices too, asking ourselves where we should be Biblically firm and uncompromising and where we should be Biblically free and flexible.

* * * * *

WHAT DID JESUS PRAY FOR?

Joe Carson Smith

For some time this writer has been asking outstanding exponents of "the Restoration Movement plea" a simple question. "If the unity for which Jesus prayed were realized, what would it look like?" That is, what would be the specific visible conditions, ideas, actions, institutions, relationships, etc which would then prevail? Usually the more thoughtful the person to whom the question is addressed, the

longer the silence. The answers are usually, "I don't know." or, "I never thought of it before." This is singular when one considers that we have been advocating this undefined unity for nearly two centuries.

It is evident that we have often been in the grip of a utopian fallacy. Classic utopianism presents a vision of a perfect city or a perfect land. This glittering realm exists only in imagination. Since it is the product of creative vision, it is subject to continual revision and enlargement. It is also immune from the requirements of reality.

It would perhaps be useful for us to address the question of the nature and scope of the unity for which Jesus prayed. We should notice that Jesus prayed for a unity that would be visible to the world.

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word: that they may all be one: even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me."

Jesus prayed for a unity that would be visible to the world. It is of necessity a unity that is evident at particular times and places to real people. It is not simply the essential unity, the "one body," that exists because of the intention of God, which leads to certain eschatological realization. It is a practical unity that moves unregenerate men toward redemption. It is a human unity existent in time.

This is not the unity of a glittering utopian dream. It is not the final unity of the Holy City presented in Biblical visions. It is a visible human unity immediately present to men and women in their direct associations. It is not a unity postponed until some future golden age. It is a unity that is real in the particular moments and places where people live and have lived since Jesus came. It is a unity visible in the lives and interactions of fallible saints who are the beneficiaries and the channels of the grace of God.

The utopian goal of perfect unity diverts the Church from its real responsibility of seeking and practicing the unity to which the Lord directs it. The possible is lost in the pursuit of the perfect. The practical is sacrificed to the unattainable ideal.

We must regain the perspective of Jesus' prayer, the perspective in which the unity of Christians is visible to unbelievers. *Most people actually see the Church on the scale of the local congregation, or in individual Christian relationships.* It is in specific situations of various, but limited, extent that Christian unity has its cutting edge. *The embarrassing truth is that the witness of the Church depends upon our unity with the saints that we know.* They are the members of our families, our friends and enemies, the Christians in our home churches, the brethren in surrounding congregations, the ministers in our local areas. Jesus' prayer was practical, not utopian. It is personal, not institutional. The unity it has in view is finite and concrete, not infinite and abstract. It is visible to ordinary people.

The unity to which Jesus calls us is so exceptional that the world instantly recognizes in its working the power and presence of God. It is virtually impossible without grace. Wherever it is found among the saints, the Gospel is proclaimed with power.

(Editor's note: Excerpted, by permission, from chapter 4, *Essays on the Restoration Plea*, a forthcoming book by Bro. Smith.)

UNITY AND CREEDS

R. H. Boll

Two Kinds That Hate Creeds

There are two sorts pleading for the abolition of creeds, but from utterly opposed motives. The one class want to shake them off that they may follow their own thoughts without restraint or fear of criticism; the other that they may enjoy the light and fullness of the whole word of God. To the one class the human standards of orthodoxy are a fetter upon their rationalism; to the other a hindrance to the full knowledge of God's revealed truth. For the one class, having abandoned faith in the infallible authority of the Scripture, care nothing, of course, for human deductions based on the Scriptures. The other class, though recognizing the precious truths contained in creeds, feel that they confine the minds of men to a partial and more or less warped conception of God's teaching, and hinder personal study and research. It is strange that two such contrary aims should converge upon one common point; for aside from their opposition to creeds the two classes have nothing whatever in common. The fact that they both unite in this shows that creeds have served as a check upon religious anarchy on the one hand, and have been a hindrance to the free and full investigation of God's word on the other. Creeds have seen their day. The modern unbeliever will not be bothered with them, and the earnest believer will not be bound by them. And things are coming to an issue; one class will wander away into deeper darkness, and the other advance into a better light.

The Brotherhood of Unbelief

There is a brotherhood and fellowship which does not stand in a common conviction, but in the common lack of it. There is a tolerance which is not due to breadth of vision, nor to love, nor to patience, but to an utter indifference regarding questions and issues. Certainly if I held no fundamental conviction that the Bible is the word of God, that Christianity is supernatural, that the gospel is *the truth*, and the only saving truth, I could look with patronizing good-naturedness upon doctrinal differences between sects and parties, and could frown contemptuously upon the narrowness and bigotry that yet dare to contend for any belief as the true one. But that is not tolerance nor is it fellowship. Though it glitter with an appearance of kindness and sweet-spiritedness it is not the real gold. It ill behooves men like that to disparage anyone that holds a definite faith, even if he hold it with some bitterness; for a true man will be aroused, over whatever challenges what he believes to be holy and right, and what in his judgment involves the soul-interests of others. If I had to choose between two evils I would even rather be a bigot than the fellow to whom all religion is just a matter of personal "view." For the bigot at least *stands for something*. The other sort stand for nothing in particular and everything in general.

"Of One Accord"

Unity in Christ is the concord of many varying sounds. It is a

"harmony of differences." It does not consist merely in sameness and uniformity, but also in mutually supplementing powers and gifts. We are not one because we have identical conceptions of the truth, but because each has his share in the same Life and in the same Truth and contributes his part to the building up of all. The whole truth is with the whole Body, and no one member has it except as he is perfected in the fellowship of all the rest. It is in our peculiar differences that the possibility of mutual helpfulness lies. Not because we are of the same type and thought and talent, but because we differ in these things, we are bound and welded together into one organism. It is because each supplies what others need and what all have not got, the members of the Body are mutually interdependent. They are also mutually corrective and balancing. Thus they grow up into Him who is the Head "even Christ, from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." (Eph. 4:15, 16) This is the unity of God's intention, the symphony of a multitude of instruments under the direction of the Spirit of truth and love in Christ Jesus.

The New Creedism

If leaders in the church agree and decree among themselves that it shall be believed and taught that Dan. 2:44 was fulfilled on Pentecost, (for example); and that it shall not be admitted that Christ will return to the earth to reign, and such like things; and that all scriptures of the Old and New Testament are to be interpreted in harmony with these tenets; and that all preachers who do not subscribe to these articles of faith are to be discredited and marked as "unsound," and unworthy of the fellowship and Christian confidence of the brotherhood—and if while setting up these denominational shibboleths, these leaders yet claim to represent the simple church of Christ, and profess before the world that they have no creed but the Bible—what is such a claim worth? If any man can distinguish between that and the position of all creed-bound sects, I should be glad to hear. The question is, if a people lay down such tests, and will cast out of their fellowship their own brethren against whose life and teaching they can raise no other objection than that they do not subscribe to these creedal articles as agreed on by a few editors and others, should such a people still claim to be "undenominational Christians," having "no creed but the Bible," or should they take their place as a sect among sects? For when facts no longer justify a claim it becomes a fraud. It is high time to recognize the danger and return to the new Testament ground.

* * * * *

CREEDS AND TRADITIONS

"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."—Our Lord Jesus, in Mark 7:8

Every church in Christendom, whether it has a formal creed or no, is ruled as to its belief and practice, to a sad extent, by the

“traditions of the elders.” The freest of the non-conformist churches, untrammelled by any formal confession of faith, may be bound with as tight fetters, and be as much dominated by men’s opinions, as if it had the straightest of creeds. *The mass of our religious beliefs and practices has ever to be verified, corrected, and remodelled, by harking back from creeds, written and unwritten, to the one Teacher.* Let us get away from men, from the Babel of opinions and the strife of tongues, that we may hear the words of His mouth.

—Alexander Maclaran

* * * * *

Are We Seeking Unity or Uniformity?

Thomas A. Langford

I recently received the copies of *One Body* and was thrilled to read of the renewed interest in dialogue among the heirs of the Restoration Movement. Such discussion has been a major interest of mine for the last twenty-five years.

I am associated with those Churches of Christ that do not use Sunday Schools. We carry our brethren’s objection to the instrumental music one step further, believing that the restoration principle excludes institutions and instruments that were available to the Apostles in the early church but were not used. We may be too strict in our construction; each of us has to determine how closely to apply the principle.

As I think of the potential benefits of dialogue, of what we might expect as a result of more discussion and understanding, I am very hopeful. But as I read what frequently is being said, it appears to me that the unspoken goal for many is something that is not likely to happen, at least not as a concession to gain unity. We are not likely to achieve *uniformity* as regards the use of the instrument or of Sunday Schools.

It seems to me that if there is to be any likelihood of progress in finding out the unity for which our Lord prayed, we must be courageous enough to admit that the illogic (of insisting on total conformity) should be swapped for a rationale that is more productive. At the same time we must follow a course that avoids trampling on any brother’s conscientious scruples. What is the answer? Surely such a happy methodology will be very difficult to find, or it would have been discovered before now. Right?

As a matter of fact, the methodology is well known to us. We have all been preaching it for years, without apparently recognizing its application to our problem. I’m referring to the doctrine of congregational autonomy. When we’ve needed the doctrine to protect ourselves from someone to our right (there is always someone even more conservative than any of us), someone who is trying to make *his* conscience *our* guide, we pull it out and expound upon it with righteous passion. “In matters of expediency we answer to God and no-one else.” But how often have you ever heard the doctrine applied to someone on your left, someone who feels at liberty to disregard *your* conscience

and do what *his* judgment allows? Logic suggests that the principle should apply both ways, but practice indicates that we are reluctant to do it.

I am speaking, of course, of congregational autonomy, not of biblical imperatives that establish our brotherhood in the first place. The frequent reaction to arguments for freedom within each congregation is to say that such "looseness" means "accepting anyone and everyone." But there is vast difference between the freedom to grow and differ *within* the brotherhood and elemental doctrines which define the essentials of initiation *into* the brotherhood. Until one is born into the family of God and the brotherhood of the saints, there is not freedom, except the choice of accepting or rejecting the Savior. Once one accepts and enters the church, there is freedom to learn and adapt, freedom to choose in all areas where God has not prohibited or commanded specific behavior.

What we have avoided facing thus far, it seems to me, is the likely fact that we will never reach unity as long as we are seeking uniformity. If we hold out for all to become a capella music congregations as a condition of our fellowship, or for all to become family Bible study oriented as opposed to Sunday School structured, or for all to cease use of individual cups and use one chalice per congregation—if, I say, this is the unspoken agenda upon which all our unity discussions are predicated, there isn't really much hope.

On the other hand, if we can really practice what we have been preaching, *if we can indeed allow congregational autonomy, we may come to experience unity and cooperation even though some of these differences will continue to exist from congregation to congregation.* Our cooperation may be limited in some areas, as long as we have genuine scruples about some of the things our brothers practice, *within their congregations.* But let us cooperate where we can, and seek out areas where our fellowship can be increased. Let us think of ourselves and be known as one body, not two or three or twenty separate denominations (which, in spite of our protestations to the contrary, we are, if we continue to think of our parties respectively as "the church," and ignore the brethren around us.)

Is this proposal indifferent to the very real issues about which we have debated? Must we "hush up" our differences just to try to reach unity? Of course not! Our unity is already achieved in Christ, if indeed we have "by one Spirit been baptized into one body." Once we recognize and stand upon the unity as the foundation of our brotherhood, we can get on with the business of discussing the issues about which we differ. As a matter of fact, it is likely that some of those issues will turn out to be less formidable than they had appeared when we saw them as barriers to fellowship. True families can handle and resolve difficulties, especially if the father is wise and the family spirit is strong. Ours is, on both counts!

Unless we are willing to admit, up front, that it is unity we seek and not uniformity, that love in the family and the grace of God can cover some thorny differences, as well as "a multitude of sins," I don't see that current bright new interest in dialogue is ever going anywhere. But is there any reason to think that our cherished principle

of congregational autonomy, under the sovereignty of God, will not get us on the road to practicing the unity already established when God called us all into His one body? Shouldn't we start here, before wasting more years of fruitless and frustrating blind alleys?

—from *One Body*, Winter 1985

PLANNING TO SWITCH CHURCHES?

J. Richard Lewis

One of the most lasting impressions upon me as a youngster in the church was my parent's loving attitude when there was a problem in the church. I vividly remember they felt personally singled out, even publically, as the church struggled with the situation. Their response was, "We worship there because of the Lord and we do not intend to leave on account of some difficult people who attend the church with us." I don't know chapter and verse for this, but as I read the Word I believe that sentiment is truly present!

As I grew older I witnessed the leaving of others. Yes, various reasons were given. Then as I preached for 25 years it seemed nearly every excuse was given to leave at one time or the other. I must confess I have thought about leaving at times and sorted through the many excuses to find a suitable one for my situation.

To be fair, we should examine all the reasons for staying as well as for leaving. If you will allow me to do so I wish to share with you some of the reasons I stay.

1. My parents set an example for me that I believe is a worthy one, an example worth following. It's supported by the scripture: just consider almost any godly Bible character. They all had good reasons to leave; but all of them stayed. Think about the ideas of the church as a "body" and "family." One cannot change these anytime one is hurt or unhappy. I'm staying.

2. Scripture indicates God puts each one where he wants us: 1 Corinthians 7:19-24. This being true He sends the things that are disagreeable to me for my benefit, as much as the things that are more enjoyable. I'm staying.

3. There is an obligation (debt) I owe to this group of churches. (A) It was this church that taught me about Christ. (B) They led me to salvation in Christ and nurtured Christian growth in my life. (C) These churches educated me in the Scriptures. (D) As a minister among them for 25 years they supported my family and me. As I see it, I have an obligation to them, like it or not. I'm staying.

4. Long ago I ceased to believe that our churches were perfect and almost as long ago the search ended for the "perfect" group. So why change and end up with a set of problems just as great but only different? I'm staying.

5. Problems? All groups have them. So if these are serving Christ inadequately (in my opinion) and I realize it, I am to stay and help! Running away doesn't show love and caring for my brothers and sisters in the Lord. To leave is selfishness, for me. I'm staying.

6. One statement bothers more than most others. You have heard

it, I am sure. It is "my needs aren't being met." Examine Gal. 6:12 and John 13:34-35 and many other passages. Each is responsible to meet one another's needs. God knows our needs and steadfastness may be mine. Romans 5:3.

7. Begin my own true church? NEVER! The idea is ludicrous and the epitome of arrogance and egotism. Just look at all the other great men who tried and failed. They were much greater than I could ever be. Who do I think I am anyway? I'm staying.

8. Paul didn't quit when the church at Galatia didn't like him. John didn't quit during his loneliness on Patmos. Peter didn't quit when Paul rebuked him publicly. The early Christians didn't leave the church in Jerusalem when the public persecuted them. The truly saved ones remained with the church. I'm staying.

9. Just consider for a moment the problems at the church of Corinth. I am convinced if Christians were leaving little congregations at Corinth and going to attend the big impressive ones, Paul would have addressed it as a problem. I'm staying.

10. What if Elijah quit serving God or left because no one liked him? What if Jeremiah left because no one listened? Maybe when they put him in the well in mud up to his arm pits, he should have left. How ridiculous to think of Christ leaving the Temple worship because it didn't meet His needs. They stayed. . . . I'm staying.

11. Serving God in a local church is not like purchasing a car or house nor like looking for a job. It isn't the biggest, newest, shiniest nor the most impressive that counts. It is our heritage, our debt, the need the church has. It is being a responsible and steadfast person. I'm staying.

12. Remember God uses the difficult times as well as the good ones. Where the sun always shines there is a desert. Clouds, rain and storms are as much a part of His plan as sunshine and fair weather. If I stayed when it was good I'm staying when it isn't so good too. . . . by God's grace.

In closing, consider a statement written by Leroy Garrett in a recent issue of *The Restoration Review*. "The matter is not so simple as staying or leaving, but what one does (and the attitude one has) whether here or there. We must have a sense of mission and believe that we are where God wants us to serve Him. It is not how we are treated but how we treat others, not whether we are loved but whether we love others. Jesus did not walk out but hung in, *servio* even when rejected, where he was, even unto death itself. His own church rejected him. The only real victory is in realizing that it is more blessed to give than to receive."

I'm staying.

Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed,
Thus understanding little what they read,
And every passage in the Book they bend
To make it suit that all-important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the Book instead of being taught.
(Author unknown)

WORSHIP IN SONG

E. L. Jorgenson

(This fall marks the fiftieth anniversary of an outstanding hymnal, the 2nd edition of *Great Songs of the Church*. Few songbooks have such a long history of such wide usefulness. To mark this occasion, and also because of its own merit, we present excerpts from a sermon given by the compiler in 1948 at the first Louisville Christian Fellowship Week. Brother Jorgenson later served as co-editor of *Word and Work*.—AVW)

Plainly, it was never the will of God that the religious service should be a "riot," or a circus, or a disorderly pandemonium. "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace." "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

Yet, on the other hand, it is not the will of God that our meetings should be too prim and precise, too formal and decorous, to allow the expression of our sacred emotions. "Be filled with the Spirit, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." In the Bible, "heart" is that which knows and wills and *feels*; how then can we deny that feeling has its place and rightful use in worship?

True, we are a sane, reasoning and decorous people. We are not of those religious groups that sometimes shout in church: but perhaps our song should be our shout! How else can we be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice with the righteous; and shout for joy, with all them that are upright in heart? (Ps. 32:11.) I speak not of noise as such, but of true emotion, of feeling that is rooted in understanding and capable of invoking holy feelings in another. If our songs are beautiful, esthetically beautiful in poetry and in music, well and good; it will help. But above all, let them be spiritually beautiful and beautifully true; true to scripture and true to the highest Christian experience. Let them be sung from the heart, heartily, and they will reach the heart; yea, they will reach to the gates of heaven.

We ought to sing much more *together*. After all, it is almost the only act of worship that we do together. Unless it be an occasional scripture portion read responsively, it is almost our only unison act. Some one leads the prayer, and some one preaches the sermon. One by one we break the bread; one by one we drink the cup, and one by one we lay by of our earthly goods; but when we sing we sing together. It is a good thing, a pleasant thing, and a unifying thing to do: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to sing together in harmony!

I now speak of the *center* of our assembly. That only center is the Lord Jesus Christ, our adorable Redeemer. One may go to the concert, the secular concert, and there he finds that the singer is the center of interest. The accompanist may have a moment of recognition, and a few may even think of the gifted writers of the words and music; but the singer is the center, and the chief object of praise.

One may go to hear the great symphony orchestra, and there the conductor is the center. A few will think of the men now gone, who composed the beautiful music. But when the finale is done, and the curtain has fallen, it is the conductor chiefly that men praise. And that is fair enough.

But in the church—there Jesus Christ is the center. There in the sacred worship service no one may intrude himself. As we realise more and more that Jesus Christ is central we leaders will intrude ourselves less and less that we may exalt Christ more and more. I have been asked in many places about choruses and special singing groups; and I have always answered, "That is a work that calls for the humblest and most spiritual direction." Where we have that, well and good; where we have men in charge who know *Who God is*, who have themselves been humbled before Him, who have "seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"; where we have such men (and we do have some), there special groups may greatly glorify the Lord. Otherwise it may well become a snare.

It is, of course, not every spiritual song that is addressed to God. Sometimes we speak "one to another" by way of testimony, instruction, admonition, and invitation: but always, even when we speak "one to another," it is to be "with grace in our hearts unto God." The divine Being is ever before our minds—even as we are to do *all*, whatsoever we do in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus. From Him are all our gifts whatever they may be; and it is suitable that *all* our talents should be returned to Him in praise!

Ways To Improve Our Sunday Schools

Ruth W. Wilson

The first Sunday School was organized in England in 1780 by Robert Raikes, a publisher. Joseph Bayly, in his fine little book about teaching Sunday School, *I love to Tell the Story*, said, "Who knows what the effects of the Sunday school in our church may be? After all, God is the same in the United States and Canada today as He was in England in 1780."

What about our Sunday Schools—are they growing, both in numbers and in effectiveness? If not, are there definite steps we could be taking to bring this about? I had a good opportunity to think through this recently when coming to the end of an eight-week teacher training course in a Louisville church. The following "ways to improve our Sunday Schools" is a result of that thinking, and of my years of being involved in teaching God's Word, especially to youth. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it seems to me that these are some of the more important steps to greater effectiveness.

1. *Closer grading.* Many Sunday School administrators have been content for years to have students of various ages lumped together in classes, such as preschool, grades 1-4, grade 5-8, high school, and adults. But 5th and 6th-graders are very different from 7th and 8th graders and could learn so much better if taught separately, as I discovered in a class I teach. The same could be said for all of these other age groups. So if you have even two or three students per two-year age span, why not try to group them that way? You may attract more students by more adequately meeting the needs of their age.

2. *Classroom improvement.* My heart aches to see drab little rooms with practically no eye appeal. Public school classrooms are

usually bright and cheerful, with timely decorations. How sad that Sunday School rooms often fail to appeal to the senses! Why not have a church work-day to paint, repair, decorate? Every room should have a bulletin board (to be used as a *teaching tool*), storage space, and proper furniture. Maybe even curtains!

3. *Assistant teachers.* "What, *two* teachers in every room? We're doing well to get one!" But what about Christian teen-agers who've been in Sunday School for years and would like to give service for a change? And how about husbands and wives serving as a team? Many, many children these days lack a "father-figure" in the home, and men teachers can help to fill this need.

Assistant, or co-, teachers can help by checking attendance, gathering materials, working with small groups or individuals, handling behavior problems, visiting homes, etc. And they should usually be viewed as trainees and, as such, be allowed to do some of the teaching.

The Southeast Church of Christ, Jeffersontown, Ky., has organized its S.S. well. Besides having co-teachers, they also practice rotation teaching, thus allowing teachers a "rest period" of several months each year.

4. *Ongoing teacher training.* Perhaps some of you have experienced the following scenario: You're standing in the church foyer, chatting, after the Sunday service. The S.S. superintendent sneaks up to you and thrusts a teacher's manual under your nose. Putting on a pathetic visage, he pleads with you to take over the Beginner (Junior, whatever) class, which is about to be teacherless. You gulp, as you've had absolutely no training for the job. But how can you turn the poor man down, and worse, turn down the *Lord*? So you plunge in and muddle through for years, until experience has finally taught you what you so urgently needed to know from the first.

Now, admittedly, this picture is overdrawn. (I have yet to meet a sneaky S.S. Supt.!) But similar scenes do occur, and they should not and need not occur in our churches. There are good training courses available from Christian book stores, such as "Training Successful Teachers" from Berean, which includes records, cassettes, and filmstrips. This one is about \$50 and can be used repeatedly. Training courses should be held for new teachers periodically.

5. *Regular teachers' meetings.* Actually, a good teacher's training *never stops!* Furthermore, teachers need the encouragement of one another, and to be able to share teaching ideas, etc. Teachers' meetings can provide motivation to constantly improve and to develop new skills. And the opportunity for prayer with fellow teachers is simply invaluable. Such meetings should be held no less than monthly.

6. *Organize and maintain a good "Teaching Resources Library."* At least a corner of a room, or better, a small room in the church building should be set aside and cabinets provided for such materials as visual aids (carefully organized in their Biblical order, or according to subject matter), flannelboards and extra flannel backgrounds, song books and charts, and books on teacher training. A simple check-out system can be used. The former South Louisville Church ("5th & M")

had an *excellent* library with a fine filing system, and this has been "handed down" to us at the Portland Church, Louisville.^o

7. *Have regular home visitation.* In the Philippines, we went out occasionally in groups to visit in the homes of our S.S. students and contacts. Students appreciate this so much, and parents are often contacted in this way. Make notes afterward to remind yourself of what you learned about your students, because you are *bound* to know and understand them better if you visit their homes.

A similar suggestion is to periodically blanket the neighborhood with invitations to the Sunday School (or a special event that can feed the S.S.—see #10). It may bear little fruit for a while—but *one* soul reached makes it worth all the effort.

8. *Use buses to reach out.* A number of our churches are doing this, but I am especially aware of the efforts by the Belmont Church in Winchester, Ky. They now use two large buses and a van and are very pleased with their busing program. God is using it for great good.

9. *Use Vacation Bible School evangelistically.* Joe Bayly says that for more than half of its history Sunday School was primarily evangelistic. Since this is no longer true, we must have an evangelistic program of some sort to reach out to children, especially. VBS is ideal for this, as it is fairly easy to attract kids on warm and boring summer days. And the ones that have not heard the gospel clearly presented before need to hear it. Therefore, at least some of the lessons should be planned specifically as evangelistic lessons. Thorough follow-up after VBS is *essential* to build on what has been started. Again, results may not come right away but there *will* be some fruit from your efforts.

Another word about VBS's: Why have we capitulated, in so many of our churches, to the pressures of the world, and given up on *two-week* VBS's? There must be many churches out there that are still doing it, else the publishers would have ceased to publish two-week material. The second week is the best, since some of the trouble-makers have dropped out and the Spirit is beginning to soften hearts. It *can* be done, even in smaller churches.

10. *Special outreach activities.* Have occasional children's rallies (a Saturday morning of fun and gospel presentation, well-publicized in the community); Bible clubs, such as the "Lollipop Club" (a Standard Publishing Co. idea) or "Back-yard clubs"; and/or weekly after-school Bible classes for kids (such as Sellersburg Church of Christ has done for many years). The possibilities are many, but let's *do* reach out to kids.

Many of the above suggestions apply to adults, too, and we don't want to leave them out of our S.S. outreach. The little book that I mentioned above, *I Love to Tell the Story*, by Joseph Bayly, (David C. Cook Publishing Co.), has inspired me much, and I would highly recommend it to teachers of adults, especially.

Let us aim for constant growth and improvement of our Sunday Schools, that we may reach souls for our Lord and thus please and glorify Him.

^o The "Resource Center and Library" of the Belmont Church in Nashville, Tn., occupies an entire former supermarket! It is a very challenging place to visit.

EARLY RESTORATION LEADERS

Benjamin Franklin: Editor, Evangelist, and Debater

Sylvia Root Tester

Everybody knows about Benjamin Franklin. He was a great statesman, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the discoverer of electricity, an inventor, a printer . . . to name only a few of his accomplishments.

Another Benjamin Franklin is not as well-known. This Ben wasn't born until 1812, in Belmont County, Ohio. His father was Joseph Franklin; his mother's maiden name had been Isabella Devold.

FARMER

This Ben Franklin grew up on a farm, learning all the skills required of farmers—and those skills were many. He loved the sports of hunting and fishing, target shooting and wrestling, and he excelled in jumping contests.

Franklin's father wanted to move west, so Franklin and his uncle went ahead, in 1832, to look for a likely place in Indiana for the family to settle. Through the summer and fall, they worked at odd jobs, as they could, while they scouted out the territory. Franklin's uncle returned to Ohio, but Franklin stayed to work on the national road being built across Indiana at that time. Finally, though, winter weather brought that work to a halt, and Franklin returned home with a brand new ax—payment for his work on the road.

In May of 1833, Joseph Franklin took his family to Indiana. He settled near Middletown and began a sawmill and flour mill. With his brothers Franklin helped to get the work started.

When Franklin was twenty-one, he bought eighty acres of land and built a sturdy log cabin on it. He began to clear and farm the land. He also managed to persuade Miss Mary Personett to marry him. One writer gives this fine tribute to Mary Franklin: She went with him through all his long career, bore him eleven children, and cared for them with a mother's patient and tender care through many long years of privation and sorrow, keeping up courage and hope when many a woman would have sunk under the heavy burden.

Franklin worked his farm for about four years; then he sold it and bought a partnership in a gristmill his uncle was running. The mill failed three years later.

Through much of this time, Benjamin Franklin was decidedly nonreligious, practically an atheist, in fact. His habit was to enjoy all the "crude amusements of the age," much to the dismay of his wife.

But in 1834, Franklin heard Samuel Rogers preach. Elder Samuel Rogers was a reformer and a friend of Alexander Campbell. Franklin was converted and baptized. A few years later, he began to preach

(This is the tenth of twelve articles in this continuing series by free-lance author and editor Sylvia Tester.)

and write. Often he would work all day and then walk three to five miles in order to preach somewhere. He preached in schoolhouses, in people's homes— wherever people would listen.

Now his lack of education began to worry him. His son remembered:

He regarded it as a difficulty that could be overcome, and with all the forces of his strong will, he set to work to learn at twenty-seven what most children now-a-days learn at school ere they are fifteen years of age. Copies of Kirkhan's Grammar, Olney's Geography, and Talbot's Arithmetic, bearing the thumb-marks of studious use, remained in his small but steadily growing library late enough for his older children to remember them well.

EDITOR

Benjamin Franklin moved several times in the following years and finally settled in Centerville, Indiana. There he began a monthly paper called *The Reformer*, later changed to *The Western Reformer*.

In his journal Franklin dealt with all the issues that were then confronting the brotherhood. His style was direct and forceful, though at times it was evident that he had little schooling. He wrote for, and appealed greatly to, the common people. He had little use for fancy words or long, philosophical discussions, and his readers appreciated his plainness of speech.

In 1845 the paper had two hundred cash subscribers. By 1846 the number had doubled to four hundred. While Franklin published the paper, he averaged receipts of six hundred dollars a year.

His biographer wrote:

At this time he had seven children, and yet he managed so prudently and economically that he was able to sustain his family, keep out of debt, pay his printing bills, and have a little left over to apply on a piece of land he had purchased.

One of Franklin's sons remembers other points about that time:

He was greatly aided in publishing so cheap a paper by employing his own family in the work upon it. He was his own book-keeper, proofreader and mailer. His eldest son set the type and superintended the press-work. His second son was "roller-boy" to the old-fashioned hand-press on which it was printed, and filled the position called by printers ever since the days of Faust "the devil." His daughter folded, stitched and covered the pamphlets. The office was kept in one of the rooms of the house in which he lived.

After a time Franklin moved again, to a suburb of Cincinnati called Hygeia. From 1850 through 1854, Franklin tried to work in partnership with other people, but these efforts didn't work out. In some cases they were not successful financially. In others Franklin was unable to work under the constraints imposed by partners holding views different from his own.

During this time Franklin preached at two churches, one on Clinton Street in Cincinnati, the other across the river in Covington, Kentucky.

In 1856 Franklin began publishing the *American Christian Review* (which is still an influential magazine among the noninstrumental churches). One writer has called this journal "the great balance-wheel of the entire brotherhood." It did seem to hold middle ground on many issues, at first. Throughout the Civil War, Franklin tried to remain in contact with both northern and southern Christians. Franklin had been a peace advocate from the time of the Mexican War, and continued to hold this position during the Civil War.

In 1858 the paper became a weekly, with Moses E. Lard, Isaac Errett, and several other writers providing regular columns.

The brotherhood was beginning to have differences of opinion about a great many issues, among them whether ministers should be trained, whether they should be paid, whether churches should set up other organizations to help send missionaries, and whether musical instruments should be used in the church.

Benjamin Franklin's journal became one of the most widely read and influential paper in the brotherhood. His was preeminently a conservative view that became more conservative as the years passed.

At first he supported united efforts to send missionaries, in an effort to preserve peace in the brotherhood, but he soon came to oppose missionary societies as being un-Scriptural. He opposed fellowshiping with the unimmersed. He opposed musical instruments in the church. He favored the view of ministers as "evangelists" and opposed the rise of ministers paid by congregations to be their "pastors," claiming that this was the role of the elder, not the minister.

EVANGELIST

Through all this time, Franklin also went on lengthy evangelistic tours; indeed, he was well-known and much beloved throughout the brotherhood. He baptized over eight thousand converts in his lifetime. His sermons were direct and forceful, always Bible-based, and they often succeeded in bringing tears to people's eyes. He published two books of sermons. James DeForest Murch wrote that these books "became the homiletical pattern for conservative preaching not only for his time but for generations to come."

Benjamin Franklin was a great conversationalist. This was one of the reasons he was so well liked by so many people. This remembrance of him was given by one man:

As a conversationalist in the private circle, he had few equals. He could converse with any one in any rank of life, and he was as entertaining to the scholar as he was to the uncultured. He would drop his pen at any moment at the approach of a visitor, and without thinking it an encroachment upon his time, he would talk on for an hour at a time, answering questions and imparting information, interspersing his conversation with lively anecdotes, in which he excelled, and pleasing his company with lively wit and wisdom. He was a good listener, and when addressed by any one he listened with close attention, and deferentially weighed every word spoken to him. There seemed to be no bottom to his magazine of anecdotes. . . . He was always himself; he put on no airs; he despised affectation; he never assumed to be what he was not. . . .

DEBATER

A fourth area in which Franklin excelled was debate. In the pattern begun by Alexander Campbell, Franklin held over thirty debates in his lifetime, five of which were published.

After Isaac Errett began the *Christian Standard*, differences among the brethren began to be more obvious. Though Errett and Franklin had worked together in earlier years, a bitterness developed between them, fed at times by one, at other times by the other. It was based on the reality that the two men saw things differently. Moreover, each felt his view was right and that the other man was trying to move the brotherhood in the wrong direction.

The two men, with the help of many others, of course, succeeded

in moving parts of the brotherhood away from each other in two directions. The result is that, even though the formal split didn't come until later, today noninstrumental churches count Benjamin Franklin as one of their most important early leaders, while independent churches and Disciple churches count Isaac Errett as one of theirs.

Benjamin Franklin died on October 22, 1878. One admiring writer summed up his life this way:

His loyalty to truth was his predominating virtue. His loyalty to Jesus Christ shone conspicuously in all his sermons and in all his writings. He never speculated on the word of God, but preached purely by authority of Jesus the Christ. . . . He was a man of prayer, and believed in the power and influence of prayer. . . . In a word, let it be said that modern times have produced few men of such faith and fidelity.

Murch had this to say: "Benjamin Franklin . . . was a splendid type of man for the work he undertook to do. His character was above reproach; he was indefatigable in his labors and willing to make great sacrifice for the cause he loved." Let that be how people remember him today.

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Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Karen Ashley

Solomon Islands

August 1987

In late May we returned to Sa'a village and spent a pretty ordinary 5 weeks there. During those 5 weeks we attended a funeral. None of this sniffing into kleenexes—these people really wail. We also had a couple bouts with sickness—first Philip had an ear infection, then a mild but recurring attack of malaria. Then our jeep (whose name is Puddleglum) got sick, and in the end we had to amputate the connecting rod from his #1 cylinder to get him running again.

July 1 we set out for the city of Honiara and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way to the airstrip Puddleglum's exhaust manifold fell off, his heart (fuel pump) stopped, and he died. We callously abandoned him and hired a motorized canoe.

The flight to Honiara the next day was uneventful, and we were soon very busy in a computer workshop. The advanced people (like James) learned all about programs that will do wonders for keeping track of all the words and other grammatical particles of the Sa'a language. Basically we feed the computer a Sa'a text and its translation, and it gives us a dictionary. (Yes, that's an oversimplification, but you get the idea.) In the class for beginners I learned enough to feel like it's *our* computer now, not just *his*.

We were in Honiara for only three weeks, so we were really rushed in buying all our supplies and getting ready for the trip

back to Sa'a. On our return trip we arrived at Olusu'u, the harbor closest to Sa'a. James took off on the motorcycle to go get a tractor and trailer to carry all our stuff the five kilometers from Olusu'u to home. Everybody at Sa'a was excited to see him—so much so that somebody poured a teakettle of water intended for the tractor's radiator into its gas tank. Unbelievably, it ran anyway. The tractor made it all the way back to Olusu'u harbor, and we thought maybe the Lord had turned the water into diesel fuel. Not true! We had just gotten everything loaded and started back down the road when the tractor quit. James took the kids and me home on the motorcycle, then he and the village guys worked on the tractor until finally, at 1:30 in the morning, they got it going again.

Kent has started school here in Sa'a. Their first grade is working on the same things we were doing at home, and he likes going with the other kids. I'm sure we'll have to go back to home school in a year or two to keep up with the U.S. curriculum, so now is a good chance for him to get some experience in the routines of regular school.

Language learning continues to be hard work. In addition to practicing conversational Sa'a, one of our focuses in the coming weeks will be to get some Sa'a stories down on paper (and in the computer) and pick them apart grammatically. We'll be using the computer to help us in our analysis, and we hope it will help us be more organized.

By the time we get this in the mail, we will have been in the Solomons for a whole year. We are thankful for a good first year, and we'd appreciate your prayers as we begin year two. Our main concerns are language learning and the selection of national translators to help us as we begin the Sa'a New Testament. Our number one headache is transportation. Your prayers really do make a difference—THANKS!

Pray for Philip—he's on his 7th re-occurrence of malaria—even the quinine doesn't seem to get it out of his system. The attacks aren't as bad as the first one was, but we'd like to get *rid* of it.

Nemesio and Myrna Auxtero

Philippines

August 24th

There is so much to thank the Lord for. Seven years ago we started the first overnight prayer meetings, when we laid before Him our needs and visions. Today we declare the goodness of Him who heard and answered our prayers.

Praise the Lord that Maranatha Bible College now stands as an institution training men and women to serve the Lord. Praise Him for our eight teachers, and the 70 students who come faithfully each night.

Praise Him that our students, along with more experienced Christians, regularly hold Gospel-meetings and Bible classes at 25 different outreaches. They minister in teams of from two to six workers at each outreach.

Praise Him for the ministry of the Christian Fellowship group in the local high school. It continues to draw students to the Lord through the faithful efforts of 30 of our Bible College students, des-

pite persecution by the nuns who oppose them. We have five different classes there weekly.

Praise the Lord for seven young people baptized after the camp last May. Including them and others who have received Christ since then, 37 people have been baptized during the first seven months of this year.

Prayer Requests: The Communist rebellion is rampant in some parts of the land. Two of our workers (who pioneered two congregations) received two letters threatening to behead them if they do not stop holding their meetings. Pray for courage and safety, and God's upholding.

Some students and members need medication or even surgery for various sicknesses. For the past two months, we have sent at least eight people to the hospital. And at least six students need eyeglasses, which for them is very costly.



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

"Metamorphosis"

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2, ASV)

Since verses 1 and 2 of chapter twelve are a prelude to the discussion of specific duties of the believer and set forth the fundamental obligations a Christian must meet before he is prepared to face the challenge of living as a believer in this world, I have taken the liberty to print the two verses together again. You can re-read last month's article for my discussion of verse one; this article will discuss verse two. I will discuss the verse by dividing it into three parts: a negative command (or strong request) and a positive one followed by noting what the result of following these things will result in.

The negative command: "And be not fashioned according to this world." The simplest way I know to begin to grasp the meaning of this exhortation or command is to note different translations by those who are scholars and who try to let us into the meaning of the original language. One of my favorites is the translation by Kenneth Wuest: "And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come

from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being but is patterned after this age." That is a lot of words, but it does express what Paul is telling us. We have a new nature, being born of the Spirit, and to continue to act as you did before would be to give a false impression of what that new nature is. We have a new birth, a new life, and we ought to show that in our actions. Someone else (I am sorry but I failed to note down the translator) said it this way: "Stop masquerading in the habiliments of the world, its mannerisms, speech expressions, styles, habits." That, of course, is a paraphrase that tries to explain just what things the Holy Spirit is wanting to have us leave off. We are different and should show it without being self-righteous; just live by the Spirit.

The positive command: "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Again, a simple way to understand what Paul is here saying in the original language is to read Wuest's translation: "But change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind." The word translated "transformed" in the American Standard Version at the head of this article is the source of our word "metamorphosis;" it indicates a change as complete as the change a grubby worm goes through in becoming a butterfly. A butterfly changes its ways of doing things from what it did as a worm (maybe that is not the technical word for it, but it looks like a worm in its early stage!)-its whole nature and its way of acting change. So should the actions of a Christian change when the Holy Spirit gives him new life and takes up residence in his body. His motivation and his actions should go through a "metamorphosis."

Now notice how this metamorphosis comes about—"by the renewing of your mind." That is, by the complete change for the better. You may shudder at the thought of having to make such a transformation, to have such a renewing, but take heart—the Holy Spirit is the One Who renews us; take advantage of His presence in us and let Him work His work in us so that our minds are truly "completely changed for the better." What is impossible to man is possible to God. When God changes our minds we are ready to do what He wants.

The result: "That ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Again, let us look to Wuest for an expanded translation to make this clearer: "Resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing and complete will, and having found that it meets specifications, place your approval upon it." You see, the idea is that you can prove to yourself what that will of God is, and having found it, to do it. It is God's will for each of us that Paul is speaking of. If you, Christian, will stop looking and acting like the world and start using the divine life you have and will allow the Holy Spirit to renew your mind as you act under the influence of that new life, you can find God's will and then do it. A Christian drifting around in the world without any purpose is a sad thing to behold. Move into the world of light. God has a purpose, a will, for you, and He wants you to find and do it. The end purpose will be that you will be joyful and God will be glorified. Praise His name not only in words but in deeds.

What Did You Do With My Last Prayer Letter?

A brown envelope with the flap tucked in, lying on the mat. Just another prayer letter. Quickly; it's almost time for the bus. Shove it inside your history book and run.

One day you must think of some way of organizing all these prayer letters. Nuisance having them messing up your folders like that. But sometimes you wonder if it's worth the trouble; pretty dull some of them are. Pity!

Queer thing, missionaries don't seem to be what they used to be. It was quite shattering what the speaker said the other night about Carey. The things that man accomplished. Changed the history of India the speaker said. But that was two hundred years ago. You don't meet missionaries like that nowadays. A pity but there you are.

What was it he said about Carey's sister? Never heard that before, but it was quite impressive. Lay paralysed in bed for fifty years. Fifty years... whew! And couldn't even speak most of that time. Seems she wrote huge letters to Carey, propped up in bed. And prayed, and prayed, and prayed. For Carey. For fifty years.

No, you don't meet many missionaries like Carey nowadays. Nor many prayer partners like Carey's sister, either. Pity!

—In *World-Wide Thrust*

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Should a person who was baptized in a denominational church be rebaptized when he comes into the Church of Christ?

It would seem to be true from all I can understand in the New Testament that a person can only be truly baptized once. People may submit to acts called baptism, and there are those who may have gotten wet a number of times; but that act which is a part of the new birth, "of water and the Spirit", like a physical birth, occurs only once. For this reason we may hesitate to use the word "rebaptism." If for some reason one has never obeyed the Lord in baptism, no matter how often he has been under the water, then a scriptural act is not a rebaptism but just the only genuine act. If for some reason a person who has been obedient in baptism is again put under

the water, this can add nothing to the one true act; it is superfluous. Understanding this can help immensely with the answer to this question.

Before proceeding further, let's eliminate some of the side issues. First of all, let us establish that the "mode" of baptism about which there is no question is immersion. While there are other acts performed today which are called baptism, the baptism of the New Testament is immersion. This is almost too clear to need any proof. We are "buried in baptism" (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Now it may be that the Lord will honor some act besides immersion, especially when the individual has acted on the best light that he had and was motivated by a sincere desire to please the Lord. I do not know! But I do know what is safe, what He has promised to honor, and what is the only thing that I have any authority for preaching. For this reason, everyone who has received something for baptism which falls short of immersion should be immersed. Our God is not a tyrant, but He does require and honor the obedience of faith. If people are careful to follow the revealed way they have no occasion for wondering whether God will accept something less. From this point on in the discussion, we will assume that the baptism we are talking about is immersion.

Secondly, New Testament baptism is an act of faith. One of the necessary prerequisites for it is faith. "He that believeth and is baptized" (Mark 16:16) is the proper order. Those who were baptized as babies or as small children, unable because of age and immaturity to act by faith, should not suppose that they have been obedient in baptism. Further, those of whatever age who submitted to baptism for a trivial reason instead of as an act of faith in Christ need to be baptized. Young people (and others, even) may get carried along with the crowd and be baptized "because Johnny was." Some might submit to please or satisfy a mate, some simply to be initiated into a religious group, or some in other superficial ways. These do not transact business with the Lord. In the scriptural sense, no baptism has ever really taken place until it is an act of faith.

It is not unusual for someone to request baptism on the grounds that they do not know whether or not a previous act was acceptable to the Lord. A spiritual crisis may bring an awareness that possibly we have been holding on to a form, not reality. Or we may discover meaning attached to baptism by the word of God of which we were not aware. Now one must be careful not to deny the existence of true spiritual life no matter how feeble it may be. Repeated baptisms may betray a wrong concept, possibly more faith in the act than in the Lord of the act. But baptism is too simple an act for people to go on through left wondering, uncertain, dissatisfied. The person who is changing religious ties may be doing so because of a better understanding of Bible truths and may have unresolved questions concerning a former baptism. Certainly it is better to submit to another act than to go on in doubt. We do not even have to sort out which act was the real one; the Lord can do that.

But let's suppose that a person comes to one of our congregations who wishes to work and worship with us—he has been immersed; he

is satisfied that he acted by faith in Christ; and having been made aware of New Testament teaching, he believes that he has obeyed the Lord. Shall we require such a one to submit to baptism because the one who administered the act was not "one of us"? That is to make baptism sectarian, the very kind of error we would claim to oppose. True, the words spoken over him may not have been what we might have used, and the doctrinal position of the baptizer or the religious party he represents may not have been all it ought to have been—but the question is whether or not the baptized individual transacted business with the Lord. It is a dangerous position which makes the validity of one's baptism rest on the spiritual character or the doctrinal stand of the administrator. There can be little doubt but what some people have been baptized by men who were really unregenerate, but this does not nullify their proper act of faith. It is one's own personal faith, not that of another, which determines the relationship with God.

Now we do not say that there could never be such a difference between the baptism received and Christian baptism as to make some act unacceptable. In Acts 19:1-5 we read of a case in which twelve men were baptized, having already received another baptism. But the other baptism was John's baptism, probably not very different from Christian baptism in form but quite different in outlook and in the fact that the Holy Spirit was not given. This incident is sufficient to show us that the right act is necessary and that there are basics to be met in baptism—sincerity alone is not enough—but it is also the only such record in the New Testament, so it should not be construed as an example that the slightest technicality renders the act invalid.

"But," someone says, "doesn't the fact that the man was joined with a group that was in error make null his baptism?" Do we want to measure ourselves by the same measure? Does the fact that a young Christian among us stumbles and does some wrong things—or perhaps believes some wrong things—nullify his baptism? Or do we believe that having become a Christian the only hope lies in being perfect and without sin thereafter? Is not the Christian message that of a Savior who bears gently with the ignorant and erring and who honors repentance? The same grace of God that we claim for ourselves must also be allowed to the man whose error may be in a slightly different way.

A part of the problem behind the question is the sectarian thinking of which people who are non-sectarian in organization and theory may be guilty. I have heard people say that so-and-so "left the . . . Church and was baptized into the Church of Christ." Of course the Bible stresses that we are baptized into Christ; it is into the church only as a consequence of being into Christ. But in the case of the individual before us, what if the earlier baptism was genuine—was not the individual at that time baptized into the church of Christ? If he made the error of joining himself to something else, did that nullify the Lord's actions?

In summary, there are certain cases when an individual who has had other religious ties, in deciding to be a New Testament Christian, needs to submit to true New Testament baptism. But there may be

cases when such an individual has already become a part of the New Testament church and his change is not that of a totally new beginning but a matter of growth in the Lord. Every case is pretty much an individual one. We must be careful to teach what the New Testament teaches about baptism, and the negative teaching which abounds in so many places may require an extra emphasis in a positive way. At the same time we do not want to be guilty of a Pharisee zeal which establishes human tradition and binds what God has not.

Must one be baptized specifically for the remission of sins for his baptism to be valid?

New Testament baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), but nowhere does the scripture say or intimate that one has to be aware of that or even that such a purpose has to be in the mind of the baptizer before the baptism is valid. Few people ever come to the Lord knowing beforehand all of the significance of baptism, or of many other matters. If a growth in understanding of its symbolism and significance made baptism invalid, then most of us would have to repeat the act several times. The faith of the new birth centers on Christ, and when He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the belief is in Christ, not in something about baptism.

A baby does not have to understand the biology of reproduction to be born. Even his parents may not have attained a full understanding of all the process. And while the illustration is not perfect (we do exercise some choice in our new birth), it does point out that processes may work without an awareness of every purpose of God. It is enough if we are baptized in obedience to and in imitation of the Lord—to please Him!

—1503 Skyline Dr., Johnson City, TN 37604

Building Better Christian Families

by Fred W. Schott



"DISCIPLINE: AVOID THE EXTREMES"

My father laid on you a heavy yoke. I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions. (1 Kings 12:11, NIV)

There are two extremes in disciplining children. Both can have disastrous results. One extreme is to do nothing when children misbehave. For years Christians have complained about our permissive society. In my experience, few parents would admit to being permissive, but many I would call "do nothing" parents. The

emphasis in disciplining should be “taking action.” Many parents do a lot of talking, lecturing, questioning, arguing, and warning, but take no action.

At the other extreme are those parents who are too severe, too harsh with their children. These parents overreact to everything. They become a scourge and often can break a child’s spirit in an effort to control behavior. They take action, all right, but often it is like killing a fly with a sledge hammer.

A common theme that is wrong with our families, our schools, and our justice system is that too many children find themselves on a frightening pendulum that swings between these two extremes. It is the too severe swing of discipline I want to address now.

The Old Testament story of Solomon’s son, King Rehoboam, gives insight into what happens when discipline becomes a scourge (I Kings 12:1-14). Rehoboam rejected the wise counsel of his elder advisors. Instead, he took the advice of the younger advisors.

King Rehoboam said in effect to the children of Israel, those whom God had put in his charge, “If you think my dad, King Solomon, was hard on you, you haven’t seen anything yet.” The Bible says he then proceeded to “scourge” them. He overtaxed them, overworked them, and showed no mercy, no kindness. He tried to control the children of Israel by breaking their spirits.

At least three things happened as a result. I think that the same things happen to modern day parents when we become a scourge and try to control by breaking the spirits of the children God has put in our charge.

First, the children rebel. They begin to resist, ignore, and even purposely defy the authority of parents. Some children, who are articulate or strong-willed, begin at an early age to rebel. Others rebel in subtle, often deceitful ways. Some run away and give allegiance to other authority figures. In Rehoboam’s case allegiance was given to another king. Today, children often rebel from the authority of a parent and come under the authority of an evil cult leader. Still others wait until they are adults, out from under parental control. Then they completely reject everything their parents have stood for.

Second, when discipline is overdone and severe punishment inflicted, children focus on how they are being treated, not on their own behavior. Children do not have to like or appreciate discipline at the time. But, discipline should help the child focus on his own behavior. When severe punishment is used in harsh and unloving ways, children can only focus on what’s happened to them. Resentment, distrust, and anger become deep-seated. It becomes easy for children to find excuses for not doing what they know is right. It was Rehoboam’s job as king to lead God’s people in righteousness. Instead, they rebelled. And, until they were led away into captivity 400 years later, they led sinful lives, openly defying God’s laws about worship and many other things.

Third and finally, God moved in sorrow, and it was God who removed the children of Israel from Rehoboam’s charge. The children of Israel belonged to God, not to Rehoboam to do with as he

wanted. When Rehoboam abused this sacred trust, God took away his kingly authority. Sadly, today God also often takes parental authority away from parents who scourge their children.

But, how is a parent to know? How can we avoid this destructive extreme? How can we keep from swinging from the permissive to the severe end of the pendulum?

Good discipline is that which:

1. *Is certain to occur.* Whenever children step outside the boundaries we have established, parents calmly respond, even when they are tired and are tempted to ignore it this time.

2. *Is related to the offense.* This is not always easy but should be a goal. Spilled milk should be cleaned up. Hitting a sibling results in doing something nice for that sibling. Getting home late from school means staying in the house Saturday afternoon, etc.

3. *Is reasonable.* Cleaning the house from top to bottom is reasonable for a teenager but not a five year old. A two-page book report on Christian dating is great for the teen who comes in ten minutes late on a Saturday evening, but probably too late for a college sophomore home for Christmas break.

4. *Is swift.* The sooner the discipline is applied, the more effective it is. Anything other than immediate is too late for the toddler! A parent alone with the 10 year old should discipline quickly and not wait for the other parent to get home.

5. *Need not be severe.* Remember, our goal is to raise children who are responsible, who think clearly about issues of right and wrong, who are self-disciplined. When parents lose sight of this, their goal simply becomes control and peace and quiet. They will often resort to punishments that "break the spirit."

Pray for guidance, wisdom, and consistency. Pray to avoid the destructive extremes of discipline.

The Great Fulfillment Vs. The Great Commission

by Dr. Daniel W. Bacon

Scripture abounds in paradoxes—two thoughts that seem mutually exclusive. God's sovereignty and man's free will is a classic example. So is God's command to make our requests known to Him, coupled with His assurance that He knows each need in detail before we call.

Seen in the right perspective, of course, God's paradoxes co-exist in peace and complement each other. From our difficult standpoint we have to hold both truths in tension and avoid extremes in emphasis which distort the total picture.

Frequently, however, in the grind of living, these paradoxes aren't so easy for us to reconcile. One such paradox touches the very nerve of missions, and it causes me great concern today because of its potential for distortion. We might call it the Great Fulfillment versus the Great Commission.

Scripture makes it clear that each of us is a creation of God,

uniquely designed to glorify God with our mind, emotions, Spirit, and body, fulfilling our potential in every area. Talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts have been given as a stewardship to develop and utilize. Coupled with this is a recognition that we have needs and a capacity to live in relation. Fulfilling my potential, then, is important.

On the other hand, the same Bible talks about a worldwide mandate which may involve personal risk, loneliness or isolation, separation from family and friends, and doing tasks that go against the grain. The needs of the three billion in the non-Christian world cry out for fulfillment—sometimes at the cost of my own fulfillment, or so it seems. Herein is the tension, and herein lies the potential for distortion.

My concern at this point is an overemphasis today on self-fulfillment to the exclusion of commitment to the Great Commission. Granted, self-help books, fitness and health schemes, and a host of other self-improvement-oriented activities have a place. But where is our balance when Christian books on jogging far outsell books on mission? Or when seminars for successful living draw much greater crowds than the annual mission conference?

Let's look for a moment at Elijah to see the intertwine of this tension between God's job and personal joy. In 1 Kings 17 we discover Elijah at work as a mighty prophet one minute, then see him taken into quiet seclusion the next. Think of Elijah's various needs for fulfillment and then note what the will of God involved for him for the next three years. God's plan for him began with a period of isolation by the brook Cherith in the wilderness. Didn't Elijah need a support group and body life? Perhaps, but the busy prophet suddenly had to face inactivity and even monotony. Where was the use of his spiritual gifts and talents? Changes in location came as well—first to Transjordan and then to a small Gentile village. Didn't God realize he needed security? And then what about the prophet's enforced dependency—even upon a Gentile woman! Was Elijah really fulfilling his potential and being a good steward of his time and talents?

Obviously something more is at stake than the development of Elijah as a person. Apostasy was about to engulf the nation, and Elijah was called to play a critical role—not asked, but commanded. At stake was really the glory of God and the outworking of His plan. Elijah was not an end in and of himself. Perhaps this perspective is that which will enable us to keep the balance between personal fulfillment and our task in this world. God went on to show great personal concern for the prophet—He was not unmindful of Elijah's needs. And yet Elijah had to subordinate his personal plans and potential to the higher purpose of God.

Remember that the solution to a paradox is the right perspective. Our responsibility is both to become all that God intends and to do all that God commands. In the will of God both truths are operative, though at times they may seem contradictory. At best, self-fulfillment should lead to other-fulfillment in mission. If not, then we have missed the higher purpose, and we have distorted the paradox.

—Editorial from *East Asia Millions*

NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . ."

Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship:

This annual conference will again be held at the Glenmora Church of Christ, from Monday night, Nov. 16, through Thursday night, Nov. 19. Preachers from Ind., Ky., Tenn., and La. will be speaking on the general theme, "Apostasy of Today." Carl Kitzmiller will give 3 expositions on 1 Cor. 12-14, and Earl Mullins will speak 3 times on Humanism. For hospitality write Dennis LeDoux, P.O. Box 314, Glenmora, LA 71433, or call 318-748-4243.

Christian Youth Encampment, DeRidder, Louisiana:

The CYE board of directors decided to continue with two Senior Weeks of camp next year, and also to add an adults-only week to the five regular camp weeks.

Linton, IN:

Wed. night classes for children resumed Sept. 2 with the following couples teaching: Milford & Becky Stone teaching the beginners and primaries; Vickie & Gary Roberts, the juniors and jr.-highs; Ricky & Linda Crynes, the teen-agers. Harry Coultas is teaching the adults the book of Proverbs. —Linton bulletin

(We recommend Linton's use of married couples teaching together. Children and teens need to have male models of discipleship as well as women. And team-teaching can be very effective. And serving Christ together in the same ministry draws husbands and wives closer, too. —Ed.)

Turkey Creek Church of Christ, LA:

Our youth and some not so young as well, visited the Prairie Manor Nursing Home in Pine Prairie and brought them a wonderful gospel message in song. Many of our youth attended summer camp at C.Y.E. in DeRidder, La. They also went on a canoe cruise down the Whis Quichitsee river directed by Danny Broussard; they had a lot of laughs and not a single person came out dry.

Bro. Glenn Baber had us engage in a fasting and prayer program as we

were selecting and ordaining an elder, to replace one of the elders who has gone to be with the Lord. We are happy to report that Bro. J. C. Guillory was ordained to fill this office.

Sunday August 30th, all the Sunday School classes participated in an end of a quarter recital program conducted by our Sunday School teachers which was just great.

One Wednesday night after the Bible class was over, we met in the fellowship hall and wrote letters to missionaries in various parts of the world. Bro. Baber gave short reports on their activities and furnished their addresses to us. We call it Missionary Night. We hope we brought a little sunshine to their life.

—Velma Johnson, reporter

Shizuoka City, Japan:

The Lord has blessed me with a successful surgery and recovery, though it is a gradual process. I feel much better and stronger than ever before and I've just started to take charge of the weekly prayer meeting and preaching. I try not to do too much for a while, as the doctor advises. I've lost about 40 lbs so far and the doctor worries a little about it, and wants me to come back for further check ups.

—Shichiro Nakahara, Sept. 21

Words of Life Radio Ministry:

Six new congregations have been started this year in the Philippines. And several congregations meeting in homes and small chapels have run out of room due to the addition of new members.

Words of Life continues to get mail from around the world. For instance, recent letters came from Norway, England, Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.

Visitor from the Philippines:

Cyrus Gesulga, an evangelist from Mindanao, Philippines, will be visiting churches in Ky. and La. during the month of November. He may be booked c/o T. Y. Clark, 3316 Moulton Lane, Louisville, KY 40218; 502-454-0896.

Gallatin, TN:

Special thanks to all of our young people who participated in Youth Sunday (twelve participants' names are listed).

In our Sunday night lessons this month we have been considering Jesus' call: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Note: 1) Following—submission to the Lordship of Jesus. 2) Forming—He makes us fishermen. 3) Fishing—actually doing the job. This Sunday night we will mention some excuses for why we don't fish for men.

Sunday morning we talked about the seal of the Spirit and found that when we give place to the Spirit a number of provisions in our life are the result. One of them is the new melody of Eph. 5:19. We said that God's people will replace the songs of drunkenness and sordidness with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

In the light of this scriptural truth I want to comment on a problem facing us, and especially our youth. It is the matter of today's music on TV, radio and audio. Two groups which recently appeared in Nashville and drew large crowds (including Christian young people) were: The Beastie Boys and Motley Crue.

The first group recently appeared in New Orleans and the newspaper reported: their message is basically one of rebellion played out in a "definitely vulgar, probably obscene and violently loud" manner. Earlier this year they were banned from London and Los Angeles.

A letter in "The Tennessean" says this about the second group: "Why do these bands have to get up in front of thousands of our young people and promote sex, drugs, and foul usage of

the infamous "F" word. It's totally disgusting, and I think they should change their name to Motley Crude!" I hope our youth realize before its too late, that these qualities in a person are not "cool."

Christian parents—take note and beware! Let us all pray for our youth as they take a stand against peer pressure and seek to stand for the Lord.

—Julius Hovan, bulletin

The next event at Woodland Bible Camp is the Bean Dinner & Camp Corporation Meeting October 24 beginning at 11:30 a.m. with the free bean dinner. Cost for belonging to the Woodland Bible Camp corporation is \$5.00 yearly. New members are sought each year.

—Linton bulletin

Robert & Joy Garrett will live in Louisville and will be available to visit churches from mid-December through Autumn 1988. Carl Vogt Wilson is their scheduling agent, at 231 S. Galt Avenue, Louisville, KY 40206. Phone: 502-897-2831

A Stimulating Magazine:

Two of our articles this month are reprinted from *One Body*, a quarterly magazine promoting unity among God's people. You may order a sample copy from P.O. Box 1132, Joplin, MO 64802; or just send \$5 for a year's subscription.

The arrival of the *Word & Work* is a high-point in each month in our home. Give our regards and thanks to each one having a part in publishing the magazine. May God continue to bless this endeavor.

Don McGee

Marshall I. Naugle

On August 24, 1987 our beloved brother Marshall I. Naugle fell asleep in Jesus (his dear Lord, and ours) after a long and fruitful life that was dedicated to God. He faithfully taught the full truth of the Word of God. His faithful and righteous deeds were helpful and strengthening to all that knew him, especially those of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He truly longed for the appearing of our Lord.

Brother Naugle served faithfully as an elder for more than thirty-two years in the church here in Borden, in all patience and longsuffering. He remained "steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers."

We the remaining officers and minister of the Borden Church extend to sister Osie Naugle (the faithful companion of Brother Naugle for more than fifty-eight years), sons Dale, Bruce, Ray and daughter Doris, our heart-felt and humble sympathies. We join with you in watchfulness for our Savior's coming and our union with Brother Naugle for all Eternity.

—E. C. Ringer

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C. Total paid circulation	955	922
D. Free Distribution (incl. samples) by mailcarrier or other means	129	40
E. Total Distribution (sum of C and D)	1084	960
F. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	179	278
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I Certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signed) Alex V. Wilson

COMING NEXT MONTH:

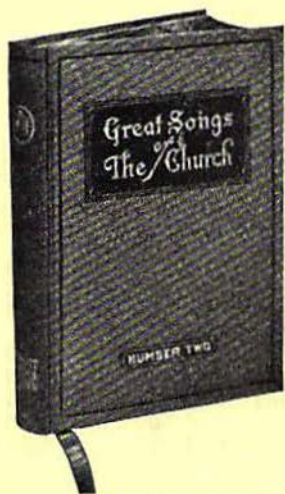
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