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THEME:

Priorities, and the Poor



Priorities, and the Poor

Alex V. Wilson

This month we have some guest-editorials for you, all of them worthy of serious thought. There are four of them, from four different men. Two are from Scripture, and two from contemporary writers. We believe they are especially relevant at this time: The year draws to an end, so let us review our priorities. Christmas approaches, so beware of materialism and remember the poor and needy.

• • •
He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly
and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.
—Micah 6:8

What Would Jesus Write to Our Churches?

James O. Baird

Last month we raised the subject of Christ's agenda for the churches. If Christ were addressing us today as he addressed the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3, what would he say?

In addition to answers mailed in spontaneously, a group of knowledgeable brotherhood personalities was polled, and this article reflects those answers. Keep in mind these are only human appraisals of what a divine judgment might be.

Interestingly enough, by far the greatest number thought Christ would tell us to do more to strengthen our *families*. This reflects the the area of most concern. Churches are doing more to meet this need than ever before. However, there is an overwhelming feeling we should be doing so much more. Satan is winning too many battles in our Christian homes.

Next to the need for building better families, several other areas received almost the same number of replies. However, in this group, *mission work* was highest. We are doing some things, but even so, what we are doing is so small in the light of the task. We do not have the hunger for souls we should. On the congregational level, we are not willing to make the investment in missionary dollars we should. We have some great people who want to serve as missionaries. They are dedicated and well trained. The greatest deterrent is finding good churches that will send them.

About equal in number were those who thought Christ would tell us to develop more good *elders*. A typical answer emphasized the need for spiritual shepherds more apt in pastoring skills than business techniques. A certain business-like approach is needed in some church matters, as we all can see, but there is such a vast difference between a church and a business. In a business the profit or loss statement is the bottom line by which success is measured. In a church, Christ's judgment turns to the care of the sheep over which elders serve as under-shepherd serving the Chief Shepherd.

Along with the importance of developing better elders was the need to emphasize the urgency of more *Bible study*. The view is widespread that we are not the Bible students we were a generation ago. We are much more prone to be passive watchers of television than thinking Christians actively studying God's Word.

Do you agree if Christ were writing to us today, he would emphasize, in this order, (1) building better families; (2) doing a better job of evangelizing the world; (3) working harder to develop spiritually-minded elders; and (4) greater emphasis on really studying the Bible?

What do you think Christ's agenda would be for the congregation where you are a member?

—In *Christian Chronicle*, January '87; used by permission

(While we fully agree that the priorities just mentioned are urgent, there are some others just as vital. Maybe we tend to minimize them, but we mustn't. One that often gets overlooked is helping the needy. —A.V.W.)

Penetrate the Darkness Around You

William Pile

Jesus declared us "salt" and "light" (Matt. 5:13, 14), and then proceeded to prescribe us as His remedy for the decay and darkness that sin has brought on the world. Translated to our own neighborhood that means that somebody living close to us needs us to get involved in their decay (addiction, immorality, crime, despair, etc.). Somebody needs us to come into their darkness like a ray of sunshine pokes its way through a dirty window pane and brightens a dingy room. O, how the world needs real Christians! If they don't find them they'll take any old counterfeit. That tells you how bad loneliness afflicts our race.

It's in the marketplace of sin that we Christians find out if what we believe is believable, if it works. So many religious ideas sound

good bouncing off upholstered pews and carpeted sanctuaries, but they aren't worth a dime to the couple whose marriage is exploding, or to the pregnant 14-year-old whose childhood is about to end. Churches talk mostly to themselves if their members aren't deeply involved in the world. If we'd rather invest dollars in foreign missions than two hours a week at a convalescent hospital, our religion may not be real. What we believe may not matter. Worse yet, it doesn't even matter to God: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).
—from *Good News* magazine

(King Josiah) did what was right and just,
so all went well with him.
He defended the cause of the poor and needy,
and so all went well.
Is not that what it means to know me?
declares the LORD.
—Jeremiah 22:15b-16

* * * * *

Our Responsibility to the Poor

Fred W. Schott

Some, perhaps many, of you will disagree with the points that I will make in this article. I ask only that you search the scriptures and your hearts to see if these things that I say are of God or not.

Fundamental and evangelical Christianity has become so infatuated with right-wing political thought that to many Christians, when the words poor, or minority, or black, or charity, or social responsibility are even mentioned, their hackles are raised, their defenses thrown up, and the battle lines are quite clearly drawn.

In some very strange way, helping poor people, as the scriptures clearly command, and the calling for social justice and equality, as is clearly indicated in the Day of Jubilee (Lev. 25), not to mention the angry cries of the prophets, makes one suspected as a liberal modernist or even worse, as a socialist or a communist.

Many Christians sound *anything* but loving, as they spew out their contempt for busing, welfare, government giveaways, and so on. As if there were no *people*, thousands of people, involved at all! I am very afraid that our contempt of these programs is also read by the world, perhaps rightfully so, as contempt for those most wronged by these very programs—those in need of our Great Physician.

Just the point! Even the largest and most humane government in the history of the earth cannot provide for the poor as well as those subjects of the Kingdom of God. Any time man, with the best of intentions, tries to ease the plight of the poor, the results are most often a dehumanizing, bureaucratic mess. Our King, King Jesus, demands a better and more loving way from His subjects.

Satan has effectively used the current political processes to bring to a virtual halt any legitimate Christian response to the poor and oppressed of our day.

The Testimony of Scripture is Overwhelming—Or It Should Be!

In considering God's people's responsibility to the poor, the testimony of scripture is overwhelming—or it should be! For example, let us consider two of our most dearly held doctrines, communion and baptism. We are not the only fellowship of churches who have very strong opinions on these two issues. In fact, the great disagreements over them is evidence of how strongly most churches hold to them and the importance they place on them.

Concerning communion and baptism, the following is based upon my own quick survey of a Bible concordance, and it could be off a little; but it should be close enough to give some idea about which I am speaking. Communion, the doctrines and the practices, no matter what they be, are based on about seven passages and some twenty verses. Baptism, again the doctrines and the practices, are based on about nineteen passages and some fifty-two verses.

God's people's responsibility to the poor, however, is based on over *three hundred* passages and over *one thousand* verses! The figures are not mine, but found in another brother's book. Again, there could be some error. Yet even a great deal of error in any of the above figures would still leave room for great contrast. However one does so, any examination of the scriptures without a doubt reveals a special concern for the poor.

A Quick Survey of the Scriptures

From the Mosaic covenant to the promises of the gospel, the Bible points to the poor, the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the needy and the oppressed as a special concern of our King.

Let us look first at the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, *God especially loves the poor and does not forget them.* As we see in Psalm 72:12-13, God's anointed One "delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and needy, and saves the lives of the needy." And in Psalm 9:12, the Lord "does not forget the cry of the afflicted." Isaiah 25:4 tells us that God has been a "stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in distress."

In the Old Testament social order, the poor received an economic advantage. Deut. 15:7-11 and Ex. 22:25 shows us that the people were commanded to loan freely to the poor, but to charge them no interest. And in Lev. 19:9-10 and 23:22, we see that part of the wheat and grape harvests were to be left ungathered for the benefit of the poor. Significantly, part of the purpose of the tithe was to provide relief for the poor, as can be seen in Deut. 14:29 and 26:12-13.

The Old Testament emphasizes that God requires justice for the poor and will judge those who oppress them. God's words by the prophet Zechariah are representative of the scores of similar passages:

Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy each to

his brother; do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor.

Finally, in the Old Testament we can see that God's people bear a special ethical responsibility for the poor. Remembrance of their own Egyptian slavery is cited in Deut. 24:17-22 as sufficient motivation to show mercy to the oppressed. The faithfulness of God's people was continually measured by their treatment of the poor.

WHAT OF JESUS AND THE POOR?

What of Jesus and the poor? Three points must be made.

One: Jesus made the preaching of the Gospel to the poor a validation of His own ministry. As He said in His hometown sermon, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, *because* He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." It can easily be seen in the Gospel records that in Jesus' ministry there was a conscious intent and a purposed practice to preach the Gospel especially to the poor.

Two: Jesus believed that the poor were more ready and able to understand and accept the Gospel. That is in stark contrast to the attitude of the modern church, which continually makes excuses for not taking the Gospel to the poor, especially if the poor are non-white.

Jesus once thanked the Father, as you will recall, that these things about which He was speaking were hid from the wise and understanding, and revealed to babes, or the uneducated, unsophisticated, the poor.

Three: Jesus specifically directed the Gospel call to the poor, as can be seen in the favorite passage, "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No matter how hard we try to spiritualize these words, Jesus spoke here, literally, in the first place, to the poor. Jesus' call is pre-eminently to the poor; of course, not exclusively, but pre-eminently to those most wearied, most burdened, both spiritually and physically, from long hours of physical labor, from various oppressions know only to the poor.

The record is clear. The fundamental sympathies of Jesus were with the poor and oppressed. In short, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, demonstrated the same attitude toward the poor that God revealed in the Old Testament.

THE POOR AND THE MODERN CHURCH

What of the modern church and Jesus? Again three points must be made.

One: Like Jesus, the church must begin to place a special emphasis on the poor. As they have always been, the poor are ready for the Gospel. Every great spiritual revival in history has been marked by a great response of the world's most rejected masses.

There has been an unfortunate pattern in regards to the poor and the gospel. First, in large outflowings of the Holy Spirit, the poor respond. Second, through their newfound life and its religious discipline, they begin to prosper as God blesses them. This new prosperity leads to a rise in economic status. Third, with this new-

found respectability comes a neglect for the new poor. I say to you tonight that it is in this third state that the modern evangelical, fundamentalist American church can largely be found. We have forgotten from whence we came, and worse yet, we self-righteously fail to give credit to our gracious King for who we are and what we have become. True gratefulness and thanksgiving to our King for His many blessings and provisions, must be accompanied by concern for those not so blessed.

Two: The number one priority among the poor must be the proclamation of the pure, unadulterated Gospel of salvation. Any work of Christians that does not clearly proclaim the saving plan of God's salvation for the individual is not the complete Gospel of Christ.

Three: Christian responsibility cannot stop with evangelism. Why? Because the scriptures and Christ dictate that we should meet the physical and social needs of the poor as well as the spiritual. Any Christian work which does not show real concern for the physical and social needs of people is also not the complete Gospel of Christ: Luke 4:16-21; 12:29-34; Acts 20:33-35; Gal. 2:9-10; Jam. 2:1-7; 1 Jn. 3:16-18.

Listen, brothers and sisters, we have direct commands from our King to do justice, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the widow and fatherless, visit the prisoner, and set at liberty the oppressed. We greatly err—no, we out and out *sin*—if we dare to spiritualize these direct commands from our Jubilee King.

A right and Biblical response to the poor by subjects of the King is more than just doing good deeds, more than an updated Christian philanthropy, more than a guide to help Christians avoid sin. It is even more than doing so just because we have been commanded to do so by our King. Such a response by the people of God is a bold proclamation to the powers of the world about the Lordship of Christ the King. It says to the world, to the powers of this darkness, that there is a new order, there is a new community at work in the world, where Christ is King, where the King rules the hearts and actions of men.

(Fred's regular column, "Building Better Christian Families," will resume in Jan.)

* * * * *

(The following two articles are both by Carl Ketcherside, of St. Louis. But the first was written in March 1969 for the magazine he edited, *Mission Messenger*, and the second he wrote for us a few months ago. The first is the challenge of a prophet, the second the testimony of a participant. Both are important.)

Real Faith and Stinking Ghettos

W. Carl Ketcherside, 1969

"Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing." James 2:15-17.

We are again forced to examine the quality of our faith in this day. *We live in a different world than the one which most of us entered at birth.* It is no longer a quiet, placid rural culture in which we exist. Secularization and urbanization have married and brought forth technopolis. We are in a world of ferment and torment. Roots have been jerked up. People have been shunted from their places of security. Many have been forced to migrate to large centers of population which have a way of life for which they are not adjusted and to which they cannot readily adapt.

The result is that *city centers decay and rot, and human beings for whom Jesus died are forced to live like animals.* Our social fabric is best described in the prophetic words, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole even unto the the head there is no soundness in it." What has the institutional church done? Has it closed the wounds, bound up the bruises, or mollified the stripes with oil? Candor forces us to admit that generally it has fled the scene to protect and preserve its image. It has sought refuge in the suburbs where it can pretend that the noise and the stink and the putridity are not there, that it is all a bad dream from which we will awaken to laugh at our fright.

Thus, *well-dressed, perfumed, jewelry-wearing men and women can sit in air-conditioned temples and worship God without giving a thought to the fact that less than a mile away, human beings arise from troubled sleep in rat-infested, stinking ghettos where an air of hopelessness and despair broods like an evil spirit over their grimy tenements.*

There are those who have not retreated. In bold new approaches they have attacked the problem. They have recognized "religious" buildings and structures for what they are—mere tools to get the job done. They know that these tools will not always fit the task in our day. "Church buildings" are useless when people will not enter them, and it is people for whom Jesus died. Abandoned store buildings, private homes, remodeled garages, these have been pressed into service as oases in a desert of despair, where men can secure food, clothing, counselling, and see Jesus at work in His members.

But all too often even such meager attempts have been attacked and condemned by the church now safely ensconced in the shiny new edifice on Greenacres Drive. The converted slum building in which ghetto children are shown how to cook and sew, where Bible classes are taught and subsistence meals are served, is casually dismissed as a part of "the social gospel." The old store building with the broken whiskey bottles at its side, which has been made into a center where dope addicts can receive help and strength is scoffed at. The coffee house maintained by young people as a bridge between the world of the "ups and ins" and the frightful world of the "down and outs" is sneered at as a project of starry-eyed do-gooders.

But Jesus may be nearer to the slum dwelling, the ramshackle store building, and the coffee house, than he is to the modernistic suburban cathedral with its plush aisle rugs and its stained glass windows.

Jesus was interested in anything which contributed to manhood,

whether physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual. He was touched by all of our infirmities. And he was no less God's Son when dealing with the physical than when dealing with the spiritual.

The word for salvation is *soteria*. The word for save is *sozo*. It means deliverance from any peril, danger or abnormal condition. It is rendered save 92 times, heal 3, and make whole 9. It has to do with the restoration of one to a state of normalcy. Sin did not affect one part of man, but man as a whole, as a person. It was sin which caused sickness, pain and death. For this reason one actively opposes sin in the world when he overcomes its effect upon the body, mind or heart. Thus the word used to describe what happened to the sick who touched the garment of Jesus (Matthew 14:36) is identical with that used for the effect wrought upon those who hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn to God (Acts 28:27).

Jesus moved on earth in a body. He still does so, but we are that body now, and when we minister to the sick, the feeble, the hungry, and the distressed, we are ministering to Jesus. And Jesus is ministering through us.

* * * * *

The Cornerstone

W. Carl Ketcherside, 1987

I began preaching at the age of twelve. I will soon reach my seventy-ninth birthday. In the 1950's I began to dream. Three years ago one of my dreams was put into action. We rented a storefront. It had long been a tavern and a house of prostitution. Someone set it afire. One of the women was burned to death. The place stood empty for seven months. It was purchased by a Christian. I discovered it while driving around. We rented it and named it the Cornerstone. And we moved in not knowing what to expect.

I visited 430 homes in the area. I found drug use and alcoholism. Immorality was rampant. Crime was overflowing. We began by giving away clothing. We made two resolutions. We would never ask anyone for anything. And we would never charge anyone for anything. That policy has paid off. Every week people call us. They have heard that we do not charge and they want to bring clothing to give us. We turn away truckloads of clothing. In addition, we supply three other places with clothing. We give away groceries when we have them. We also give away cooking utensils, furniture and toys when we have them.

Early on, we learned to give away Bibles and good reading materials. We also gave away blankets. Nell has given away more than 325 new blankets this winter. We help with the rent and utilities of some who are about to lose their homes because of dereliction. When we first began we were introduced to the needy, the seedy and the greedy. But we kept right on. Now the last two have virtually disappeared. It is interesting to note what influence does. We have never allowed smoking in the place. People come to the door and

throw their cigarettes away. The language has generally been that of which none need to be ashamed.

Let me tell you what happens each week. We begin by sorting clothing. Generally we are helped by ten people. These represent four ethnic groups. Some cannot speak a word of English. This takes place on Monday. The clothing is sorted and sized. It is given away on Wednesday. That night I teach a Bible Class of from 15 to 23. The subject is "Good News Saint Louis." Thursday we have a quilting bee. Friday evening is Teen-Age time. About two dozen show up for it. Many were formerly on drugs. On Saturday morning we have a Bible Study for children. On Sunday we gather around the table of the Lord. There are forty who come to this.

One evening per month we fix a dinner for street people. Afterwards we show a movie with a religious setting. All of these activities require a lot of planning. They are supervised by a group of young and old who have learned the meaning of love. Many of those who come have never experienced it in their lives. It is a new and powerful thing. We have baptized alcoholics, the immoral and drug addicts. It is a wonderful experience to see them clean up their lives and go straight. One thing noticeable is how they rely on someone who is living a clean and above-board life.

It is tragic to visit them in their places of abode. Many live in filthy little apartments. They are alive with mice and roaches. The older ones hardly ever walk on the street. There have been seven murders in four blocks of the place in three years. Many adults and children suffer abuse that is almost incredible. We find it necessary to do a lot of counselling. But it pays off. The size and constituency of the assembly on the Lord's Day is proof. For months it was impossible to bring together a group on that day.

I was working at the Cornerstone recently. It was early in the morning. I heard a knock at the door. When I opened it there stood a woman crying. I knew her quite well. I had persuaded her to come in for clothes. I also knew her son. He was almost always drunk. He beat up on his mother frequently. But he liked me and would do anything to help me. The old woman, in her late seventies, was a pitiable object as she stood before me. She was unkempt, wearing an old coat held together with a large safety pin. When she gained control of herself she said she had come to me because I was the only one she knew who would care.

She told me that when she arose that morning she looked out of the window. She saw a man lying on the gravel drive. She went out to see if he was drunk, or sleeping one off. When she got near enough she saw his throat was cut from ear to ear. He had been hit in the head and his brains were on her driveway. When she could gain control of herself she called the police. When they came, they knew the man, who was about twenty-five. They told her he was a no-good. One officer reached out with his foot, turned the man over and said, "They did a good job on him." I took the old woman by the hand and prayed for her. She crossed herself when I finished. She told me she felt better and went down the street. That is *the seventh murder within three blocks of the Cornerstone since we have been there.*

We operate on what we have. We do not ask for anything. We do not beg. But we seek to spend wisely, judiciously and carefully what is provided. Saint Louis is a city of many homeless, helpless and hopeless. I did not know of the number of people sleeping in cars, parks and under bridges. Another thing I did not realize was how many sick and helpless there are in a great city like this—I was insulated from them. I always attended a nice, clean and lovely congregation. We did not see the pain and suffering of the distraught, disturbed and distressed.

Even now, the plight of the retarded and mentally disoriented affects me. There are many of them. We cannot understand a lot of them. They cannot always understand us. They become disturbed and upset. We pray for them. We ask God to guide us and help us relate to them. We try to clothe them. But we have lost a lot of them in three years.

I wish we could see more Cornerstones. As old as I am, I hope to see another started in Saint Louis before I have to depart. Pray for us very earnestly. Ask God to bless us all with proper judgment. May we use our ability wisely. Let all of us labor to help the helpless, affect the afflicted and honour the homeless. God be with and bless you all.

* * * * *

Flypaper and the Never-Confessed Sin

by Pat Heston

G. Campbell Morgan called it "the master motive in the emotional life of Judas." He was speaking of "covetousness." What role does it play in our lives?

The word "covet" does not startle The Modern Christian. We do not blush at its mere mention, nor flee from its presence. Yet, it is the deadliest of all deadly sins, and is, again and again, unsparingly condemned in the pages of God's word. It is the one word in the Ten Commandments that brought Saul of Tarsus, later Paul the Apostle, to a conviction of his sin. This he confessed in his Roman letter (7:7). Able to stand erect in the presence of every other commandment, he bowed his head and knew his guilt full well when he reached the word "covet."

Is there a more subtle sin? It is so subtly a part of most Christian's life-styles that we don't even recognize it when present, nor see it to be sin. As a result, it both conquers and controls us.

Does the following parable speak to us? A fly landed on a strip of gooey, sweet-smelling flypaper. Not seeing a challenger in sight, he happily announced, "My flypaper!" Sinking his nose in the syrupy stuff, he dined sumptuously. Then deciding to leave, he began hopelessly beating his wings against the air, the paper announced, "My fly!"

That's often the way it is with a man and his possessions. Sur-

veying his accumulations he proudly says, "My possessions!" The possessions knowingly announce, "My man!"

Francis de Sales, reputed to have heard more confessions than any other Catholic priest, said the sin of covetousness was never one time confessed to him! Never once! I wonder how often it is ever confessed to God. This is the problem with covetousness—it is seldom recognized by its victim.

Covetousness is so easily camouflaged. Most who are guilty of it refuse to face it. It represents Satan's "home field" where he has won many stunning victories. Covetousness is to the soul what cancer is to the body. No wonder Jesus preached about it (Luke 16:14)! No wonder He warned, "Watch out! Be on your guard against covetousness!" (Luke 12:15)

Over against the sin of covetousness stands the grace of contentment.

Thomas A' Kempis' words are filled with wisdom: "This is the highest wisdom: to despise the World and aim at the Kingdom of Heaven." Indeed it is. And such a properly aimed heart brings about true and lasting contentment.

We know well that the problem with aiming for the world and the things of the world is that it always takes more (even if just a little more) to satisfy. In such an atmosphere, covetousness feeds and fuels itself, and contentment remains beyond our reach, elusive.

This is why we must heed the call of Jesus—and of many modern thinkers—to simplify our lives, weeding out all but a desire for God. In such an atmosphere as that, covetousness disappears and contentment reigns. Therefore, we must covet God alone.

Cheryl was a nine-year-old friend of mine with one arm and terminal cancer. In long conversations with her, she would speak seriously and soberly of death, and longingly and joyfully of seeing Jesus soon. Two weeks before she died, she was asked to record her definition of "life" to be read at her funeral. This was it: "I love God; He loves me." That is contentment.

That is what I am after. What about you?

—The Brookvalley Church Bulletin

* * * *

A MORE GIVING TYPE OF CHRISTMAS

"In the last few years we have developed a Christmas custom that holds down our spending and adds a new dimension to the holiday as well. We add up the cost of our family gifts and place a check under the Christmas tree of comparable value, to be sent to a development project abroad. The children have responded well to this idea of getting a little less and sharing a little more."

(The above quote is from a book I recommend very, VERY highly: *Living More Simply*, edited by Ronald Sider, published by Inter-Varsity Press @ \$4.95; 192 pages. It consists of Biblical principles for joyful-but-sacrificial living, followed by sections of testimonies, re: non-materialistic living in the family, the church, and professional life, and a stirring chapter on evangelism and simpler lifestyle. —AVW)

A Miraculous Deliverance

Robert K. Smith

One afternoon as we journeyed by truck through the game-infested area in Equatorial East Africa, toward a tribe of people who had never yet had the true Gospel preached to them, we were halted by the tremendous downpour of a tropical rain. In the midst of the rain, and drenched to the skin, we set up camp, for we knew darkness would fall a bit earlier than usual and our party needed rest. My wife, a son born in America before we went to Africa, my little daughter born on the shore of Victoria Lake, an African helper, and I made up the party.

As we slept the rain ceased and the tropical moon came out in all its glory. There is no difficulty to see at long distances distinctly by moon light. I've often seen Victoria Lake at a distance of sixty miles by moonlight. Too, one can read print as fine as in one's Bible. About fifteen minutes before midnight we were suddenly awakened by a strange motion of the ground and tent. It seemed to be rising and lowering under us, and in perfect rhythm with this was a swish, swish sort of sound as though some large animal was walking through the tall, wet elephant grass which was all about us. We knew that the rhinoceros were very numerous in this area as well as were elephants and lions, and I supposed that a large rhino was approaching our tent. Knowing that it might pass right through our tent and kill us all, I slipped quietly from my cot, took my rifle in my hand and slipped just as quietly through the flaps of our tent.

Seeing that there was nothing directly in front I peeked around the corner, all the time with a finger on the trigger of my rifle, expecting to see the large brute near at hand. But to my amazement just twenty-three normal steps away stood fifteen elephants. They had been traveling single file, head to tail. Seeing our camp they had stopped to look it over. They undoubtedly saw me, even though I had come into the scene as quietly and as cautiously as I could, for immediately their trunks went into the air in a trumpet, as is customary before a stampede of these brutes. My first thought was to fire but good judgment checked me, for I knew that if I were to fire every shot in the magazine there would yet be enough of them left to utterly destroy our camp.

I did not fire, but settled back a bit and in so doing I unintentionally bumped the table upon which were stacked our cooking and eating utensils of tin. To my horror, the table tipped over spilling the pans with a clatter. I thought for the moment that all was ended for us but, to my amazement, they all trumpeted again, threw their trunks down, their heads back into line, and away they marched in double quick time. They were an angry bunch of elephants as they went on down the way pushing over trees, breaking limbs off trees, and rolling rocks down the hillside.

We went on into the country of the tribe toward which we were headed. One day an ivory hunter came into our camp, and I told him of our experience. He said, "Smith, you did the only known thing that will frighten away elephants. Beat on a pan or piece of tin and they will always run. Shoot at them and they will always charge." I didn't know that fact that night, but God did; and He caused me to dump all the tin in the camp on the ground. Some unbelieving or unknowing one might say that it was merely coincidental. But God wanted this experience for His glory.

We had rejoiced over this marvelous deliverance while we were in Africa, but God let us go home to get the better half of the story. After speaking on one occasion, shortly after our return to the homeland, the lady who was entertaining us asked if we had had any unusual experience while in Africa. We smiled, for we had had several. She then related an experience of hers when she was washing windows in her home. God spoke to her and called her to pray for us over there. She hesitated, as one so often does, feeling that her duties were so pressing and her work very important. But God showed her that we were in desperate circumstances and in grave danger. She knelt down by the window where she was and poured out her heart to God asking Him to spare our lives and deliver us from this danger. God lifted her burden.

This experience was so unusual with her that she wrote down the time on her calendar, and now she brought it before us. As we checked it with our own diary, taking into account nine and one half hours difference between the time here and the time over there, we were amazed to find that this lady was on her knees interceding for our deliverance while the elephants stood outside our tent. She was twelve thousand miles away from us, but close enough to God to be used in our behalf.

Friends, God depends on us in intercession to pray down conviction on the sinner, to strengthen the weak knees, encourage the faint-hearted, and bear one another's burdens. God uses us, from our nearest neighbor to the far ends of the globe. Let us get into and stay in the place where He can bless us and use us as instruments for the administration of His marvelous grace. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name ask . . ." —*Call to Prayer*

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH" (1 Tim. 6:12)

"I fear much for many professing Christians. I see no sign of fighting in them, much less of victory. They never strike one stroke on the side of Christ. They are at peace with His enemies. They have no quarrel with sin. I warn you, this is not Christianity. This is not the way to heaven.

"I often fear much for those who hear the Gospel regularly. I fear lest you become so familiar with the sound of its doctrines, that insensibly you become dead to its power. I fear lest your religion should sink down into vague talk. . . . while real, practical fighting on Christ's side is altogether neglected. Oh! beware of this state of mind." — J. C. Ryle

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



In becoming Christians do people repent of sin or grow out of sin?

My initial answer to this question is: "Both." But it is an answer that needs an explanation.

The one asking the question is concerned that some people in coming to Christ seem to have the idea that they can hold on to certain wrong things in their lives with the thought that they will eventually grow out of them. Certainly there are those who treat conversion very superficially who often leave repentance out of the "what-to-do" teaching given to inquirers. It is popular in some quarters to call for a commitment to Christ which seems to ask for or expect little more than a signature on a card or a confession that "I want to be recognized as a Christian." There are those asking for decisions for Christ who do not seem to realize that this also involves a decision against sin.

Let it be said very clearly that repentance toward God is a necessary part of our response to the gospel of Christ if we are to be saved. And our repentance is not of some sins, part of our sins, or even most of our sins—it is repentance of sin, whatever is wrong in our lives, whatever misses the mark and is not in the will of God. The very moment we begin to reserve some corner of our life and want to be rid of all sin except such-and-such, we show that we are trying to repent selectively and that is not repentance of sin. What wife wants to hear that her husband has decided to stop committing adultery with six different women, that he has "repented" and now only intends to do so with just one other woman? True repentance is not selective but covers every known area of sinning.

Moreover, repentance is a prerequisite of the new birth. New Testament messengers included repentance in their message (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). From the beginning to the end of the Bible repentance precedes the forgiveness of sins. It is not something added to faith as a work of merit; it is one of the activities of true faith in a God who abominates sin. But it is there. There is not even a hint that God forgives known sin in responsible persons without repentance.

Now, without retracting even one iota of this above, let us understand that prospective Christians and new Christians do not always recognize some things to be sin which are sin. New Christians are babes in Christ and immature in their thinking. Every Christian in his growth becomes more aware of the terribleness of sin and likely comes to see things as sin which he may not have earlier understood to be so. In this sense he might be said to grow out of sin.

Let us illustrate. A young man believes that Jesus is the Christ and, repenting of his sinful life, confesses Christ and is baptized into Christ. It is a genuine conversion to Christ. Let us say, however that he has not had much pre-Christian training as to what the Bible teaches and so he does not as readily recognize specific sins as others might. In spite of his immature state, such a one is a genuine Christian. Now let us say that this young man in his life has picked up some language which is not wholesome. He continues to use that language. That proves, does it not, that he never repented of sin? No, it does not. He may have repented of sin as a principle, but his understanding may not have caught up with his principles. He does not intend to do wrong, but he does, without being aware that it is wrong. Now, as a further development, someone declares his language to be wrong without giving a solid basis for it in God's word. He may be deterred a bit, but does that person know what he is talking about? Let us not confuse faith in an individual's judgment with faith in Christ. Finally, he is shown from the word of God that his words are wrong. Now he must repent of this sin. He has not grown out of it, but he has grown in his understanding so that he now includes it in those works of darkness he wants out of his life. Suppose we even go a step further. His words have been spoken by habit, and a habit is not easily broken. He no longer intends to use those words, but he slips. It was not that he had not repented. He temporarily lost a battle with the flesh. But now that he knows this to be sin he cannot shrug it off. Repentance is called for. And if he is living in touch with Christ as he ought to be, it will be done.

There is a sense, then, in which repentance is primarily a matter of the heart. We do not say there is not also a practical side. Some wrongs are so evident that it is foolish in any normal case to talk about repentance while one continues in the acts. Nor are we talking about playing games with God, pretending an ignorance which we do not have. God knows our heart. What we are saying is that it is possible for a person who has repented of sin in his heart to continue doing some things because of ignorance or immaturity which will be recognized as sin by the more discerning. Now we know that when there is a willingness to do the Lord's will (John 7:17), darkness does not persist. We must be fair, however, and recognize that sins of ignorance can only be repented of in the sense of ceasing from them when we come to know them to be sins. And this is often a process of growth.

Another danger to be avoided is this—confusing a human standard with God's. Some there are who are ready to pronounce a cup of coffee or a glass of Coke sin. Nevertheless, that person who drinks these refreshments is not necessarily an unrepenting sinner; he may simply see that there is no solid ground on which such an interpretation stands. I have some neighbors and friends for who holiness is a particular style of clothing and hair style. Am I unrepenting in rejecting this arbitrary standard which they have adopted? I do not like to see Christians using tobacco. I think it hinders their testimony. I can even make the possible connection that it harms the

temple of God. I'd like to see no Christian ever using the stuff in any form. But I have known and know some Christians for whom I have a high regard who use it. It is just not an issue with them. They reject my application of scripture which makes it a sin. They reject my standard, but they do not believe God has made it an issue. Preachers, elders, teachers, and others have been known to be wrong in what they declare to be sin before God. Those persons are not necessarily wicked sinners before God who reject human judgments and applications. Even when the judgments and applications are right, it may involve growth in spiritual understanding to recognize it.

Now for a statement or two in closing. We are not saying that only that is sin which a person recognizes to be sin. God's word, in specific declaration and in principle determines sin. We are saying that there can only be an active repentance of that specific sin when it is known. Surely this is one area where the continual cleansing of sin for the one abiding in Christ is such a precious truth (1 John 1:7). Again, we are not suggesting that one can deal with *known* sin by growing out of it and that it is to be tolerated until such is achieved. We may grow in strength to overcome (or in our awareness of the provision for strength in Christ), but known sin must be repented of or else our whole outlook on sin is defective.

—1503 Skyline Dr., Johnson City, TN 37604



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

"Sober Judgment of Your Place"

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
(Romans 12:3-5, NIV).

Having urged us, on the basis of the mercies of God shown in the first eleven chapters, to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God and to be renewed in mind by the Spirit of God, Paul now goes on to make practical applications of these things. He starts with both negative and positive statements of the judgment you should make of yourself in the great work to which the Lord has called all Christians.

A great many people in reading verse three take note of the negative part and overlook the positive. The negative is important, of course—"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. But the positive is equally important—"think of yourself with sober judgment." We are not to spend all of our time "running ourselves down" but to look soberly at what gifts God has given us to use in His service. To neglect the negative makes one feel superior and expect to be looked up to; but to neglect the positive is to assure yourself of not doing what you are called to do.

Before dwelling on this too much, let us first notice the standard or "measure" according to which we are to estimate ourselves. It is stated simply—"in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." Faith, the great gift from God, is the measure we are to use; and please note that it is the particular portion of faith God has given you, not what He gave to Paul or to some great worker that you know. By faith look at what you are, what gift or gifts you have, and do not say either that you can do nothing or that you can do things for which you have no gift. I taught music in a University School of Music for forty-seven years, but I did not even once give a voice recital. I can sing the right pitches, but no one would want to hear me sing as a soloist; I have no such gift. I played trombone and other low brass and taught many theoretical subjects and conducting, things for which I seemed to me and to others to have the proper gift. Let us use our spiritual gifts from God in the same way, using what we discover He has given us and leaving other things to those who have the proper gifts.

I have really gone ahead of verse three in what I have been saying, for it is in verses four and five that Paul elaborates on this subject, comparing our functions in the body of Christ to the functions of the members of our physical bodies. I have just one body, but it contains ten fingers, two hands, ten toes, two feet, two legs, and on through a great many things. Each of these is part of my body, but all are different. No one would compare what my heart does to what my brain does, but no one not a fool would think that the heart and the brain are not both important to the body and that the body can function properly without both the heart and the brain doing what they are qualified to do.

Let us also remember that the least of these things I have mentioned is important to a full use of my body. I could do without some of my fingers, but it would make me less able to do many things if I lost them. On the other hand, I could not live without my heart, but the heart is not the body in itself. What good would it be if it had no blood vessels to take the blood to the parts of the body, or what good would the brain be if no nerves brought sensations to it? All are important in their own way, though some are more important than others. What Paul is wanting us to do here is to find out what we are gifted to do (gifted by God, of course) and use that gift for the good of the whole body.

May I give a somewhat extended close by pointing out two things about this life we have from God in the body of Christ. Those two things are the unity of the body and the diversity of the gifts. Just

as there is no one part of your body that is important by itself, so the Church of Christ can not function properly unless all the members use the gifts that God has given them. And, at the same time, let us remember the importance of every part; without a diversity of gifts there is nothing to be done. Just because I am different from you is no reason for you to think that you shouldn't treat me as an equal in Christ, as a true brother. I may seem "eccentric," "odd," or some other thing to you, but that is because I am different and the differences are as much needed in the body of Christ as in your physical body. Christ, our head and our life, planned a body that would function perfectly through many differing gifts, and we should then feel, or rather know, that "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. But let us leave further discussion of that to verse six through eight, probably next month. In the meanwhile, let us "think of ourselves with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given us," to slightly paraphrase part of verse three.

Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Joy Garrett

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

October 3rd

On Sept. 26th the women of Harare were the first to use the multi-purpose building here at Rockwood Park. The lovely new roof kept all out of the hot sun. There are no walls and the floor is still dirt, but the 134 sisters and lots of small children enjoyed their day of prophetic Bible Study and didn't mind any inconveniences.

Brother Agrippa Chiwengwa and Bro. Chizive were asked to speak at Nhowe Mission the last week in September. Bro. Agrippa reported 133 baptisms that week.

Robert plans to travel to South Africa by bus for the second-hand truck he has purchased plus urgently needed spare parts.

Lord willing, we plan to return to U.S.A December 5th. It has been six years since our last furlough and we are eagerly looking forward to seeing our relatives and Christian friends who have so faithfully supported us.

Irene Allen

Eagle River, Alaska

October 1987

Several months ago, seeing the need, several of the brethren here agreed to relieve Winston of responsibility for some of the services. One is teaching the adult class, and two or three others rather regularly share the Sunday and Wednesday night meetings. This has proved a blessing to all.

Just now we ask special prayer for the cataract surgery Winston is to have on October 28. His right eye has become almost useless to him. The Dr. recommended taking care of this now while he

still has the use of his left eye, as a cataract is also forming there.

I do a lot of coughing as the result of my lung problem (bronchiectasis). Coughing, however, is my lifeline, as it relieves me of the inflammation which forms continually.

EARLY RESTORATION LEADERS

DAVID LIPSCOMB: ELDER AND EDITOR

Sylvia Root Tester

David Lipscomb's career began before the Civil War and ended in the twentieth century. Because he lived so long, and because he was a man of extraordinary conviction, he had a profound influence upon the restoration movement.

Lipscomb was born on January 21, 1831, in Franklin County, Tennessee. He was a second-generation Disciple. His father had begun reading Campbell's *Christian Baptist* and had shown it to his own brothers. Together they worked in their Baptist church, trying to get the congregation to return to the New Testament plan, until the congregation kicked them out. Then they joined a church that was part of the Barton Stone movement.

Lipscomb grew up in a small congregation for which his father often preached. His father's way of preaching was simple; he read from the Bible and then talked about what he had read. It was a method Lipscomb approved of highly and later adopted as his own.

Schooling was scarce in Franklin County. Lipscomb spent much of his time working on the farm alongside the slaves his father owned. Now and then when there was opportunity, he and his brother would go to school awhile.

A GUIDING PRINCIPLE

When David was thirteen, his father sent him and his brother to live with their grandfather for a year so they could go to school. The school was run by Baptists and stressed the memorization of Scripture. In that year David memorized the Gospels and Acts.

David and William, his brother, returned to help their father. Their taste for schooling, though, had been whetted. So on January 21, 1846, when David was fifteen, he and William enrolled in Franklin College, near Nashville. Franklin College was run by Tolbert Fanning, a well-known leader in the restoration movement. The school was then in its second year.

Lipscomb spent about four years there, completing his work by July of 1849. He wasn't the best of students. His brother William was far better in the classroom. In later years Lipscomb told of a time when he fell asleep in class. He also told of the last whipping he ever received—from Fanning, for stealing a kiss from a Baptist lass.

While Lipscomb was in college, a basic principle crystalized in his mind. Stated simply, Lipscomb developed a profound belief that the only important thing in his life was to follow God's laws. All he did, from this time on, arose from this belief.

He had no wish to be a preacher. When he left college, he wanted to be a farmer and to do what he could to advance Christ's church. After he began preaching, people urged him to let the elders ordain him as an evangelist, but he refused. His preaching might be part of his work as a Christian, but he did not wish to be thought of as a preacher nor confined to preaching alone. Later he did accept the position of elder. All of his work, he felt, was appropriate for an elder.

For a while Lipscomb worked as a supervisor on a plantation. Later he worked on a railroad line. Then he came back to Nashville, and after a time, he bought a farm.

The Civil War was looming. War fever ran high. Lipscomb thought about events and about the Christian's relationship to civil government. He came to the conclusion that the Christian's duty was to God and God's laws first, that civil governments were not of God's making and, indeed, had been formed in violation of God's overseership. He decided he would obey whatever government was in power if he could, but would not disobey God to obey the government. He followed this course openly throughout the havoc that followed.

As a result, the Confederates thought him a traitor, for he refused to join their cause. Moreover, he tried to persuade others to join him in this refusal. Soon the Union army captured Nashville. The federal officials confiscated Franklin College, where Lipscomb's brother was teaching, and made it into a hospital. Now the Union leaders thought Lipscomb was a Confederate sympathizer, because he refused to join the Union cause. Lipscomb's biographer said, "Amid these chaotic events David Lipscomb moved with as little perturbation as possible."

He even got married. On July 26, 1862, he and Margaret Zettner were wed. Two years later, in June, a baby son was born to them, but the boy died the next spring. Margaret found it hard to comfort her husband. He finally said with grim resolution, "I'll just have to work hard and forget."

David Lipscomb did work hard. He did everything he could to help churches and people during this time.

Finally the war was over. Lipscomb's biographer wrote, "A picture of desolation greeted him everywhere he looked. Farms had been burned, and poverty, like a grim, ghastly monster, stalked the land. These poor people would have to be fed and clothed."

A REVIVAL JOURNAL

Before the war Tolbert Fanning had started a journal, the *Gospel Advocate*, which he and William Lipscomb edited. They ceased publication when the war began, for the mails were stopped and there was no other way to get the journal to readers.

Now, with the war over, it was time to revive the journal. But Tolbert Fanning had all he could do to get his beloved Franklin College going again. William Lipscomb was too ill to even consider editing the journal. David Lipscomb thought J. W. McGarvey would make a good editor, but McGarvey was not interested. Reviving the journal was very important to Lipscomb, so he did it.

The *Gospel Advocate* resumed publication in January of 1866, with Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb listed as its editors. It soon became clear that Fanning had turned most of the work and all of the editorial direction over to Lipscomb.

Through the postwar years, Lipscomb used the *Gospel Advocate* to raise money to help people in the destitute South. Lipscomb's biographer wrote:

Lipscomb possessed an insatiate desire to help the stressed people of the South. Before the crisis was over he raised a hundred thousand dollars for the poor. Upon receiving money he would send it on to the elders of a local church to be dispersed among their needy. His rule was to help the needy preacher first so he could go and preach the gospel. Then he would assist the widows and orphans and finally, help the people of the world.

Lipscomb thought this work of helping the needy in the South would be over in a year or two, but he was wrong. A drought hit the South, making conditions even worse for poor people. Then in 1869 a cholera epidemic struck Nashville. Through all this time, Lipscomb solicited funds through the paper, traveled extensively asking churches in the brotherhood for help, and distributed the funds.

The journal itself was having a difficult time. For three years Lipscomb was hard pressed to pay the paper's bills. Several times he simply stopped publishing until he had enough money for another issue. His own living he made by farming. His way of life had always been simple, and the farm made him and his wife self-sustaining.

In addition to running the *Gospel Advocate*, collecting and distributing money, and farming, Lipscomb helped to build up the churches in the area. He preached often, to three or four people as readily as to a larger group. No one ever described Lipscomb as a great preacher. He stammered. His delivery was low-key. He refused to tell stories. But his method worked. He read from the Bible and then talked about what he had read. People were touched by what he said. Many congregations in the Nashville area were either started or helped along by David Lipscomb.

In his work of helping the poor and encouraging the churches, Lipscomb raised no color barriers. He preached to and worshipped with blacks as well as whites. The congregation he grew up in had been integrated; he believed that all people should be welcomed into the church. The movement toward separate black and white churches gave him great sorrow, and he spoke against it often.

How he managed to do all of this work is difficult to say, for it would have been a heavy load for a very healthy person, and Lipscomb was often ill.

In the journal Lipscomb spent much time discussing the Christian's relationship to civil governments. His views on the subject were controversial, and not many people in the brotherhood agreed with him. He felt that Christians simply should not be involved; he even felt they should not vote.

He also became deeply embroiled in discussing almost every issue that was troubling the the brotherhood. He was against missionary societies, feeling that they were an organization outside the church and in competition with the church. He was against using musical instruments in worship services, feeling that if Christ had wanted

His followers to use them, New Testament congregations would have used them.

A BLUNT BUT CONCERNED LEADER

Lipscomb's way of speaking and writing was blunt and plain. People often thought him stubborn and irascible. Some of his opponents disliked him intensely. Yet Issac Errett, who seldom agreed with Lipscomb on issues, said:

We like Brother Lipscomb for one thing—his entire frankness. There is nothing of the assassin in his warfare—no sulking about the pathway of his opponent with cowardly insinuations, ready to hurl them murderously at the reputation of an unsuspecting and unarmed antagonist. He may, perhaps, be charged with an excess of frankness. We are inclined to think that ill health and a somewhat atrabilious temperament give an undue soberness to many of his editorials. But we always know where to find him; and if we must have a controversy, we prefer to deal with an open and honorable disputant.

Most of the time, Lipscomb refused to attack others personally. He attacked beliefs and practices, but not people. When one of his editors got embroiled in a fierce debate with an editor of another paper and the attacks turned personal, Lipscomb simply refused to print the articles.

The years passed, and the divisions in the brotherhood became more pronounced. Those who were against musical instruments refused to worship with those who used them. Lipscomb sometimes preached in a church that had an organ, if the congregation agreed not to use the organ while he was there. Other people refused even that amount of fellowship. Lipscomb viewed the division with sadness but felt it was inevitable.

In 1889 Lipscomb began planning for a school of higher learning. The Nashville Bible School opened in 1891. It was not a preacher-training school, for Lipscomb thought such institutions were not needed. It was open to any who cared to enter and, in addition to classes in the Bible, it taught many college subjects. By Christmas of 1891, there were eighteen young men enrolled. By October of 1894, there were eighty students, including eighteen young women.

So, at sixty-three, David Lipscomb was still involved with the *Gospel Advocate* (though he had turned over much of the business detail to others), he was still preaching near and far, and he was directing and teaching in the Nashville Bible School.

A DIFFICULT TIME

More difficulties arose in the brotherhood. Some ministers began preaching against the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Jesus. Lipscomb attacked these views strongly in the pages of the *Gospel Advocate*.

The nineteenth century was almost over. In the *Gospel Advocate*, Lipscomb wrote,

This number of the *Gospel Advocate* is the last one for the century, and closes thirty-five years of work I have given to the *Advocate*...

I feel very sensibly the infirmities of age creeping over me, and the incurable disease, old age, will soon finish its work... I have tried through three-score years and ten to keep a conscience void of offense toward God and man... I have tried to do that which would help my fellow-men. I have not always succeeded. I have not tried to do what would please them... I have tried to get

them to be pleased with that which would build them up, do them good, and fit them for the service of God forever.

In 1902 the church at Newbern, Tennessee, went to court over the question of whether the pro-organ or anti-organ people should retain the church building. Anti-organ elders had come earlier to talk to Lipscomb, who advised them to give up the building, if necessary, to avoid going to court. He told them it was better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. They went ahead against his advice.

Lipscomb was called as a witness. The court battle dragged out over several years and was a sore tribulation to Lipscomb, who was now past seventy. Not until 1905 was a decision handed down, in favor of the pro-organ people.

During this time Lipscomb's articles were seen less and less in the *Gospel Advocate*. Lipscomb's health was getting worse. By 1904 his eyesight was nearly gone and his hearing was failing. He continued, though, to preach now and then and to write on a fairly regular basis. Lipscomb died in 1917, shortly before America's entry into World War I.

Earlier, an editor of the *Gospel Advocate* had written a short biographical sketch of Lipscomb. Lipscomb read it and was dissatisfied. He felt it was too complimentary and left out his failures. He mentioned this to the author, who answered, "You needn't worry. Your enemies will take care of that."

Lipscomb thought a moment and said, "Possibly things may be adjusted in that way."

Even his enemies, though, paid tribute at his death. For, as one admirer wrote, David Lipscomb saw both the "faults in his friends and the virtues in his foes."

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Gleanings From David Lipscomb

Compiled by Larry Miles

THE TIMES OF RESTORATION (Acts 3:20-21)

Jesus had been to earth and returned to heaven. Heaven must receive Him until "the times of restoration of all things." Then "the times of restoration of all things" must be when Jesus returns again to the earth—the restoration of all things to their original relation to God. . . . When Jesus comes again, the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and all things in the world will be restored to harmonious relations with God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe.

JUDGING (Matt. 7:1-5)

Judge is used in the sense of condemn. Be not too ready to condemn. Some persons are ready to put the worst construction on the actions of all and to condemn harshly and unjustly. People who so judge or condemn others will be judged in the same way. The Scriptures require us to put the best construction on the acts of our fellow-men, not to condemn them until forced to do so—that is, until

no other construction can be put on their actions. It is the same thing as to condemn "evil surmising," "charity thinketh no evil," and like phrases. On the other hand, when the actions of persons will allow no other construction, one must apply the laws of God to them impartially.

WHO IS SECTARIAN?

I would say that it is wrong to encourage sectarianism in any way, if we can tell who are sectarians. But my observation is that it takes a sectarian to ferret out a sectarian, just as "it takes a rogue to catch a rogue." Unfortunately, all the sectarians are not in sectarian churches; and I hope that some in sectarian churches are not sectarians. Things get badly mixed in this world. Sometimes people who wish to obey God are born and reared in sectarian influences. A man who loves party more than he loves God is a sectarian. A man who divides the church of God for a theory or teaching not required by God is a sectarian. A person who pushes an idea or practice not required by God, to the disturbance of the peace of the church, or that exalts a human opinion or practice to an equality with the commands of God, is a sectarian and a heretic.

There are some in nonsectarian churches who are sectarians, who violate the laws of God in order to oppose sectarians. They are sectarian in their opposition to sectarians. There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the sectarianism of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches who were baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.

Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, all met with sectarian Jews at their times and places of worship and participated with them, that they might find an opportunity to speak a word for the truth. I do not think it hurts anyone to hear the Bible read by sectarian or sinner at any time or place. The great end is to be true and faithful to the truth and at the same time kind and sympathetic with those in error. The nearer we can do these two things, the more like Jesus we will be and the more sinners and sectarians we will save.

Church of Christ—Sect or Main Body

E. L. Jorgenson, 1961

We do not read the "fussin, fightin, feudin" magazines any more, and are perhaps the better for it. We do, however, read a journal that sometimes reprints their sectarian sayings. From such a reprint, we learn that a brother has been dishonored for pleading that "Christians are to be found in many denominations." If the article is a denial of that plea (as it clearly seems to be), we are bound to take issue with that sectarian position.

Let the limited proposition which we support be clearly understood: It does not say that there are Christians in all denominations nor that all in the denominations are Christians, nor that Christians ought to be in any denomination as such, nor that the full gospel and the simple pattern of work and worship will be found in any or many of the sects, etc. It affirms simply that "Christians are to be found in many denominations." On this simplified proposition we say yes, and we add that this was the understanding of *all* the pioneer fathers from Campbell down. The denial of it makes the "Church of Christ" group, (as distinguished from "Christian," "Baptist," and other baptized believers) a cut-off sect. To such a sect we do not wish to belong!

"It is the fault of our logic," said Emerson, "that we cannot emphasize one side of any truth as we ought without seeming to give the lie to the other side." It is unfortunate that we must now write on one side of this question without writing on the other side. Some may mistakenly think that we are now excusing, or even advocating, the scattered state of the church's membership! We take that risk.

WHAT IS INVOLVED

There is involved in this proposition the very reason for existence of the churches of the New Testament order, the fellowship that grew out of the great unity movement commonly called "the restoration." There is involved the sacred non-denominational church position that we have espoused, and earnestly labored to maintain, for a full half century. It has been our unchanged, unchanging purpose through the years to uphold, in a kind and unsectarian spirit, the New Testament concept of a free and non-sectarian church of Christ, *inclusive of all the saved*—not a "Church of Christ" party or denomination or sect. This is the church revealed in the Scriptures, and this was the understanding and the vision of *all* the pioneer fathers as we shall show.

As early as the second year of this journal under Brother Boll's management (1917), we said: "There are congregations belonging to no denomination at all, but whose members have separated themselves from the various religious parties in order to be members of none—except God's church. Such a stand, if it be accompanied with the unsectarian *spirit* (a spirit which recognizes God's children as such wherever they may be and whether they have as yet separated themselves or not) we believe to be according to God's mind."

It is, of course, well known among our readers that many churches and preachers, though they loudly profess to be non-sectarian, have in truth and in fact forsaken and denied the non-sectarian position—if not in actual teaching, then in bad spirit and unbrotherly behavior toward brethren. We shall not speak out against this trend more vehemently than we do, simply because we have at long last learned that violent and unbrotherly criticism is the very thing, chiefly, that feeds the fires of division. Sectarianism is, in great part, *a spirit*, even as unity is chiefly (I do not say entirely) a spirit—the work of the Holy Spirit within us (Eph. 4:1-3). When good men are freed of ugly attack and evil aspersions, they often get together in a good and scriptural way.

It becomes clearer and clearer that many who profess the unsectarian position have never yet learned *the first primary step* out of sectarianism. I mean that incipient and hidden sectarianism which rises up so easily from within and unawares, and that has crippled every unity movement of the past, regardless of how sincere and pure were its beginnings. And what is that first primary step? It is, after a true conversion, to get one's eyes opened to the present scattered state of God's church—as to its membership, that is. The *saved* but scattered believers in the whole wide world today—these *are* the *aggregate membership* of Christ's one and only universal body now. This undenominational concept of the church is slipping from the preachers and journals that circulate among us; but it was universally known and held by the early leaders.

CAMPBELL

Alexander Campbell dreamed of uniting great numbers on the "restoration plea"; but he never thought of smalling down Christ's church to the limited number of the restoration disciples. (Was he not immersed by a Baptist minister?). In answering a question about "Christians in the sects," he argued that if there were none among the sects, there were certainly none among the Catholics or the Mohammedans, and therefore none in the whole wide world—except the restoration disciples, and none at all before their time! Thus he applied the *reductio ad absurdum* argument (reduce to absurdity) to the view that those who had taken up with "restoration" principles were the only Christians—a view that was to him a horrible heresy. He did not, on this account, give up his dream of uniting great numbers on the "Back to the Bible" plea; far from it, nor need we. He labored on, intelligent of the facts as they were and have come to be, in our mixed-up world today. God puts no premium on ignorance among us either (Eph. 5:17).

Campbell saw the trend that would end up in another sect. He said, as early as *The Christian Baptist*, p. 381: "I am truly sorry to find that certain opinions (by which he meant religious views or beliefs) called Arminian or unitarian or something else are about to become the sectarian badge of a people who have assumed the sacred name Christian; and that some peculiar views of atonement or reconciliation are likely to become characteristic of a people who have claimed the high character and dignified relation of 'the Church of Christ.' I do not say that such is yet the fact; but things are, in my opinion, looking that way; and if not suppressed in the bud, the name Christian will be as much a sectarian name as Lutheran, Methodist, or Presbyterian."

On that Campbell quotation, R. H. Boll commented: "Campbell's fears were not groundless. It is as easy to have a sect denominated 'Church of Christ' as any other. It is fatally easy to slide from the high vantage ground of Christian unity on the Bible alone, the "one faith, one Lord, one baptism," to the level of a sect which holds peculiar, distinctive views on certain points (prophecy for instance) as a sectarian badge. . . . We desire no membership in any human sect by whatever fair name it may designate itself. Nor shall we ever

make a sect of ourselves by requiring brethren to subscribe to certain prophetic convictions in order to fellowship with us."

Another time Brother Boll wrote, "I am a member of the church of God or of Christ in that universal sense in which the New Testament uses that term—the Body to which *all* the true children of God belong—even all those who have truly become God's children, and have been added to Christ by the Father's hand, though they may have failed to see all things clearly and though they be held in some grievous mistake." (*To be concluded*)

From Where I Sit

by Carl Vogt Wilson

Sometimes we overlook the fact that the great commission is two-pronged. We are to: 1) "Go and make disciples, baptizing them" and 2) "teach them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." Only God's almighty power enables us to do both successfully.

Since 1924, Portland Avenue Church of Christ has taken both of these commands seriously. The better to accomplish these aims, the congregation established in that year the Portland Christian School. As one of the veteran private Christian schools in America, Portland Christian is now rounding out its 64th year of serving God in Christian education.

Its principal reason for existence was to bring the subject matter of the public school system into conformity with the facts of Christian belief. R. H. Boll, long-time minister of the Portland congregation, wrote prior to the opening of school, "We purpose that the instruction given in the grades and high school shall measure up fully to the standards required in the public institutions in all the secular branches, and, in addition, every pupil shall receive daily instruction in the Bible."

In the present days of secular humanism with its evil offspring (abortion, disobedience to authority, unnatural affections, liars, traitors, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, etc.) such teaching is sorely needed.

The official philosophy of the school was formulated by Stanford Chambers and Claude Neal. Briefly, it follows:

- 1) To give each boy and girl an opportunity to learn God's Word;
- 2) To make each one wise to salvation;
- 3) To develop Christian character;
- 4) To teach dependence upon God thru prayers and personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ;
- 5) To attain good scholarship;
- 6) To train boys and girls in mind and heart for Christian service;
- 7) To teach a love for Christian hymns and sacred song;
- 8) To discourage formation of bad habits and lust for worldly pleasures;
- 9) To teach obedience to God's Word and respect for authority in home, school, church and nation.

Over the intervening decades, time has told its story. Over 500 graduates have been scattered around the world in various occupations and ministries. Earl C. Mullins Sr. is the superintendant of P.C.S.

Back in the 1960's he carried on extensive research in working on his master's degree. One hundred and sixty-two graduates responded to a detailed questionnaire he sent out. Here are just a few facts gleaned from their answers:

Over 60% of the respondents were actively engaged in some sort of ministry in their local congregations (whether as preacher, teacher, missionary, preacher's wife, or "general activity"—which might include anything from regular attendance, praying and giving to being an elder, deacon, song-leader, youth-leader, personal worker, etc.). Of the one hundred thirty-four respondents who had been married, only three had been divorced and two others were separated. How vastly, gloriously different from the divorce rate of the nation!

The academic quality of the alumni is discernible also. Almost 50% of P.C.S.' graduates from its first class in 1928 (when not so many people attended college) through 1963 went on to college, and an additional 20% attended some other type of educational institution beyond high school. Of those who attended college, over one-third received degrees. And through the years up to the present, its senior classes have consistently scored high marks on standardized tests—considerably higher than the average class in Kentucky's public schools.

Another exciting aspect of the school has been the answers to prayer at crucial times. Many examples could be given; let me share just one at this time. During 1967 P.C.S. was put on notice that in order to maintain accreditation, we would need to offer more courses of study. This, of course, meant more students, more classrooms, more teachers and more money (for expanded facilities and for salaries for the enlarged faculty). What to do?

At this juncture, the loyal Alumni Association stepped forward to volunteer its services. In order to expand the premises, we needed the back parts of the 4 lots back-to-back with the school. These were unusually long and would afford ground for an office building and for a new all-purpose building. So here's how the Lord worked:

The board meeting of P.C.S. directors decided at a late night meeting to acquire the rearmost parts of these four lots. But—the very next morning, before any leakage of our plans could be made, one of the owners concerned called on Robert Heid at the family printshop. "Robert, my wife and I want to sell our property and move to Florida for the rest of our lives. Would your school be interested in buying our lot?" So that push to our plan by God's behind-the-scenes working was the first of the four acquisitions! The price quoted was quite fair and the deal was closed.

Another of the desired lots was owned by a maiden lady. "I don't want to sell, but if the rest of them are willing, I won't stand in your way." Eventually she sold as well.

The third landowner, whose lot was the largest, had some questions in his mind about how much land he'd be willing to sell. A session with our two alumni representatives convinced him and he happily fell in line.

But lot #4 was owned by an elderly lady with a mind of her own. Her lot contained a beautiful peach orchard and she "wasn't about to

sell my lovely orchard, not by any means!" Her daughter tried to persuade her by pointing out their need for money in the family coffers, but in vain.

The directors and alumni representatives undertook a protracted season of prayer that night and God helped the mother to change her mind the very next day! Thank Thee, Lord.

From where I sit, I've seen *many* parallel cases like this where God has led and prospered our school—which from the start was dedicated to be *His* school. Of a truth, "God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear." Thanks be to Him for His wisdom and love.

HIS 1990th BIRTHDAY!

"He commenced His ministry at age 30, in A.D. 26 . . ."

—J. B. Payne, *Hebrew History*

I wonder . . .

How are they celebrating Jesus' birthday in Heaven?

(What kind of a cake would it take for 1990 candles? a piece for each of the redeemed . . . angels . . .?)

Certainly there, the *Celebrant* would be in the place of prominence. And, I would suppose, the main characters would be involved . . .

Mother Mary recalling the annunciation, with *Gabriel* telling her how frightened she looked.

Joseph depicting the trauma of where to bring his expectant wife, the relief of finding a private spot, tho' a stable, where he could make her a bed on clean hay . . . the mixed emotions, delivering the *Child* with rough carpenter's hands . . .

I can imagine that at least one of the *shepherds* would chime in telling how he trembled when he first saw the angels, heard their announcement of Jesus' birth. Perhaps he'd request a repeat performance. And I'm inclined to think the *angels* would oblige with the "Peace on Earth" chorus.

Perhaps the *Wise Men* would have thought of something new and special to present to the King of Kings on His 1990th birthday; and the historian *Matthew* would report some new findings from a conversation with *Joseph*—how the gold came in handy on the trip to Egypt. He might good-naturedly chide *Dr. Luke* for forgetting to include the trip to Egypt in his account. *Elizabeth* might urge *Mary* to share some of Jesus' antics as a child during those silent years.

Then for a change, I'm just sure the *sweet singer of Israel* would have a new song for the occasion and a new harp to play it on. Perhaps he'd collaborate with *Charles Wesley* and *Fanny Crosby* to make it superbly special. And then, what a perfect opportunity for *Handel* to try out "Messiah's Return" using the whole audience as participants and letting *Ira Sankey* try his hand at conducting it.

I can see *Peter* popping the question in everybody's mind: "Will it be

this year, Lord? When will that great Family Reunion take place?" And the *Lord* looking at Peter in love, saying, "Can't we have any secrets around this place, Peter?" Perhaps *Isaiah* and *Daniel* and *John* the Revelator would have a panel discussion then, entertaining questions that might provide a bit of light on the subject, from *C. I. Scofield*, *Larkin* and my dear Dad. *Billy Sunday* might ask to see the computer returns on how those young whippersnapper evangelists are getting on with the job. And *Paul Little* might come up with the suggestion that they have an on-the-spot TV showing of how 1987 Christians are using the Christmas season to share their faith with others. But I think it would be the fiery little *Paul* who would think to ask the Lord, "What would you like most of all this birthday? I'll get it for you whatever it costs!" Thoughtfully the *Celebrant* considers... "I'd like to quadruple the corps of angel bell-ringers we used last Christmas... more sinners repenting... more angels rejoicing... That is the sweetest music I know!"

Just imagining,
Betty Honeywell

LIST OF THEMES DURING 1987

This is not a complete index of articles that ran during this year. Such an index would require too much space, we feel. But for your convenience, here are the various main themes for each month since February, when we began emphasizing some topic(s) each month.

February:	Witnessing for Christ
March:	Our God and our Wallets
April:	Tell the Whole World (missions)
May:	Wanted: Church-planters
June:	Balanced Churches (worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism) (2nd theme: Grace, not works; 3rd: Unity)
July:	Singleness, Courtship, and Marriage
August:	Firm Convictions & Tender Hearts (doctrine & unity)
September:	Jesus is Coming Again
October:	Unity amid Diversity
Nov. - Dec.:	Priorities, and the Poor

NEWS AND NOTES

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

C.C.Y.B.B.:

Last September 11th and 12th, 1987, there was a very successful C.C.Y.B.B. (Christ the Cornerstone Youth the Building Blocks) Youth Rally at the Ebenezer Church of Christ near Salvisa, Kentucky. 163 people from 24 churches participated in the rally which emphasized some of the problems facing teen-agers today. Those topics included alcohol abuse, drug abuse, premarital sex and teen-age pregnancy.

On December 5th, 1987, the Sellersburg Church of Christ will hold the next C.C.Y.B.B. Youth Rally. It will be "A Happy Birthday to Jesus" rally in which the birth of Christ will be the major topic. Mark Baker, the new youth minister from Southeast Church of Christ will be the featured speaker. The rally will begin at 10:30 a.m. with registration and end at 4:30 p.m. with lunch and refreshments provided.

—James Embree

Winchester, KY:

What a wonderful week-end we enjoyed Oct. 9-10. The Missions Conference was such a blessing! The committee worked long and hard to plan and carry out this seminar. We thank and appreciate each of them.

We were blessed by every phase of it! The special music was such a blessing. Our Jr. girls, Amy Smith, Kristin Thompson, and Joy Rake sang two songs. Our Clark County High School Choir brought us two beautiful numbers; one was directed by our Jonathan Garrett who is doing his student teaching under the tutelage of Dr. Gale Price, who directed the second song. Dr. Price is a good friend of many of us Belmonsters. We appreciate the contribution of the GRCHS' chorus. Four of our young people are members of this group, including Jonathan and Michelle Blevins, Laura Thompson, and Jeff Neal. Also, our friend, Crystal Hardin and her sister Cindy Brady sang, "So Send I You" beautifully!

Each speaker gave a most informative message and the audiences left with an acute sense of life on the various mission fields. May we pray more intelligently for those about whom we have learned so much. Oh, yes, the food was delicious, too!!

—Belmont Church Bulletin

East Dallas Christian School:

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts that we write this letter. After nearly 27 years of ministry, the East Dallas Christians School may soon have to shut her doors!

Many factors have brought this situation into being. The two greatest factors are the decline in employment due to the slow down in the oil business and a lack of students in the neighborhood location of the school.

East Dallas opened this year with the smallest enrollment of the last twenty years with 29 students. As a result of this decline in enrollment several staff positions were cut and some of the classes were combined.

Please pray that we may have wisdom from God in discerning His will. . .

All who receive this letter are invited to support this ministry with your prayers and financial assistance. Address: 2360 Laughlin Drive, Dallas, TX 75228.

—Board of Directors, E.D.C.S.

1988 Japanese Summer Mission Work:

Brother Moto Nomura desires to host adults and high school students who want to work during the summer break of the Japanese schools, July through August 1988. The purpose of the trip is to work at Bro. Nomura's center in the mountains (Bethany House) and also with the house church in Tokyo. Work would include physical labor, evangelism, teaching, camp work, visitation, etc.

Those desiring more information may write Earl Mullins, Sr. at Portland Christian School, 2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212, for a brochure.

Hamburg, IN:

A few months ago, the brethren at Hamburg began to consider the possibility of sponsoring a "short-term" missionary. We learned that the Garretts were planning to return to the U.S. in December for a year-long furlough, but were praying for a replacement. We also learned that Bob and Joanna Morrow (Glenmora, Louisiana) would be available and willing to go to Zimbabwe and serve as the replacements until August of next year.

The Hamburg church is willing to be the Morrow's sponsoring congregation, to pay their round trip air fare and to provide at least three months of support while they are on the field. Bob will plan to leave the latter part of November in order to be with the Garretts a little while before they return. Joanna plans to follow later.

For more information, address correspondence to:

Morrow Mission Fund
c/o Mr. Elbert Goss
105 Coral Way
Clarksville, IN 47130
(812) 944-0062

Some good ideas from JENNINGS, LA:

Banquet to honor our "elderly members" men & women.: Saturday night members 65 years and over are invited to a dinner to honor them for their guidance and example thru the years. There'll be a guest speaker, and soloist.

Classrooms A and B have a new look this week. Take time to peek in and see the new tables, bulletin boards, and soon there will be new bookcases. As funds become available, we will continue to upgrade the other classrooms.

Atlanta, GA:

The Brookvalley Church houses the office of Katapauo. Katapauo ministers healing to those who desire freedom from homosexuality. They also have a support group for parents of homosexuals, and a worldwide referral service to similar ministries in other cities. Their phone no.: 404-636-5924.

—Brookvalley Church Bulletin

Lexington, KY:

FROM THE MISSIONS OFFICE—

The Summer Missions Program—'87 was possibly the best so far. Victor and Mae Broaddus, along with Jan Rake of Winchester and Karen Leach of Louisville spent a month in the Philippines and Hong Kong.

Churches in the Philippines are not only growing, but multiplying. Nearly all of the new congregations have grown out of home Bible studies.

Philippines continues to experience political unrest and grinding poverty. Two of the church leaders have been threatened by Communist insurgents with beheading if they will not stop preaching. They have not allowed that to stop them, but they do need our prayers.

Contributions for missions have, as a whole, been increasing. This is much needed because of both inflation and the weakening of the U.S. dollar in many countries—especially Japan.

—Cramer & Hanover Bulletin

Gallatin Church of Christ, TN:

Sunday Scene—We had a great Homecoming Sunday! Jim Olive's messages were good, practical and forceful challenges to all of us. God used him to speak to both individual and congregational needs. Two responded and we rejoice with the angels over their decisions to follow Jesus Christ.

Annual Workshop at Tell City/Lily Dale, IN:

This will be held Feb. 26-27, and the theme is Standing on the Promises. We await more information.

2nd Annual Missions Conference, Winchester, KY:

The conference was a great success, and much gratitude is due the Belmont Church for putting it on. Attendance was good, yet we wish MANY MORE

congregations would take advantage of this event. What an opportunity to build a world-vision among our members—and how much this is needed! Everyone from youth through ministers and elders would benefit from the information & inspiration of this annual conference. Messages, discussion-groups and audio-visuals were challenging, and an offering of over \$1,000 was given.

Church of Christ World-Wide (Missions Office):

Victor Broaddus has again published a very helpful missionary prayer-guide, with information and specific prayer requests related to various mission fields and workers around the world. Copies will be distributed free at the Thanksgiving Day meetings in Lexington and Louisville, and at the Louisiana Fellowship Week. Others who desire copies may order them from the above office, P. O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555. Please send 39¢ postage per copy, or better yet a generous donation to the missionary office for its valuable work (supported by freewill gifts).

Turkey Creek Church, LA:

Our annual homecoming was held on Sunday October 18, and attendance was very good. Our guest speaker for the morning service was Dr. J. Miller Forcade minister at the DeRidder, La. Church of Christ, and Evangelist Aaron Arvie minister at the Kennedy Heights Church of Christ in Ville Platte, La. A covered dish luncheon was enjoyed by everyone and special singing by various groups as well. We all had a wonderful time of fellowship in the Lord.

—Woodrow & Velma Johnson

Valley Station, KY:

I graduated from Portland Christian in 1928, so I know how important the writings contained in the W & W are for a student of the Bible. I am renewing my subscription and also giving one to my grandson, who attends Johnson Bible College. —Ted Brooks

NEXT MONTH Fred Schott's family series will resume. It was replaced this time by his other article. Our next issue will bring one series to a close, and start a new series by Cecil Carcott.

Coming in January:

What if your son got AIDS?

Songs from a sickbed

Does loneliness engulf you?

The mystery and mastery of suffering

Give 11 Christmas Gifts for only \$5⁰⁰!

Give your Christian friends a subscription to Word & Work, and eleven times during 1988 they'll be glad you did.

If your friends already subscribe, then give them a good book—see our inside front cover. Upbuilding, and economical!