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"Holding forth the Word of Life."

SEPTEMBER, 1994

CRUCIFY LEGALISM and SECTARIANISM!

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**20th ANNUAL
CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

November 14-17, 1994

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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CRUCIFY LEGALISM AND SECTARIANISM!

Alex V. Wilson

Legalism began back before Methusaleh. And it has become more widespread than cancer or AIDS. It's harder to eradicate than a thousand dandelions. Its presence has plagued every decade of history and every country and town on this planet. Every denomination and congregation must battle it continually, "Churches of Christ" as much as anyone (if not more!).

By legalism we mean self-righteousness based on our goodness or obedience. The "good" legalist saunters smugly into God's holy presence feeling he is doing the Lord a favor by taking an interest in Him. "I'm confident You are pleased with me for being such a good guy this week. I've sure done better than Joan or Bill have. I've worked hard for You, as You must have noticed." (On the other hand, the legalist who has failed to live up to his standards feels utterly hopeless. Despair grips him because his savior--himself--has let him down and he doesn't know where to turn.)

Legalism often begets an ugly son, sectarianism. It's easy to see why: legalism is basically pride, and proud people feel they and their group are better than others. Extreme SECTarians believe that their SECTION of God's family is the whole family: they alone are saved. Less extreme ones believe that some folks outside their sect may be saved but are 2nd-class Christians at best.

Sectarianism often begets ugly children too, called factions. The dictionary gives these definitions: "a usually selfish or contentious group; party spirit, especially when marked by dissension." (Party spirit as in the party of the Pharisees, or the parties of Paul or Apollos in Corinth--not as in "Let's have a party"!) Factions didn't become extinct in the first century; new ones kept popping up throughout all of church history.

Woe and alas that these plagues thrive so easily in our hearts. Through the prophet Isaiah, God gives a striking picture of legalism and sectarianism, and of how they stink before Him:

[Such people] say, "Keep away; don't come near me, for I am too sacred for you." Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day. (65:5)

May this month's magazine be a tool the God of Grace may use to help us recognize and flee from legalism and sectarianism. Away with them! To the cross--crucify them!

--Can This Movement Survive? Can It Thrive?--

For the 3rd month in a row we are focusing on the Stone/Campbell reformation, often called the Restoration Movement. For while legalism and its brood are a universal plague, till recent years Churches of Christ have been infected with it as badly as anyone and worse than most. (Next month we'll move on to other subjects, mainly.)

In these three issues we've tried to point out both the major assets and liabilities of the Stone/Campbell legacy. We've seen some early strengths which were lost with the passing of time. But praise God some of them are being recovered. Read on in this issue and discover what I mean.

In many places God's breath of fresh air is blowing away toxic fumes in this movement. I for one am encouraged by magazines such as *Wineskins*, *Image* and *One Body*. And by great gatherings such as Restoration Forums, "Saving the American Family" conferences, and especially the Nashville Jubilee (though I recently received by mail a lengthy paper filled with silly criticisms of it). I am deeply heartened by such preachers, writers and editors as Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, Leonard Allen, Tom Langford, Denny Boultinghouse, Victor Knowles, Edward Fudge, Bill Love, Lynn Anderson and others. (Do you say, "Who are those guys--I've never heard of them?" Then get some of their books--you can find Lucado's bestsellers in ANY Christian bookstore--and also copies of the magazines mentioned above.)

Even in these desperately evil days, our Lord is doing some very good things. Progress is taking place, though Much More is needed. Let's pray, love, trust, obey and discern, that He may use us "together with ALL THOSE EVERYWHERE who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--THEIR LORD AND OURS" (1 Cor.1:2).

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A CROSS-CENTERED, GRACE-ORIENTED PEOPLE?

Leroy Garrett

Recent studies by some of our own scholars reveal that there has not been much good news in what we have called "gospel preaching." In a 1988 article in the *Gospel Advocate* F.W. Mattox explains that Church of Christ preachers have left it to "denominational preachers" to preach grace, faith and the atonement while they "went about straightening out their misunderstanding of the place, action and order of faith, repentance and baptism in obtaining church membership." Mattox notes that while others preached the atonement of Christ but not baptism, we preached baptism but not the atonement of Christ. Others preached Christ while we "straightened out" those who so preached. Alas!

Back in 1937 K.C. Moser wrote a tract on "Are We Preaching The Gospel?" in which he charged that the Churches of Christ were not preaching the gospel. By the gospel he meant the good news of Jesus Christ and him crucified. For much of his life Moser charged that we are not a Cross-centered, grace-oriented people, and even when we "preach" baptism it is treated as an arbitrary command unrelated to the Cross. In a reference to one of Harry Emerson Fosdick's books, in which he finds not even a hint of Christ dying for our sins, Moser issued a stunning indictment of Church of Christ preaching: "If Mr. Fosdick has REJECTED the gospel, others have NEGLECTED it." Moser examined a book of 50 Church of Christ sermons and found in none of them more than a passing reference to the gospel.

Bill Love, minister to the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, in a recent book titled *The Core Gospel* has studied the content of preaching in the Restoration Movement during its first four generations, from the early 1800's to the 1950's. His aim was to determine to what extent Restoration preachers preached the core gospel (the Cross) in comparison to New Testament preachers. His findings are disturbing, for while the NT preachers referred to the Cross in all the 33 sermons in the NT (100% of the time), Restoration preachers in the hundreds of sermons that Bill studied referred to the Cross only 25% of the time.

Love's study reveals that there was a continual decline in the preaching of the Cross from the generation of Stone and Campbell (56% of their sermons pointed to the Cross) to the generation of G.C. Brewer and Foy Wallace (23% of the time). In the first two generations, before the Church of Christ was a separate church, preachers

referred to the Cross an average of 52% of the time, while in the two generations of Church of Christ history our preachers averaged only 25%.

I could not help but notice that the most irenic and unity-minded of our preachers were Cross-centered (Barton Stone, who never had a debate, pointed to the Cross 82% of the time), while the more controversial did not (J.D. Tant referred to the Cross only 12% of the time). I was pleased to see that Hardeman and Wallace scored as high in Bill's study as they did, 41% and 42% respectively. But the overall findings are alarming. Part of Bill's conclusion is: "Our focus moved from Christ crucified to his church, a subtle but destructive shift," and then adds "Once our sickness took hold, we grew weaker and weaker, more and more anemic. Without the gospel we lost touch with the source of our faith."

--From *Restoration Review*, condensed

Leonard Allen regarding Alexander Campbell

"By the mid 1830's Campbell's emphasis began to shift . . . due to the hard and controversial spirit he observed in the movement. Many times throughout 1835 he spoke of the present 'crisis in our history.' The crisis was brought on, he stated, by the 'dogmatical, unfeeling and snarling temper' of the many preachers who 'denounce error rather than preach the gospel.'

"Campbell lamented 'the furious zeal for orthodoxy' that he felt was draining the health of the movement. Proclaimers of the ancient gospel had become 'too much addicted to denouncing the sects representing them *en masse* as wholly aliens from the possibility of salvation.' They tended to 'make baptism a saviour, or a passport to heaven, disparaging all the private and social virtues of the professing public.'

"Campbell was distressed. 'We are very tired of controversy,' he sighed, 'and still more of that unkind, uncourteous . . . spirit which appears to be the genius of every sectarian establishment.'"

--From *Distant Voices*

FRONTIERS OF GRACE FOR CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Gary Pearson

When I think of God's grace and our understanding of it, I think of confusion.

Grace is so basic to the Christian faith; without grace there is no Christianity. Yet for most of us grace is a slippery subject. Just when we think we've figured it out, we find out we don't quite have it. Fortunately for us, we don't have to fully understand grace in order to have it. Yet we continue to strive for deeper understandings of this grace that has made our salvation possible.

This article will consider three frontiers for Churches of Christ in our understanding of grace: one that has confronted us, one that is confronting us and one that will confront us.

Understanding Salvation by Grace

The first frontier of grace that has confronted us, and to some extent still confronts us, is the frontier of understanding our own personal salvation by grace through faith. For one who is familiar with the New Testament, it may seem strange to call this a frontier. What's so hard about it? The Bible is clear, isn't it? Ephesians 2:8-10 is about as plain as it can be:

For by grace you have been saved through faith--and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

This passage defines what biblical grace is. It is God's gift of salvation that comes to us through faith. Paul is emphatic that we are not saved on account of our works. Now good works do come into the picture but only as a result of our salvation by grace through faith. Good works are the fruit of our salvation; but they count for nothing when it comes to causing our sins to be forgiven. If I went to the mall and tried to buy something with Confederate money they'd laugh in my face. It wouldn't work. Why? It's the wrong currency. Good works are to be an important part of our Christian lives, but they are the wrong currency when it comes to being justified before God. Christ purchased our salvation, 100 percent of it, at the cross and gives it to us when we by faith accept it.

Traditionally we've been wary of this Ephesians passage and others like it because it doesn't mention baptism and it might sound like "faith only" if we emphasized it too much. That is a needless concern, because baptism is as much faith as is believing. Baptism is not a work in any shape, form or fashion. No work whatsoever is accomplished by man in baptism. It is a passive act. Someone else immerses us into water. Our own exertion never comes into the picture.

Baptism is a physical expression of faith. In biblical accounts of conversion, we find a three-fold expression of faith. To accept Christ we trust in him for salvation *intellectually* by believing and confessing that he is the Son of God. We trust in Christ for salvation *emotionally* in repentance. We trust in Christ for salvation *physically* in baptism. With our entire beings we express our reliance on Jesus for salvation. At that point we accept God's gift of salvation. That's all. Everything we do in conversion is equivalent to holding out our hands to receive a gift.

So we need not fear those words "by faith" in Ephesians 2:8. In fact, if we have a biblical understanding of faith, we need not fear the words "faith only." Biblically speaking, salvation is by grace through faith only. Baptism and repentance are just as much manifestations of biblical faith as is belief in Christ as God's son. Once we work through that concern about what faith is, the message of Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10 seems simple and straightforward. We are saved solely by God's grace through faith and the fruit or the result of our salvation is our good works.

If you've been a part of our fellowship for many years, you know that this has been a frontier for us. I am now thirty-six, and I was raised in the church on concepts of grace that denied the truth of Ephesians 2:8-10. I will always remember hearing our salvation compared to rowing a boat--with one oar being grace and the other works. As a young person and a new Christian, that was my understanding of salvation by grace. Many of you know what I'm talking about because your experience has been similar. You may have heard things like: "God by his grace provides 50, 60, 70, 80 maybe even 90 percent of our salvation, and we by our works provide the rest." Or even more common: "We do all we can and then God's grace makes up what is lacking."

We should weep over that legacy. How many of our brethren have gone through life and to their deathbeds with no assurance of salvation--hoping against hope that they had worked enough to be saved? How many through the years turned back from Christ in frustration because they never felt they were good enough to be saved?

One hundred theologians could not reconcile "rowboat salvation" with Ephesians 2:8-10 if their lives depended on it. Our legacy of works salvation has been a stumbling block to many. It's time to confess it, renounce it and repent of it. We can be thankful as we now near the end of this century that the majority of our brethren in Churches of Christ have passed through this frontier and now understand that salvation is by grace through faith. Some have not. Some are still in the midst of the passage. Some are dead set against ever passing it. But as a whole, the bulk of our Restoration Movement is now beyond it.

Understanding Grace-based Fellowship

As a brotherhood, we are now passing through another frontier--the understanding of grace. This frontier follows naturally from the first one. This present frontier is the frontier of a grace-based fellowship with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. A truth began to dawn on us in the 1960's and 70's and increasingly through the 1980's. That truth is that God's grace extends not only to our moral imperfections but also to our doctrinal shortcomings.

We've always recognized this truth to some extent. We've always considered some doctrinal questions to be in the realm of opinion. Few, if any, of us would teach that a Christian woman's salvation depends on her correct understanding of Paul's teaching on coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. Most of our women have concluded that God does not require them to wear a special head-covering. What if it turns out that we're wrong? We understand that God's grace would cover that doctrinal shortcoming. But we haven't known how far to take this.

First John 1:7 teaches that as long as we're walking in the light of Christ his blood goes on cleansing us from sin--all sin. That would include doctrinal sin, or missing the mark doctrinally. How far does this go? The answer is inherent in the truth we accepted in crossing the first frontier of understanding salvation by grace. Grace is God's gift of salvation to us when we by faith accept it. Just as we are not saved by our works, so we are not saved by what we know. Rather we are saved by whom we know: Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me." As long as I know the good news of Jesus, then I know enough to be saved. The only doctrinal error that will cause anyone to be lost is doctrinal error that leads one to lose faith--to quit trusting in Christ for salvation.

Doctrinal error of that magnitude does exist. John in 2 John 7 condemns those who denied the incarnation--the coming of God in the

flesh in Jesus Christ. If that wasn't the Son of God who in the flesh died on the cross, then we can forget salvation. Some religious groups today deny the divinity of Christ. That's a denial of the gospel or good news of Jesus and is a rejection of a biblical saving faith. So there is doctrinal error that will cause one to lose his salvation. With those people we cannot be in fellowship. But all doctrinal differences that fall short of destroying biblical faith are covered by grace. We are all, in one area of doctrine or another, brethren in error.

Do any of us really think that at the Judgment, God will say to us, "You got everything right! You get a 100!?" That's not going to happen for any of us. I'm not in fellowship with you because you've got everything right and you're not in fellowship with me because I've got everything right.

It is God's grace that makes possible our ongoing fellowship. What we hold in common is that each of us has been saved by grace through faith. This may sound revolutionary but it's really not. It's what we all practice in our local congregations. When someone comes forward and says that he wants to become a Christian, we don't ask him about his understanding of church government or what can and can't be done in worship or what's going to happen at the second coming or whether spiritual gifts are for today. We ask him only one question: Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? If he makes that confession, then we baptize him and accept him as a brother in Christ.

At what point does it change? Is it 5 years later, 10 years later, 15 years later? At what point does it take more knowledge than a knowledge of the good news of Jesus to be saved? It never takes more. When we know Jesus, he is able to keep what he has entrusted to us until the day he returns. As long as we hold on to our faith in Jesus, we continue to know Jesus and thus to be safe in him, even if we are mistaken in a thousand opinions.

We are in the midst of the passage through this frontier of a grace-based fellowship. We may continue to be in the passage of this frontier for years to come. But thankfully it appears we're going to the right direction. When questions of fellowship arise, let our answers be based on God's grace.

Learning to Live by Grace

Yet a third frontier of the understanding of grace awaits us. We're just beginning to approach its edges. It is the frontier of living by grace. Once we've crossed the first two frontiers, we must stoutly

resist the temptation to stop and settle down. If we're not careful, we can stay in a rut of reaction against our previous mistakes.

During the twenty years that Bob Hendren preached at the Donelson Church of Christ in Nashville, he traveled and spoke elsewhere probably ten or twelve Sundays a year. He preached from Fresno, California, to Caribou, Maine, and a lot of places in between. He has been one of the most notable proclaimers of God's grace in our brotherhood. Yet, for all of Bob's emphasis on grace, I've heard him comment on an attitude he encountered among some of our brethren. He calls it the "Thank-God-I'm-not-a-legalist" attitude. He said those with this attitude just wanted to be congratulated on their discovery of grace. They weren't interested in being challenged by grace to reach new heights in their Christian lives.

After crossing the first two frontiers, it's possible for us to make a wrong turn into a modern-day gnosticism--an emphasis on the knowledge we have. This can show itself in a smug, elitist attitude--a feeling of superiority over those who haven't yet gained our insights. This attitude is as deadly to the church as legalism ever was. It makes for a sterile, impotent church that rarely sees anyone come to Christ. It makes for a cold church with little zeal or commitment. Reaction is no better a motivator than guilt. Guilt at times produces spectacular short-term results but is worthless for the long haul. Christians burn out when their motivation is guilt. Reaction is similar. You can only react with vigor for so long.

If the primary motivation in our Christian lives is reaction against the traditionalism and legalism of the past, we will not burn out, we will eventually "blah" out. The spiritual fire within us will go out. Christians and congregations stuck in this rut of reaction usually end up becoming bland. To forever define ourselves by what we are not never frees us to become what God wants us to be. We don't have to get stuck in the rut of reaction. We can consciously choose rather to face this new frontier of living by grace.

What does it mean to live by grace? Basically it means to welcome the transformation that God wants to accomplish within us through His grace. We almost always concentrate on the role of grace in our conversion, our initial salvation; but that's only the beginning of God's grace in our lives, not the end. Yes, grace makes possible the forgiveness of our sins, but it does so much more. I don't begin to claim that I have a grasp on all that living by grace involves, but I do see some directions of living by grace in Scripture.

To live by grace is to live an honest life before God. Freed from the need to be good enough to be saved, we no longer have any rea-

son to whitewash our sinfulness. We can be authentic in our relationship with God and in our relationship with our brethren, confessing our struggles against sin. This connection is found in 1 John 1:5-10. Almost in the same breath as he declares the continual cleansing from sin available in Christ's blood, John advises us to confess our sins and receive that cleansing. The pretending is over. We can be honest now.

To live by grace is to realize that progress in the Christian life comes only in cooperation with the Holy Spirit living in us. As we more and more surrender our lives to God, the Spirit produces more and more of his fruit in our lives--fruit characterized in Galatians 5:22 as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Romans 8:13 teaches that is by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body. So not only is our salvation due to God's grace but so is our sanctification--our progress in the Christian life. In the words of Philippians 2:13, it is God who "is at work within us both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

To live by grace is to live each day in reliance upon God and his power. It is to learn as Paul learned in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that no matter what we encounter in life, God's grace is sufficient to see us through. Like Paul, we can boast even in our weaknesses because it is in our weaknesses that God's power is most evident. Our sufficiency for every situation comes from God. Our trust is in God and in His power and sovereignty. The spirit of living by grace is expressed well in a story told by Kline Roberts. He writes:

I remember in the last days of my mother's life. I used to carry her up and down the stairs of our home. She was badly arthritic and couldn't negotiate the stairs herself. As I would carry her up and down the stairs, she would grab the bannister and hold on so that we couldn't move. I would say, "Mom, let go. We can't move." And she would always say the same thing, "I'm afraid you will drop me." . . . Then she would let go for a little while and we would start to move, and then she would grab the bannister again. One day as we were going through our little routine I thought to myself: "What a perfect analogy . . . God has us in his arms and is saying, 'Come on, let go,' and we are saying to him, 'No, I am afraid you will drop me.' You know, what if it isn't true? What if I dreamed this up? And He is saying, 'Let go. Ride the winds of the Spirit. If you really let go, you will be fine. If only you make the surrender of faith, really believe in me.'" (Clergy Journal, August 1988)

May God help us to let go and go wherever his amazing grace takes us.

-- Reprinted by permission from IMAGE magazine

BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE BAYOU COUNTRY

Antoine Valdetero and Jack Harris

Without bridges, the State of Louisiana would be seriously restricted. The bayou state has a marked riverine environment, consisting primarily of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. The advent of bridges in the early years provided the means for much of the advancement which the state has experienced. The Atchafalaya Causeway, nearly twenty miles in length, spanning an uninhabitable basin of thousands of acres of swampland, is indeed an engineering marvel. The two longest bridges in the world are the twenty four mile causeways which reach from Covington on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain to New Orleans on the south side.

The bridges that enable the east, west, north and south of Louisiana to lie within easy access of each other, did not come easily. They stand in mute testimony to much sacrifice, hard work, intensive planning and great expense. Building and maintaining bridges has been an absolute must for the bayou state.

More recently, some Louisiana folk have joined with others who have been quietly going about the business of building bridges of a different kind. These are much more desperately needed than the ones mentioned earlier, due to the profound implications they represent. The bridges of this latter type are those which allow followers of Christ to have access to each other, many of whom had been separated by barriers of a most impenetrable kind. Geographical gaps, no matter how impassable they may have appeared, were small in comparison to the ones these "bridges" are attempting to span. Gaps such as these had arisen between brethren of like precious faith in many cases, out of good intentions. They have grown, however, and have been perpetuated by scriptural ignorance, spiritual immaturity, and just plain selfish inclination. The movement, launched nearly two centuries ago, to restore men to the Divine pattern initiated by our Lord Jesus Christ, has splintered repeatedly.

Heirs of the Restoration Movement have fallen loosely into three camps, those who prefer to worship without mechanical instruments, those who prefer a tight organizational structure of a general assembly and those who use instruments in worship and prefer the freedom of local autonomy. Within these three are numerous factions who have seen fit to separate over some petty controversy, not usually doctrinal, but rather of a methodological or a ritualistic nature. More than one of these has been known to vie for recognition as the true representative of the New Testament legacy. In too many of these minds, loyalty to a dogma seems to have superseded love for the

Master and for all those who claim identity as His servants. Because of the gaps which have been inherited, those who wear His name have not been able to present a united front to a lost world, instead, these are often characterized as being a sectarian people. Whether this appellation is always true is irrelevant, the image which is projected is quite relevant.

It is heartening to hear of the strides forward which have followed across the United States in the wake of the National Restoration Unity Forums. Brethren from each side of the instrument question have been impressed afresh with the admonition in Scripture, that Christians are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Thus, there have been numerous occasions in which these have arisen to meet lovingly in the Lord. Consequently, it has been discovered that there are many things in which each may undergird the other without sacrificing the freedom of identity which individual congregations cherish. There does not have to be total uniformity in views of prophecy, the instrument in worship, missions or other areas in which controversy has raged, for brethren to be one in love and respect for each other and in their concern for the lost. There are many activities in which the followers of Christ may engage in promoting the Lord and His church. What a blessing it is to see men and women humbly embrace and warmly commit to the mindset of "in essentials, unity, in opinions, liberty, and in all things, charity."

In Louisiana, there is an example of such harmony being developed in a gentle but effective manner. Some years ago four ministers—three acappella and one instrumental—launched the Acadiana Christian Worker's Clinic. In the intervening years, each spring has seen the brethren participating in this effort. For a period of six weeks, classes are conducted on a college level, not in order to gain credit, but rather that Christians may develop themselves, so as to prepare for greater usefulness in the Kingdom of Christ. Each year, a different panel of teachers, acappella and instrumental, have participated. Classes on Bible study, Christian education, cults, family matters, financial planning and personal growth have been presented. The year of 1994 was unquestionably the best yet. When it was being planned, an entirely new approach was decided upon. The theme of Christian Service was selected and the format was planned to include eighteen different men. For six connective sessions, three speakers would be heard in each assembly. These would include a state representative, a school superintendent, a police captain, a physician, a city judge and a financial consultant, each of whom would speak on the responsibility of a Christian in these respective areas. Following the civil servant's presentation, two ministers (one acappella and one instrumental) would present a Christian perspective on

two of the Ten Commandments. On the last evening, the "New Commandment" of Christ and the "Royal Law of Liberty" would close the sessions. The Classes were well attended and the speakers were warmly received. Overall a beautiful spirit of grace radiated in each session.

When the Louisiana Christian Men's Retreat convened in the spring of 1994, two men from the acappella fellowship were invited as speakers. Robert Danklefsen, an elder in the Whites' Ferry Road Church of Christ of West Monroe, Louisiana presented two excellent sessions on soul winning. This brother has personally witnessed to over seven thousand individuals on behalf of Christ, and has won many of them to Him. He is one of the founders and directors of the "We Care" evangelistic outreach program. In his lessons, over and over again he emphasized that we are not to try and debate people into a system, but to win them to a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus. The other speaker, Denny Boultinghouse, is the editor of *Image Magazine*, published in West Monroe. Bro. Boultinghouse is a veteran of the Unity Forums and is deeply committed to reaching out to brethren wherever they may be. He presented two great sermons on the wonderful Grace of God. The men in attendance represented backgrounds of both acappella and instrumental, pre-millennial and a-millennial, traditional and contemporary worship, and French and English cultures. At this retreat, these areas were not seen as divisive issues, so each was able to relate to the other in the spirit of Christ's love. More and more people appear to be becoming convinced that it is not only possible but indeed is imperative that such "bridges" as these be built on local levels. The task facing individual congregations is that of holding forth the Word of Christ with a loving, open heart.

These positive developments are a result of several years of friendly interchange between instrumental and acappella congregations of southern Louisiana. Many have actively engaged in pulpit exchange and have frequently called ministers from each other for special speaking engagements such as revivals, etc. A recent experience in the bayou state illustrates at least one of the benefits of this openness. A fellow minister, through no fault of his own, found himself without a congregation. This brother had distinguished himself both as a capable preacher and as a man with a deep spiritual commitment. Although he possessed great potential, due to the circumstances which had arisen, he could easily have been lost to the ministry. In a nearby town, there was a sizeable and stable congregation which had been served for a number of years by a minister who was desiring to retire. There were background differences between the minister who had no pulpit and the pulpit which had no minister, both in prophetic interpretation and in the instrumental issue. In spite of this, the elders invited the minister for an interview. During

their discussion, it was decided to embark upon an agreement in which neither would attempt to change the other's mind on the aforementioned issues, but rather to simply accept each other in love and work in harmony for the glory of God. Quite obviously, there was some adjustment necessary, but overall the agreement seems to have had upon it the blessing of God.

What a joy it would be if those on all sides of these past areas of conflict could exercise this same courtesy to each other. The great gatherings for lectureships, conventions, clinics, retreats, and even special assemblies in local congregations would feel free to draw from and share the accumulated wisdom and skills of men that before were on the "other side." A veritable treasure could and would be discovered, but even more, there could again be raised a clarion call to Christians scattered in various sects to unite on the basis of the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His Word.

Since all of the "restoration" related congregations have known what it is to be free and independent in Christ, there can be no hierarchal pronouncement that will bring brethren together. Yet, if only people will attempt to get to know and accept each other as Christ knows and accepts everyone, it may be possible for Christians to realize in the closing hours of this century, what the Lord Jesus prayed for in His prayer for unity. It would approach being no less than a move from the hand of God if all His family could put aside the gaps and barriers of bygone idiosyncrasies, and enter into the "bridge" building challenge.

[Antoine Valdetero, well known to most of our readers, preaches at the Avenue E. Church of Christ (acappella) in Crowley, LA. Jack Harris ministers at the First Church of Christ (instrumental) in Jennings, LA.]

Leroy Garrett: "Alexander Campbell himself in his early years pled for unity on the basis of 'a restoration of the ancient order.' [But] he came to see that sincere, intelligent people disagree on what that 'order' is By 1839 he admitted that the basis for unity had not been clear to him. He made an important mid-course correction in that he now pled for unity on what he called 'the catholic rule.' Christians can unite only upon those universal (catholic) truths that all hold in common. He sometimes referred to it as unity based upon 'general Christianity.'

"A plea that calls for unity on 'particulars' (mode of baptism, frequency of Communion, name, organization, music, etc.), which is what restorationism does, will not only not work but further divide. We are on solid ground if . . . we [practice] 'In things catholic unity, in particulars liberty'

"Mark it, only the Cross of Christ is at the center. All else is perpheral. This does not mean that what is in the periphery is unimportant. It only means that we can never unite upon understanding all the New Testament alike."

LET EACH BE PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND

Alex V. Wilson

How should we regard those disciples of Jesus Christ who belong to other churches? To what extent, if any, can we cooperate with them in the work of the Lord?

One time the apostle John told Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he was not following us." Our Lord replied, "Do not forbid him For he that is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:38-40). How can we apply those words to our present situations?

In his interesting booklet, *A History of the Premillennial Churches of Christ* (1963), LaVern Houtz contrasts three different "restoration movements," all of which sought to return to the New Testament pattern of church practices.

With the Sandemanians there was little concern for others. They were apparently smug and satisfied to monopolize their orthodoxy in their own little corner. They were in the main content merely to exist without recognizing any obligation to promote the Gospel among others. They had no mission field.

The Haldanes had a fervent missionary spirit. Like the Sandemanians they made little effort to proselyte those already professing some form of Christianity but were vitally concerned about the heathen who had never heard of Christ. They recognized in them a vast mission field.

The movement inaugurated by the Campbells and Stone embodied an objective not present in the other two. To these men the concept of the unity of all Christians upon the New Testament pattern was a chief objective. By the 1830's . . . the unity objective drove them to consider their first mission field as the vast number caught in the grasp of the many denominations. Having since subdivided into a number of warring factions, we take similar delight in proselyting each other. Certainly our "unity" objective, desirable though it be, and certainly through no fault of the pattern of the New Testament, has been a complete failure. Somewhere we have failed, and perhaps our greatest error has not been this failure, but the fact that, being preoccupied with the unity objective, we have failed those who have made no profession of faith in Christ.

Though those observations are true in general, we have seen in this series of articles there also have been broad concepts of fellowship practiced or at least proposed through the years. In 1845 Alexander Campbell recommended that the churches support a Bible society run by the Baptists. He even recommended that the believers among whom he ministered give financial backing to a missionary-sending agency which the Baptists had begun. In 1866 some Churches of Christ in Virginia met in conference with some Baptists Churches to consider grounds upon which they could unite! No union resulted from this, but it did create a better spirit between those churches. In 1871, another group of Baptists discussed cooperation and even unity with Churches of Christ. "There was some exchange of pulpits among the preachers of the two groups, but beyond this nothing came of this effort" (Hailey, *Attitudes and Consequences*).

Coming to more recent times, we saw last month that R.H. Boll not only called upon men from other church-groups to lead in public prayer, but he also preached and taught classes in other kinds of churches. Stanford Chambers and the Camp Street Church in New Orleans sponsored evangelistic meetings in which a member of the Christian and Missionary Alliance preached the gospel. They were not sponsoring the C.M.A., but they used an evangelist who was not from "our" churches. Frank Mullins, Sr. at times preached the gospel at Youth For Christ rallies. And during the 1960's and early 70's, at least, some men from the Christian Churches spoke at our Bible conferences, and vice versa, as well as sometimes exchanging pulpits in the churches.

Options Regarding "Others"

If we come right down to it, there seem to be about seven options in our relations to professing followers of Christ outside our churches. 1) Consider them unsaved, and thus have *no Christian fellowship* with them but try to convert them. 2) Consider them as saved persons and thus have fellowship with them as *individuals*, but have no fellowship with their congregation or their denomination. 3) Consider them saved and also their *congregation* as basically sound (in fundamentals at least), so have fellowship with them on an individual basis and a congregational basis, but not on a denominational level. 4) Consider their entire *group of churches* as at least basically sound and true to the gospel, and thus be willing to cooperate in some kind of *intergroup projects*. 5) Consider their group of churches as sound and therefore seek not only to cooperate in some projects, but even to *merge into one fellowship of churches*. 6) Consider *all* churches as good or at least worthy to work with, and therefore apply to the World Council of Churches! 7) Somewhere between position #2 and #3 above is another one: Working together with believers not on an *inter-church* basis (like #4 and #5) but on a *trans-church* basis.

That is, Christians from various churches cooperating in what are sometimes called *para-church* organizations ("alongside" the church), such as the Gideons or Youth For Christ. Such organizations usually specialize in one field; for example, Bible distribution, youth work, tribal missions, etc.

I presume that none of us agrees with approach #6, the ecumenical movement, or with #1 if by "disciples" we mean repentant, immersed believers. I include those approaches just to represent the whole spectrum of varying viewpoints. But what about positions #2-5 and #7?

Some Examples

As an instance of approach #2, I know a preacher who meets weekly with the preacher of a Christian Church in his town. They enjoy individual fellowship in the Lord, praying and studying Scripture together, but to my knowledge their congregations have never worked together in any way.

As examples of position #3, there are some congregations which join with other kinds of churches in community-wide meetings for occasions like Thanksgiving Day or the local high school's baccalaureate service. If that is practiced, then why shouldn't congregations which are clearly Evangelical also *cooperate in series of meetings on subjects of common need*? Thus, if your church holds meeting stressing family life, why not invite other churches in your area? If a Christian Church has a man especially gifted in holding teacher-training seminars, why not take advantage of his knowledge and experience? If the Baptist Church in your neighborhood invites a speaker with a profound understanding of prophecy, why shouldn't we benefit from it too? Or if a local "Bible Church" or a "Brethren Assembly" brings in a man used by the Lord to promote greater holiness of life and church renewal, do not we as well as they need such blessing?

Still thinking of approach #3--cooperation among the Evangelical churches in the same community--what about concerted *action*? The preceding paragraph mentions only meetings for teaching. But the Lord's people need to *do* things, not merely talk and listen! Would it be good or bad for various churches in a neighborhood to join together in common pursuits like establishing an outreach to drug addicts, or opposing pornography in the area? In such cases, groups of believers can sometimes accomplish goals which cannot be attained by an individual here or there crying out like a voice in the wilderness. However, in projects like these, it often seems better if interested *members* of churches work together rather than the congregations officially setting up a project. This avoids possible or-

ganizational problems. In effect, it would mean taking approach #7 rather than #3.

Approaches #4 and #5 differ from #3 in that they go beyond cooperation between differing congregations in a *community*, and include harmony and working together of many churches in *many areas*. These two approaches seem impractical usually, because of congregational autonomy--a basic Biblical principle. However, there might be times when the almost-miraculous would happen, and elders of a number of our churches feel convinced that it is right and wise to cooperate or even merge with a number of other Bible-based, Christ-honoring churches! After all, it did happen in 1832. That is when the group of congregations led primarily by Alexander Campbell merged with the similar-but-distinct congregations which looked mainly to Barton Stone for leadership. All of them united into one fellowship of churches, and yet strongly emphasized and practiced the independence of the local congregation.

Viewpoint #6, the ecumenical movement led by the W.C.C., we reject because most (not all) of its members and leaders reject the Bible as their supreme standard of faith and conduct. The movement is dominated by doctrinal infidelity and political radicalism--even terrorism has been supported!

Para-church Organizations

Approach #7 furnishes a means for individual believers to be actively engaged in concerns which are dear to their hearts but which some other members of their church might not feel free to participate in. Some of our folks, for example, have had their vision and faith enlarged through serving as short-term missionaries under Operation Mobilization. Others in our churches are active in the Friends of Israel, which seeks to evangelize Jews. Many people have learned vital lessons at the Basic Youth-Conflicts Seminars of Bill Gothard. Some of our ladies have grown in Biblical understanding through the nationwide Bible Study Fellowship. Some of our men participate in the Christian Business Men's Committee, finding it a useful channel for evangelism. Some of our young people studying in secular colleges have had their faith stretched and their witness enhanced by being involved in Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship or the Navigators.

Other members of our churches feel that such involvement is compromising or at least dangerous. And no doubt there *are* dangers. People may become so engrossed in the activities of para-church organizations that they *slight their duties to the local church*. But the local church is paramount in God's plan. Another danger is that members who are not well-grounded in the Bible may *become confused or misled doctrinally*. Some may even become church-

tramps, hopping from one church to another in their shallow search for entertainment or popularity, etc. Yes, such involvement can be dangerous, especially to the immature.

But are there no dangers to limiting our fellowship to Christians of our own stripe? How easily shibboleths develop and turn into *party-lines to which leaders demand conformity*. Thus "the freedom of simple Christians" (Brother Boll wrote a great tract with that title) gets lost. In extreme cases, mini-Inquisitions even are set up (review the quotation from Brother Olmstead in last month's article). Also, if we avoid fellowship with saints from other churches, *we rob them of Biblical insights* God has give us, and *cheat ourselves of spiritual treasures* God has given them. How impoverishing if we miss out either on truths the Lord has revealed to our brethren from various backgrounds, or on fellowship with those brethren themselves. Also, we may *cripple the Lord's work* if we restrict our cooperation to "ourselves" only. Several churches working together, or some members from those churches using teamwork, can often accomplish results far exceeding what any one church can achieve by itself.

Conclusions

So, what about the various approaches to fellowship and cooperation mentioned earlier? How shall we decide? Obviously, on a case-to-case basis. For situations differ from one church to the next, from one community to another, and at one time from other times. That is why neither "open" or "closed" policies regarding fellowship should be maintained merely because they were so practiced in a former time. A good church may become heretical, or a bad one reformed. Conditions change, and prayerful dependence on the Spirit of God is essential.

Again, Romans 14 tells the fundamental principles we must apply, under the Lord's leading. *First*, the brother who practices wide fellowship must not condemn the brother who does not feel free to do the same; and vice versa. Each must respect the conscience of the other. *Second*, each should study God's Word for himself and reach his own conclusions on these matters. Then he should stick to those convictions and not compromise them (though at the same time be open minded and willing to consider differing views). "Let each be persuaded in his own mind." *Third*, act with brotherly love. Christ died for that brother you disagree with. If He went to Calvary for him, can't you accept and bear with him?

May we weigh well these words sounded out so often by Carl Ketcherside:

Tolerance is not endorsement of error. It is the acceptance of the person who holds the error in spite of that error.

But I am asked, "Shall we accept brethren in error?" Certainly so. There are no other kinds of brethren. No one knows it all. No one is infallible. If brethren accept you they will have to do it in spite of your error. You do not accept the error because you accept the brother.

Wherever God has a child, I have a brother or sister. They are my brothers, not because we have the same opinion but because we share the same Father.

We may honestly differ among ourselves in opinions and decisions related to specific practices of our fellowship and cooperation. (E.g., should I attend that seminar at the Christian Church? Should I be active in the Friends of Israel? If my son wants to join Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, should I encourage or discourage him?) But at least one general principle is indisputable: We must strive to promote fellowship and unity among all genuine Christians. Be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit." "Receive one another as Christ has received you." Thus says *the Lord!*

Room to be Different

"In the 1960's I heard 'Cotton' Jones preach a sermon, 'The Marks of a Christian.' One point he made very clear--'In matters of opinion we must give our brother some room to be different.'

"I came from the 'old school.' Eighteen years ago when I started serving with First Christian, we had a traditional service. Because the community is of mixed cultures, we had to change the type of service (not doctrine). I used more emotion in my preaching, kept the service moving, lot of music, different kinds of music, etc. Over the years we were able to reach people for Christ who were born in foreign countries.

"Today the members are over 30% black. Some folks have left the charismatic movement because of our strong Bible preaching. They like for you to tell it like it is. They have also taught our whites to show some emotion. There are songs sung I don't like, but others do. As long as the song is scriptural, the elders permit it. Our people like choruses, they like lots of Scripture reading and long sermons.

"When people come forward to accept Christ and be immersed for the remission of sins, the people stand and applaud. The angels rejoice when sinners repent, so folks say, 'Why can't we?' The elders permit it. You know, I'm getting to enjoy it!" --Letter to *Christian Standard* from Robert P. Johnston of Bolingbrook, Illinois

THE BOND OF PEACE

C. Leonard Allen

In 1841 representatives from 29 churches of the restoration movement met in Nashville to discuss matters of church polity and teaching. According to the report of the gathering, someone asked the question whether or not the Bible permits Christians to differ from one another.

To this question someone answered that "In the kingdom of Messiah, all the subjects are bound to think alike." "The Bible reveals every religious duty," the answerer continued, therefore differences among believers "always manifest either ignorance of the law or a determination to rebel against it." The report noted that "all agreed thereto."

In the mid 1850's, faced with upheaval and division in the Nashville church, Tolbert Fanning, founding editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, said essentially the same thing. "Everything is a subject of authority and there is no room for debate," he wrote. "We have complete instructions in all matters pertaining to religion, or we have nothing." Thus, regarding the "externals, or ordinances" of the faith, he could write that "the least change, whatever, not only annihilates them, but all genuine religion."

This viewpoint marked a considerable shift away from the movement's pioneers. The earliest leaders had envisioned a large realm of diversity in the reading of the Bible. Barton Stone, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and others had said in effect, "In faith unity; in opinions liberty." This slogan, in fact, had become a frequent refrain as the movement had spread.

The early leaders acknowledged that even the most sincere and diligent believers would not agree at many points. But all could agree, they believed, on the basic facts of the gospel--the essentials that belonged to no sect or party. But by the 1840's and 50's the realm of allowable diversity had narrowed sharply in a segment of the movement.

In this context Robert Richardson, Campbell's close friend and associate editor, began a long series of articles in 1847 entitled simply "Reformation." In 1853 he published a condensed version of the articles in a small book entitled *The Principles and Objects of the Religious Reformation, Urged by A. Campbell and Others, Briefly Stated and Explained*. The book circulated widely. Campbell praised it,

noting that it "gives a well proportioned miniature view" of the movement's original goals.

The movement rested, Richardson said, upon three basic principles. First was a *distinction between faith and opinion*. The movement sought to recover a core of essentials comprising a "common Christianity," thereby allowing greater room for diversity of opinion.

The Protestant churches, he said, sought to take the Bible alone, and that certainly was proper. But in their great zeal for pure doctrine they committed a serious error: They went "too much into detail," constructing elaborate confessional statements and measuring orthodoxy by agreement on a sizeable body of doctrine.

To make a proper distinction between faith and opinion, Richardson argued, one cannot simply say, "The Bible alone is our creed." For the Bible is a rich, detailed, and complex library that can occupy the greatest minds for a life-time. Expecting people to unite by understanding it alike will simply insure continued division in the Christian ranks.

In claiming to take the Bible alone, Richardson said, many believers fail to distinguish between the Bible and the gospel. The apostles and earliest preachers had no Bible to distribute, so "there was no such thing as a formal union upon the 'Bible alone.' Nay, rather, it was a union upon the Gospel alone."

The gospel, Richardson believed, consisted of the simple facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This was the baseline of faith. Believers would never unite on a broad doctrinal platform—300 years of Protestant wrangling and division and proved that; but they could unite on the simple facts of the gospel.

When one received these facts into one's heart by faith, one was saved; and "that alone which saves men, can unite them." The great confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," should therefore serve as the "only authorized test of orthodoxy." Beyond that, believers should allow each other much room for opinions and for growth in understanding.

"Let the Bible be our spiritual library; but let the Gospel be our standard of orthodoxy," Richardson said. "Let the Bible be our test of Christian character and perfection, but let the Christian confession be our formula of Christian adoption and Christian union." "In a word," he concluded, "let the Bible be every thing designed by its Author, but let 'Christ crucified' be not only our peace with God, but our peace with one another."

The second basic principle of the movement, Richardson said, was a *distinction between "the Christian faith" and "doctrinal knowledge."* What does it mean to believe in Christ? He asked. He answered that it means not simply to receive his doctrine or to believe what he says. Rather it means to be brought into "*direct relation and fellowship* with Him; to think of Him as a *person* whom we know, and to whom we are known." It means to speak to him and listen to him as one would to a close friend.

"Christ is not a doctrine, but a person," Richardson urged. At its heart Christian faith centers on a person, not a body of doctrines. It does not consist essentially in the "accuracy of intellectual conceptions," but rather in a certain kind of life--a transformed inner life and a fruitful outer life. People may possess "the same faith, while they differ greatly in the amount and accuracy of their religious knowledge."

The broad expanse of biblical doctrine, he carefully pointed out, must never be discounted, for it serves as an important superstructure. But it does not provide the foundation. That is found only in a deeply personal relationship with Christ--and "the foundation must precede the superstructure."

The main problem behind a fragmented Christian world, Richardson believed, is that people confuse trust in a living savior with belief in certain doctrines. When this happens faith gets "supplanted by polemics." Sectarian belligerence and rivalry mount. Doctrinal creeds, whether written or unwritten, become the basic measure of orthodoxy. And people inevitably grow distant from Christ. They grow distant, Richardson said, because a "syllabus of doctrine has no power to enlist the heart and the energies of the soul in the true work of Christ."

Indeed, what every sectarian lacks is this personal reliance on Christ. He stands on the wall of his camp and asks those who seek to enter, not "In *whom* do you believe?" but rather "*What* do you believe?" He thinks that the error and confusion of the human heart will be remedied by intellectual opinions.

But this way is the way of human folly. The way of divine wisdom is "to correct the errors of reason by regulating the affections." "Oh! to set the heart right first," Richardson exclaimed, "saves the head a world of useless trouble, for it is truly through the heart alone that any one can comprehend the 'doctrine of God.'"

The first two basic principles provided the foundation for the third: *the restoration of "SIMPLE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY"*

as the true basis for Christian union. Reiterating much of Campbell's original agenda, Richardson said that the movement sought to restore "the gospel and its institutions, in all their original simplicity, to the world." This, he thought, was the scriptural basis--and only hope--for the visible union of believers.

But Richardson made a significant distinction. Commenting on Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17, he distinguished sharply between unity and union. Unity, he said, referred to "a spiritual oneness with Christ," while union was "an avowed agreement and co-operation of Christians with each other."

Most interpreters of John 17, he said, mistake union for unity. They suppose that Jesus' prayer for unity has not been answered and thus expect "some future fusion of all religious parties into one, or the creation of some grand overshadowing community" of faith.

But Jesus' prayer *has* been answered, Richardson insisted. Not in a universal, visible union, of course, but in a spiritual unity. The sinful state of humankind "utterly precludes the possibility of any denominational or organic union among believers in this wide world," he said, "but the unity for which Christ prayed is always, and has been always, not only possible but existent." This unity is a spiritual oneness created by the presence of the Holy Spirit for which Christ prayed. It is not a doctrinal uniformity or an ironing out of differences, but a oneness given by joint participation in the Spirit.

Of course, Richardson said, believers should pray for visible union, for the breakdown of "the bigotry of denominationalism and the rancor of party spirit." But such a prayer is always a prayer for the Spirit and should not be "misapplied to so inferior a matter, and one so improbable, as a future universal, organic Christian union."

Late in Richardson's life a correspondent told him about a union overture with Baptists in Virginia and asked his opinion. We were part of the Baptists in the early days, replied Richardson, and have never wholly separated. There were sharp controversies, to be sure, but "at no time have we separated ourselves, or denied fellowship to a Baptist brother, or refused to receive as a member any one accredited by a letter from a Baptist church. We have, in reality, ever claimed the Baptists as our brethren."

At a time when some leaders in the movement insisted that all true Christians were "bound to think alike," Richardson held up a different vision--the one that he thought had first launched the movement. The demand for doctrinal uniformity, he believed, inevitably

entangled believers in the "bonds of partyism," while only a unity in the Spirit drew them together in the "bond of peace."

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MORE THOUGHT-PROVOKERS

Alexander Campbell: "So long as any man, woman or child declares his confidence in Jesus of Nazareth as God's own son, that He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification; or, in other words, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of men; and so long as he exhibits a willingness to obey Him in all things according to his knowledge, so long will I receive him as a Christian brother and treat him as such."

Alexander Campbell: "The christian religion is a *personal* concern. It is confidence in a person, love to a person delight in a person--not confidence in a doctrine or love to a party. Jesus Christ is the object on which the Christian's faith, hope and love terminate."

Alexander Campbell: "Christians are . . . temples of the Holy Spirit; and they are quickened, animated, encouraged and sanctified by the power and influence of the Spirit of God, working in them through the truth."

Again he wrote: "If any man should infer . . . that I contend for a religion in which the Holy Spirit has notheing to do; in which there is no need of prayer for the Holy Spirit; in which there is no communion of the Holy Spirit; in which there is no peace and joy in the Holy Spirit--he does me the greatest injustice All whom I baptize, I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I pray for the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit to remain with all the saints. [2 Cor. 13:14] A religion of which the Holy Spirit is not the author, the subject matter and the perfecter is sheer Deism."

OUR BROTHERS IN THE DENOMINATIONS

Leroy Garrett

"Brethren of all denominations." All these long years most of us in Churches of Christ-Christian Churches have not allowed ourselves to talk like that. Even if we might think it, and most of us probably do, we do not say it. It is our unwritten creed that our sisters and brothers are all in what we call the Church of Christ. While we often refer to "the denominations," in contrast to "the Lord's church" (meaning us!), we do not refer to our brethren in the denominations. In this short piece I want to show that this sectarian mentality is of recent date, for our founding fathers did not have this narrow view of brotherhood.

The phrase is in quotation marks because it is taken from Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*, which dates back to 1809 and is one of our founding documents. The *Address* is in fact written "To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, throughout all the Churches." It is clear that he considers those in all the churches who love the Lord Jesus Christ as his brothers and sisters. Time and again in the document he refers to "our brethren" and "our brethren in all the denominations," and at least once he refers to them as "Our dear brethren of all denominations." While he recognizes that they are divided into parties, he still refers to them as "our Christian brethren, however unhappily distinguished by party names."

He refers to these brethren in the denominations as both the Christian Church and Church of Christ, such as "so that we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church," and "all the Churches of Christ which mutually acknowledge each other as such." He is not calling any one denomination or even all of them together the Church of Christ, but rather the Christians in all the denominations. What he sees as the Church of Christ transcends any sect or denomination.

That is the basis upon which he set forth in the same document his first great proposition on unity, often quoted by our people through the years: "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."

Thomas Campbell did not suppose he had to refer to "the Church of Christ" with a lower case c, as our folk are wont to do, supposing that by using "the church of Christ" they are affirming nondenominational status. In all such references as those above Campbell consis-

tently uses the capital C for church, whether Church of Christ or Christian Church, as I notice most scholars do when they refer to the church universal. It says something about where we've been (or not been) when we fastidiously use "the church of Christ" and refer to less than all Christians, while others use "the Church of Christ" when referring to the universal church made up of all believers.

Campbell also says in the *Declaration and Address*, "This, we are persuaded, is the uniform sentiment of the real Christians of every denomination," referring to his plea for unity among all believers. This explains why the Stone-Campbell movement was an effort to "unite the Christians in all the sects." They were not trying to unite or amalgamate the denominations, but to unite "the real Christians" in the denominations.

It is impressive that Campbell did all this writing about "the Church of Christ" while he yet did not have a single congregation that would eventually wear this name. This means he saw the true church as made up of all his dear brethren wherever they were and whatever party name they might be wearing, and this church has always existed, ever since the Holy Spirit breathed it into existence.

It not only existed, but it was by its very nature one, even if scattered among the sects. Christ's body cannot be divided! And so he wrote in that document, "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."

It would be wonderfully liberating if we could all, like Thomas Campbell, refer to "our dear brothers and sisters in the denominations," and realize that we are all together the true Church of Christ upon earth.

--*Restoration Review*

CHURCH RELATIONSHIP WITH AND RESPONSIBILITY TO HIV-POSITIVE INDIVIDUALS

(Jim Shelburn, San Antonio, furnished the following notes on a discussion at the semiannual South Texas Leaders Meeting in the spring. He points out that a growing number of people now have the HIV virus which leads to AIDS, and suggests that now is the time for congregations to decide what they are going to do if they become directly affected by this malady. He offers these notes as a possible first step in determining our strategy.)

AIDS is now the ninth leading cause of death in this country. While many try to ignore it, AIDS affects every group, race, and religious faith. Churches cannot, and must not, ignore this deadly dis-

ease. It has already resulted in death for Christians through blood transfusions or occupational hazards. There will be others.

Policy suggestions discussed at the meeting include the following:

1. Each congregation's leaders should obtain factual information on this topic and educate the congregation on the *facts*, because there is much paranoia and misinformation on this topic.
2. Each congregation should develop a written policy on how it will handle members/visitors with the HIV virus and other diseases.
3. Rubber gloves/cleanup kits should be available to every church building to safely handle blood and other potentially infectious body fluids. These are inexpensive and could keep our members and workers from contracting diseases such as AIDS, Hepatitis B, staph infection, and so on.
4. We should remember that the church is a hospital for the spiritually sick, and we have *no* authority to turn people away who want to learn of Jesus and serve Him. This means anyone, including a person with AIDS.
5. The Confidentiality laws concerning HIV/AIDS are among the strictest. It is reasonable for the church leadership to request that people with HIV/AIDS inform them. However, this information *must* be kept in strictest confidence, *unless* the infected person chooses to reveal his or her condition to others (this is the law, as well as good leadership responsibility). Violation could result in lawsuits for the congregation as well as individuals.
6. It is reasonable to request HIV/AIDS persons to exercise common sense and caution. Most Christians would probably do this anyway. Such requests would include ensuring that others do not use utensils or eat foods after them, covering any cuts or lesions, demonstrating responsibility about sports, and ceasing to play if injured where blood appears.
7. Church leaders should follow the example of Jesus and set the example for the congregation toward these people. Leaders should extend the hand of Christian fellowship, love, and acceptance. They must guard against fear, isolation, or rejection.
8. Fellowship should be withdrawn only if the infected person refuses to cooperate with the church leadership, or comes for the intent of division. This Biblical policy on division should apply to *any* individual, AIDS-related or not.

This is no longer an illness that affects just the homosexuals or IV drug users. The most risky group at this time for new AIDS cases is heterosexuals ages 14-30. Congregations cannot afford to ignore HIV, because it is spreading to all segments of our country. We, as church leaders, can help prevent the spread of AIDS through information, leadership, and teaching our members Biblically directed and responsible lifestyles. Leaders and members must take the initiative in responding in a Christ-like manner to this growing worldwide tragedy.

--From *Gospel Tidings*

VOICES FROM THE FIELDS

Winston and Irene Allen

September 15, 1994

12731 Spring Brook Drive
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

Brother Kenneth Stockdell and his wife JoAnn are now on their way home after being here one week. He is one of the Elders of our sponsoring congregation, the Gallatin Church of Christ in Tennessee. The purpose of the visit was to facilitate an important transition. Bro. Stockdell preached to the congregation, and met with the men who have been selected to serve as Elders and Deacons. He said he was impressed by the progress here and also with the potential he observes in various members.

Last year we gave you this request: "Pray for the Lord's guidance of our sponsoring congregation regarding the request of the church here to be autonomous after the New Testament pattern. We believe that time is near." By mutual consent the Spring Brook Church of Christ after this month, with the Lord's guidance and enabling, will be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Personal support for any worker here will be the crucial challenge of faith, but our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We take this opportunity again to express our appreciation for the tremendous help received from the Gallatin Church of Christ since the beginning of the work in 1964. Special thanks to Bro. Ken Stockdell for actively promoting the work (particularly construction of the church building), and to Bro. Lester Butler who has faithfully and efficiently served as Treasurer for 30 years.

We will continue to stand in need of your prayers for the Lord's work here in the Northland as we assume new and more responsibilities. According to the calendar, this fall I will be 75 and Irene 73. I am to serve not only as Minister, but also as one of the two Elders (at least until the Lord raises up a replacement). Optimistically, Bro. Stockdell is urging us to be making plans to enlarge the church building.

As we prepare to serve the Lord here during our 31st winter in Alaska, we feel keenly the need for physical strength, but most of all for the strength in the inner man which the Holy Spirit can give in answer to prayer.

Open Doors reveals 10 most severe persecutors in the world

1. **Saudi Arabia** - Since its large Christian population was driven out more than a thousand years ago, Saudi Arabia has been strictly Muslim, one of the least evangelized nations on earth. Christian gatherings, made up mostly of foreign workers, must be held in secret. These meetings are hunted down with increasing diligence and the leaders subjected to beatings, imprisonment and expulsion from the country. Any Saudi who confesses Christ faces the death sentence.

2. **Afghanistan** - Declared an Islamic state in 1992, Afghanistan has 48,000 mosques but not a single church building. The country has been devastated by war. After the communists were driven out, the mujaheddin

guerrillas degenerated into civil war among themselves. Open profession of Christianity can lead to death.

3. Sudan - Proudly boasting that they are the vanguard of the Islamic revolution in Africa, Sudan's leaders have used this as a tool to strengthen their personal control. The tragic cost is a million dead, an economy devastated and a country divided. The non-Muslim south has been under siege, with little notice from the rest of the world. Attempts to eliminate the Christian presence include bombings of church services, mass kidnapping, widespread murders and the destruction of entire villages.

4. China - The growth of the church in China since 1977 has no parallel in history, largely among unofficial house churches that arose out of the severe persecution of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's and 70's. The government attributes the collapse of communism in Europe to "religion," and has thus renewed efforts to control and repress religious activities in China. Government policy is clearly to shut down all house churches. A tremendous shortage of Bibles leads to heresies among the untrained house church leadership.

5. Comoro Islands - Made up of islands between Madagascar and Mozambique in East Africa, the Islamic Republic of the Comoros had engaged in intense persecution of its few hundred Christians. The islanders are strong Muslims, but deeply involved in occult practices and spirit possession. Open Christian witness and meetings are forbidden.

6. North Korea - The birthplace of a revival earlier in this century, North Korea caused most of its Christians to flee during the Korean war of killed them, and the churches were bulldozed. The leader, Kim Il Sung, and his son have made themselves into gods, and their repressive regime is totally dedicated to maintaining their power. Little is known about the underground church except that it has survived.

7. Iran - The infamous Islamic revolution of 1979 has proved more cruel and corrupt than the system it replaced, while intense propaganda against Christians has caused many Muslims to seek answers in this forbidden area. Arbitrary arrests and Islamic religious education for children have led to emigration of a large proportion of Christians. Muslim converts to Christ may be imprisoned or killed.

8. Egypt - Although the Egyptian Coptic church is by far the largest body of Christians in the Middle East, persecution of Christians continues to grow steadily, including harassment, discriminatory laws and destruction of churches. Muslims who convert to Christianity have been imprisoned, and one Muslim leader has publicly exhorted his followers to wipe out all Christians.

9. Morocco - This North African kingdom is committed to preserving Islam as the religion of all Moroccans. The government refuses to recognize the existence of a Christian church. Small groups of Christians gather secretly in eight cities, but they risk imprisonment if discovered.

10. Yemen - Located at the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula, Yemen is officially Islamic. The few thousand Christians, mostly foreign workers and refugees, have little opportunity for fellowship and are under continual pressure. Yemen is one of the world's least evangelized countries; the north was sealed from the Gospel for 1,300 years. A renewed outbreak of civil war makes the situation even more difficult.

--From Open Doors *Newsbrief*

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Catching Up

We regret that these past couple of issues have been so late, due to factors beyond our control. Hopefully we shall catch up soon. Starting with the previous issue, our printer is using some new equipment which speeds things up by eliminating a step or two in the printing process. It looks better too. We're grateful for that, and for all who help in any way in putting out W&W. Some pray, some donate, some write or edit or proof-read, some help mail them out, & of course some print them. Sister Louise Wells is my right arm in handling the office matters. But if you have questions or problems re: the SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY, especially if they don't arrive by the deadline, call Jane or Becca Heid at (502) 778-5518. They keep track of mailing out the quarterlies.

Please HELP US INCREASE OUR CIRCULATION. Won't you pause right now and think of some Christians who would benefit from W&W but don't get it. Then either lend or give them a copy or two & encourage them to subscribe, OR else give them a gift subscription, OR send us a list of names & we'll send them a free sample or two (no charge to you except for the postcard you mail us!). Thank you, friends.

I know of a teacher at the School of Biblical Studies who sometimes uses W&W articles for classroom discussion or homework assignments. (I won't tell you who it is.) Various articles would be great to supplement your teaching in

Sunday school or other Bible classes or studies at camp. Others would be very helpful for new converts. Order a bundle for your church so all your teachers, leaders, shut-ins, & other members will have a copy. Then encourage them to use them. It's incredible & shameful how FEW Christians read much at all. By the way, a bundle of 10 or more copies gets a reduced rate. --AVW

Something New

The School of Biblical Studies in Louisville (2500 Portland Ave.) has added a TWO-year course in addition to the 4-year course. These are not just for prospective preachers but anyone seeking to grow stronger in Christian conduct & service. This semester, for example, classes are held in the book of Romans, the life & teachings of Christ, Christian growth & development, & apologetics (evidences supporting the Christian faith). Next semester SBS hopes to offer Christian ethics, methods of Bible study, church history, personal evangelism, & Daniel/Revelation. Also the Lilly Dale church in Gatchel, IN, plans to hold an SBS extension class: someone will travel there to teach. They did that twice before & found it very beneficial to their members. Your church might too.

Good Advice For Bulletin Editors (& W&W Too!):

Always proofread to be sure you have not out something, misspelled a word or used a wrong punctuation mark? (Taken from the

Locust Street bulletin, Johnson City, TN)

Going To Maryland?

We appreciate those churches which send us their bulletins regularly. One that does so is the Belair Church of Christ, 2518 Kenhill Drive, Bowie, Maryland. The preacher there is Graham McKay, longtime friend of Moto Nakahara & of missions in Japan. In fact the McKays were missionaries there themselves, some years ago. If you get to that part of the U.S., worship with the folks there.

Gallatin, Tenn.

"Created to strengthen men in the body of Christ," is the stated purpose of In His Service Ministries, Inc. Dr. Bryant Millsaps, former Secretary of State, is spokesman for this organization. He was with us on Saturday, October 1st to lead our men in growing in the Lord. The seminar was from 8:00 - 3:00 and limited to 30 men.

The Wednesday night visitation teams are making visits on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday nights of each month. The teams meet at 6:15 p.m. for assignments and prayer, then make visits from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. A training session for team members will be held the 2nd Wednesday night of each month for the next few months. We will meet from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the church library.

Stand up for Jesus

Wednesday, Sept. 21st, teens from all around the nation and the world gathered around their school's flagpoles before their first class. They met to pray for their nation & its leaders, their school & teachers, and for students who do not yet know Christ. They took a stand for what they believe. Will you take a stand? Decide right now

that you will, regardless of who else will or will not, regardless of the fact that you might be a little scared, and regardless of the fact that you will have to give up whatever. Take a stand! BJB

Jennings, La.

Worship is not a spectator sport! If we fidget, our message is that worship is boring. But worship is giving, not receiving! Sing and reflect during communion. It really grieves the Lord when we are not worshipping. Examples of that are given in Matt. 27:27-31

The place is not important, but the manner is. We must not be hypocritical! --D. Johnson 1/29/94

Linton, IN

Part of our worship today will be the ordination of Brother Milford Stone as a deacon. We are thankful for Milford's response and the support of his family.

Jerry Carmichael was speaker at the Good Friday community service at the First Baptist Church of Linton. Jerry has been asked to do a series from the book of Romans which will begin tonight. He will be mainly preaching through it, but will try to allow time for questions during the study.

We are happy to report that \$174 was given to Dan Ford to go for the India missions that he has been working with. We do appreciate Dan coming last week to share with us about the work and to challenge us in the area of missions and living for Jesus.

We have repaired and packaged over 150 used songbooks to send to the Garretts in Zimbabwe, Africa. These were stored here at the church and were not being used by anyone.

Woodland Bible Camp

There were over 165 at the 40th anniversary celebration of the camp Aug 6. Thanksgivings, old times, and a lot of reminiscing was a part of the day, along with the good food that was set before us.

Tell City, IN

Excited and *expectant* are the two clearest words to describe the way the Sunday School staff feels about the fall quarter for 1994. It is with utmost joy that we are beginning this quarter of Bible Studies. Beginning this quarter, we will be changing our Sunday School format from a Bible based "lecture" lesson to a Bible based "activity" lesson. The new material will get the children involved in the study of their various lessons by becoming a part of the lesson. The new material is greeted with excitement, but at the same time with hopes and prayers that it will encourage the students to receive Christ's teachings into their lives in such a way that they will learn how to apply them to everyday living.

We are planning a trip to the Wayside Christian Mission on Sept. 24. This trip will be an all day activity taking us to a Louisville inner city mission and then the zoo.

No God - No Brains?

There was a Quaker who in dealing with an atheist used an excellent method. The atheist asked

the Quaker, "Did you ever see God?" "No." "Did you ever feel God?" "No." "Did you ever smell God?" "No." "Do you believe there is a God?" The Quaker, in disgust, asked the infidel, "Friend, did thee ever see thy brains?" "No." "Did thee ever feel thy brains?" "No." "Did thee ever smell thy brains?" "No." "Dost thee think thee hast any brains?" If we have any brains at all, we must come to the conclusion that there is a God, that there is an architect behind this marvelous architecture called the universe.

Happy Anniversary!

Julius and Claudia Hovan celebrated 37 years of wedded bliss and Glenn and Opal Baber for 44 years. Thanks be to God for both of these Christian couples - dedicated to do God's will.

A Call For Prayer

Ken and Ruth Rideout are veteran missionaries to Southeast Asia, mainly Thailand. In recent years they have worked primarily among primitive tribespeople, and the Lord has given some real breakthroughs. The Gallatin Church of Christ co-sponsors them.

Word has just come that Ruth has cancer and has turned quite jaundiced. After 36 years in Asia this is their 1st serious illness! Please pray for God's glory and their strength and enabling.