

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

114-124

APRIL, 1998

CHURCHES and DENOMINATIONS, PREACHERS and PREACHING

A batch of wonderful photos of the Church

* * *

How come so many denominations?

Where'd they come from?

* * *

Buying a new preacher--it isn't easy

* * *

A preacher muses,

"How seriously do they take me?"

* * *

**"You've been there for our family
in every crisis we had during the past 15 years."**

* * *

**A Semi-seminar on Preaching,
to stimulate the preacher**

**"There is a Time for Everything....
A time to weep and a time to laugh."**

Eccles. 3:1,4

Some compliments(?) allegedly paid to preachers: "Your sermon was like a cup of cold water to a drowning man."

"I don't care what other people say, I like your sermons."

"Each sermon is better than the next."

* * *

Abraham Lincoln's comment on a fellow-lawyer: "That man can cram more words into fewer thoughts than anyone I know."

Someone else said, "A sermon need not be eternal for it to be immortal."

On the other hand, Donald Grey Barnhouse observed, "Sermonettes by preacherettes produce Christianettes."

* * *

Speakers should seek to use good grammar. That's important. But on the other hand, some hearers are overly technical and picky. Winston Churchill was criticized by one such hearer for ending a sentence with a preposition. Churchill replied, "This is the sort of nonsense up with which I will not put!"

* * *

We end with a serious note, a statement by John Newton, the wretch-turned-preacher-&-hymnwriter: "**My grand point in preaching is to break the hard heart and to heal the broken one.**" Amen.

[Thanks to Victor Knowles for 4 of those quotes.]

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Jack Blaes, News

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CHURCHES and DENOMINATIONS, PREACHERS and PREACHING

Alex V. Wilson

Last month we thought about church leaders and servants--elders and deacons. Even deaconesses (all churches have them, but most don't title or ordain them!). We also thought about church meetings, especially the smaller, mutual-edification type. Those are important, and need to be included somewhere in every church's schedule.

But sermons are important too, so this month we focus on preachers and preaching. If your preacher doesn't take *Work and Work*, pass this issue on to him after reading it yourself.

The second theme this month is the church... and the churches ... and the denominations. In our "What the Bible Teaches" series we have devoted six lessons to various aspects of salvation: Christ's provision, our response, His gifts (justification, new birth, the Holy Spirit, etc.). But we must never think of salvation merely as an individual matter. No, the Lord saves us to be a part of His people, His team, His family. True, many people overemphasize the church in their preaching, urging folks to "come to the Lord's church" instead of the Lord Himself. But many others minimize the wondrous privilege of being in God's family, and our responsibilities as organs in Christ's body.

But what about all those other churches out there? Well, don't be an air-head, but do keep an open mind as you read the two important articles on that topic this month.

Let's pray for all the churches where Christ is upheld, especially those which are struggling. And ask Him to raise up more preachers of His great Good News. Do what you can to encourage them too.

What the Bible Teaches about...

CHRIST'S PEOPLE, the CHURCH

Our physical family is important to us. God didn't make us sprout from the soil like plants, without parents! He knew we'd need a dad, mom, brothers and sisters, to help one another. And the church, our spiritual family, is also important to every Christian. God didn't make us "Lone Ranger Christians," intended to get along as individuals on our own. He knows we need Him, our heavenly Father, but we also need our spiritual brothers and sisters. They need us too.

A. Bible Terms and Symbols of the Church

1. God's building: He Lives in Us!

"Don't you know that you (plural) are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" [as a congregation]. "In Christ you are be-

ing built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" "I pray...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (1 Cor.3:16; Eph. 2:22; 3:17.) Of course these verses do not refer to literal church buildings. Such were unknown during the church's first 200 years. A "church" is not where we meet, but we who meet. When God's people gather in His name, we need to recall that in a special way HE is in our midst. Make Him at home there! (Matt.18:20. Other verses show that the individual believer's body is also God's temple or home: Jn.14:23; 1 Cor.6:19.)

2. God's family: Like human fathers, God gave us life, cares for us, teaches and disciplines us, is the head of the family, and loves to spend time with His children.

Meditate on the passages which verify the preceding sentence. "Now we are children of God." "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God." "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" "What son is not disciplined by his father? God disciplines us for our good." Jesus prayed, "My Father,...may your will be done." "Our fellowship is with the Father." (1 Jn.3:2; 5:1; Mt.6:8 & 7:11; Heb.12:7,10; Mt. 26: 42; 1 Jn.1:3.)

3. Christ's flock: He guides, provides, protects, and feeds us.

"Fear not, little flock..." "The shepherd...calls his sheep by name and leads them out....I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep." (Lk.12:32; Jn.10:3,14-15.) Can you say, "I am the Lord's sheep--weak, helpless, foolish and needy--but depending on Him"? Only then can you truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

4. Christ's bride: He loves us intimately, and yearns for our presence!

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Paul wrote, "I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that...your minds may somehow be led astray from your...pure devotion to Christ." One of the last chapters of the Bible says, "The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." (Eph.5:25; 2 Cor.11:2-3; Rev.19:7.) Are we fully devoted to Him, keeping ourselves pure from spiritual immorality (love for other gods)? Do we yearn for His presence?

5. Christ's body: He works thru us!

"The church...is his body." "Christ is the head of the church, his body." "You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (Eph.1:23; 5:23; 1 Cor.12:27.) He has no other hands or feet than ours. He wants to use us. If 1/4 of your bodily organs didn't work, what would you be? How many parts of Christ's spiritual body are not working under the control of its Head?

B. The Universal Church and the Local Churches

1. The Universal Church: "Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5: 25). This is the entire church world-wide, all born-again people everywhere, "the church of the firstborn ones, whose names are enrolled in heaven" (Heb.12:23).

2. Local Churches (or congregations/assemblies) "Paul,...to the church of God in Corinth"--or in Louisville, or Manila. Then, just as now, there were many congregations of disciples. Some were very good; others very bad; most were in between. What about ours? How can we help it improve? "If every member were just like me, what kind of church would my church be?"

Questions: Is it possible to belong to a local church without belonging to the universal church as defined above? (At this point we are not thinking of "Christendom.") Is it possible to belong to the universal church without belonging to a local church? (Think of an example, in Acts 8 for instance.) In such cases, the abnormal situation should be remedied as soon as possible, of course.

C. The "Invisible Church" and the "Visible Church"

Matt.13:47-50 compares the kingdom of heaven to some fishermen's large net. They put it into the lake and caught many fish. Later they separated them into two kinds, and kept the good but threw away the bad. It seems that in this parable the lake and all its fish stand for humanity. The net with the fish caught in it represents Christendom, the professing "church." The good fish are real disciples. The bad ones are church-members who are Christians in name only. Both the saved and the fake Christians are together in the net until the separation, which occurs at the end of the age. Due to this passage and others like Rom.2:28-29, 2 Tim.2:19 and Rev.3:14-22, we speak of the visible church and the invisible church. John Stott explains this concept:

"The **VISIBLE** Church is so called because the marks by which its members are known are visible and therefore easy to discern. They are such things as baptism, public worship and outward conformity to the rules of the Church. The **INVISIBLE** Church is so called because the marks by which its members are known are invisible and therefore

hard to discern. They include such things as faith, spiritual worship and inward conformity to the will of God.

"The **VISIBLE** Church is what men see, namely a company of people who profess Christ with their lips. The **INVISIBLE** Church is what God sees, namely a company of people who possess Christ in their hearts. What **MEN** see is those who have been baptized with water and whose names are placed on the register of a church. What **GOD** sees is those who have been born again of the Spirit and whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

D. Which Church is "the True Church?"

Sometimes people ask, "Did Christ found one church, or many?" Only one, of course. Then they ask, "Well, which of today's many churches is the one that He founded? Which is the one right church? Is it the Catholic Church, the Baptists, or Churches of Christ, or Methodists or what?" How would you answer them?

No church-group now is the one true Church, to the exclusion of all the rest. The Church of which Christ is the Savior and the Head is the universal Church or the invisible Church, that is, the entire family of God--containing all those everywhere who are converted to Him and thus born again. And these members of His Church are scattered through many congregations of many kinds, names and denominations. Some local churches have a high % of their members who are saved, some have a low % who are saved, and others have no saved members at all--for in those churches the Gospel is denied or at least neglected.

For it is not church membership that saves, but only Jesus the Savior. So where the true Gospel is preached--the message of who Christ is (Matt.16:15-18) and what He did to save us (1 Cor.15:1-5)--then whoever responds with heartfelt commitment becomes born again into God's worldwide family. But where people do not repent and trust in Him, either because their church does not preach the Gospel (many do not), or because it does but they've never turned to Jesus-- they are not saved, even though they've been church members for 50 years!

The church can't save; only Jesus can. Membership in His family is the result of salvation, not its cause. You are not saved because you are in a church, but you are in His universal Church if you are saved. Church is important; don't neglect it. But joining a church can't make us right with God; don't trust it. Put your trust only in its Head.

Were Stone and Campbell Sectarian?

Leroy Garrett

[Editor's Note: We feel it is important to run this article, since we have advertised and sold Richard Hughes' book, **Reviving the Ancient Faith**. Brother Hughes does an excellent job in his coverage of R.H. Boll and the "premillennial controversy," but we agree with Brother Garrett's views regarding Stone, Campbell and also Walter Scott. See Garrett's article in 9/97 **W&W** about Scott. --AVW]

In 1996 at the Pepperdine Lectures I joined Doug Foster of Abilene Christian and Tom Olbricht of Pepperdine in a review of Richard Hughes' *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. While all three of us gave the book high marks in general, we offered some criticism that we hoped would prove helpful.

I took particular exception to Richard's description of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell as sectarians. He in fact traces the origin of Churches of Christ to the "apocalyptic sectarianism" of Stone and the "legalistic sectarianism" of Campbell. I believe I can prove that Stone was neither apocalyptic nor sectarian and that Campbell was neither legalistic nor sectarian.

While I agree with Richard that Churches of Christ have sectarian origins, and that they have moved from "sect to denomination," a basic thesis of his book, I believe their sectarianism is traceable to second-generation editor bishops rather than to Stone and Campbell. We would in fact never have become sectarian, and never divided and sub-divided, had we remained true to the ecumenical principles of Stone and Campbell.

That is what Campbell himself predicted: This movement will never divide if it remains true to these principles. Hughes presents a different picture. We started as a sect--in the days of Stone and Campbell! I could not disagree with him more.

To Richard's credit, he does allow that Campbell eventually became ecumenical. It was in his youth, in his "swashbuckling" days as editor of the *Christian Baptist* that he was a legalist and a sectarian. This is when the (noninstrumental) Churches of Christ began--as a sect under the tutelage of Alexander Campbell.

For the sake of the record--and to let the record speak for itself--I offer a few quotations from both Stone and Campbell. The quotes

from Campbell will be limited to the Christian Baptist when he was supposed to be a swashbuckling sectarian.

Stone: "Let us acknowledge all to be our brethren who believe in the Lord Jesus and humbly and honestly obey him as far as they know his will and their duty. Let us not reject whom the Lord has received." (Christian Messenger, 1831, p.21)

Campbell: "What are the principles of union and communion advocated in this work? . . . So long as he confesses with his lips that he believes in his heart this truth (Jesus is the Christ), and lives conformably to it and supports an unblemished moral character, so long he is a worthy brother." (Christian Baptist, May 1, 1826)

Stone: "Let the unity of Christians be our polar star." (CM, 1832, p.266)

Campbell: "I have tried the pharisaic plan and the monastic. I was once so strait that, like the Indian's tree, I leaned a little the other way. . . I was once so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with anyone who was not as perfect as I supposed myself. In this unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake; and discovered that on the principle embraced in my conduct, there could never be a congregation or church upon the earth." (CB, III, 10, May 1, 1826)

Stone (to Campbell): "From all your public exhibitions we have been induced to believe that you fraternized with all who believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and who were willingly obedient to His commands." (CM, 1827, p.11)

Campbell: "Why not dispense with this popish furniture in the church and allow Christians of every stature to meet at the same fire-side and eat at the same table." (CB, IV, 1, Aug. 7, 1826)

Stone: "We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." (Biography, p.51)

Campbell: "I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. This game has been played too long. I labor to see sectarianism abolished, and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded." (CB, III, 7, Feb. 6, 1826)

Stone: "Our principles are known to the world. . . that we will unite in fellowship with all holy, obedient believers in Jesus, without

regard to their opinions--that we will labor to the destruction of sectarianism." (CM, 1829, p. 202)

Campbell: "I declare non-fellowship with no man who owns the Lord in word and deed. Such is a Christian. He that denies the Lord in word or deed is not a Christian. . . If a man cause division by setting up his own decisions, his private judgment, we must consider him as a factionist, and as such he must be excluded--not for his difference in opinions, but because he makes his opinion an idol and demands homage to it." (CB, VII, June 7, 1830)

Not exactly sectarian, I would say, and such sentiments could be multiplied almost endlessly. In 1839, after a generation as a reformer, Campbell insisted that Christian unity had always been his "darling theme," including his Christian Baptist days. Stone looked back on the union of the Stone and Campbell movements in 1832, which he helped effect, as "the noblest act of my life."

Robert Richardson, Campbell's physician and biographer and our first historian, described the Movement as "born and bred of a passion for Christian unity, and unity has been its consuming theme." Could this discerning man, hailed by Campbell as the best interpreter of the Movement, have been so wrong?

Then there is William B. West who did a Ph.D. on Stone at Yale in 1949, describing him as an "Early American Advocate of Christian Unity." In reference to this thesis, Luther A. Weigle, then the dean at Yale, referred to Stone as "a grassroots practitioner of Christian unity rather than a debater about it." I suspect that West and Weigle would have been surprised that in another generation an "insider," a professor at Pepperdine, would find Stone a sectarian!

Richard Hughes makes it clear what he means by sect and sectarian: "any segment of the universal body of Christ that regards itself as the total body of Christ" (p. 4). In the same paragraph he says the Churches of Christ for most of their history have regarded themselves as the whole body of Christ.

That may be true of noninstrumental Churches of Christ in the 20th century, but it is not true of Stone and Campbell. I invite Richard Hughes to present the evidence, which is absent from his history, that Stone and Campbell ever had any such idea that the movement/church they started was "the whole of the body of Christ."

What the Bible and Church History Teach about...

CHRIST'S CHURCH TODAY: What about DENOMINATIONS?

Alex V. Wilson

Definitions: One meaning of denomination is a group of congregations with a ruling hierarchy or headquarters telling them what to believe and practice, and assigning their preachers and maybe even controlling their budget to some extent. We heard of a strongly evangelical church which was forced by its mainly liberal denomination to give a certain percentage of its budget to support missionaries who did not believe the Gospel, as well as support social programs with which the church disagreed. Obviously this is anti-Biblical.

But "denomination" may also mean a group of congregations with basically similar beliefs and practices, which work together in some ways, and are distinguished from other groups of churches. That's not wrong, so long as their beliefs and practices agree with Biblical principles, and if they avoid sectarian attitudes--feeling they alone are saved. In fact, if a number of congregations cooperate in any endeavors--radio outreach, foreign mission work, schools, camps, homes for senior citizens, etc.--it's almost impossible not to be a denomination in this 2nd sense.

Origins

Why and how did denominations arise? Why are there so many? Are they good or bad? Such questions naturally arise when we observe the current religious scene.

Some arose for bad reasons: Sometimes people were especially attracted to one teacher or another, who themselves were good and humble men. The teachers had no desire to cause division or start some new church, but their "fans" did it anyway--by emphasizing their pet teachings and rejecting those who disagreed with them. Paul was horrified because Christians in Corinth were splitting into four groups. Some said, "I follow Paul," others, "Apollos is better"; another group said, "Peter is our man," while others cried, "We follow Christ." This would have divided the church if Paul had not stopped it.

In the 1500s Martin Luther tried but failed to keep his followers from calling themselves Lutherans. He exclaimed, "Who is Luther? I have not been crucified for anyone....Cease to cling to those party names and distinctions and let us call ourselves only Christians." But he could not persuade them.

In the centuries since then, new denominations have resulted from **other bad causes**: False teachers have denied basic Bible truths, and drawn people after them--forming cults like the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Moonies and many others in our day. Other churches resulted from orthodox-but-ambitious leaders who wanted power and prestige. Also, since much of Christendom became enmeshed in a church-state alliance, political power-struggles led to some new churches, such as when the Anglicans split from the Roman Catholic Church during the 1500s. Churches have also split in two due to disagreements over social issues such as slavery.

Other new churches arose for good or neutral reasons: During the 300s A.D. and the following centuries, Christianity became popular rather than persecuted. As a result, unconverted people flocked into the church, and Christendom began to decline drastically. Most bishops led their churches into the growing state-church system which then evolved into the Roman Catholic Church. But there were groups, sometimes widespread, of sincere Bible followers who rejected that worldly system. They refused to accept anti-Scriptural innovations like baptizing infants, religious use of images, praying to the saints, the veneration of Mary, and the popes' claims to dominance over all the churches. Often they were bitterly persecuted for not conforming in such matters.

Thus various movements and churches arose throughout the centuries to preach the Gospel and protest doctrinal errors and corrupt conduct in mainstream Christendom. Waldensians, Lollards (spearheaded by the reformer John Wycliffe), Hussites, Anabaptists--these and other groups sought to follow God's Word and renew His people. We mentioned Luther above; other reformers also arose in various lands and fought the good fight of faith. None of them saw all the truth. (Neither do we, no doubt.) And some were less willing than others to follow the truths they did see. Then the 1600s saw the Puritans' attempt to reform the Anglican Church; many of them got kicked out. A century later John Wesley tried again to renew it. That resulted in the Methodist movement which later became a separate church. Wesley had not intended for that to happen.

Barton Stone and the Campbells didn't intend to start a new denomination, either. But their unity movement evolved into a church which later split into 3 church-groups: Churches of Christ, Christian Churches and the Disciples of Christ. A similar development occurred in Great Britain, resulting in the Christian Brethren assemblies. (Like us, they are a "non-denomination"!) A. B. Simpson began a crusade to emphasize holy living and missionary work in all the U.S. evangelical churches over 100 years ago. As in earlier instances, it became an unintended denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Around 1900 a desire to recover the power of the Holy Spirit led to the Pentecostal movement. Some churches that emerged became extreme in several doctrines and went to great excesses of emotionalism; but others were more balanced and had many strengths.

To summarize: Sometimes denominations sprang from attempts to reform an unbiblical church and restore belief in the Gospel. The Reformation (Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, etc.) is a prime example; several new churches emerged. Other denominations resulted from attempts to revive orthodox-but-dead churches. The movements were rebuffed, but continued and developed into new church-groups. For instance, England's churches in the early 1700s were plagued with a stale, "dead orthodoxy." The deists rejected orthodoxy; Whitefield and the Wesleys rejected the deadness. The major issues in the 1500's Reformation had been doctrinal, while the great needs in the dead churches of the 1600s/1700s were life and power.

Again, some denominations arose when teachers rediscovered attitudes and practices in God's Word which had become lost for generations. The Stone-Campbell movement and the Brethren movement both began with a desire to break down sectarian barriers. Such walls had been built by insisting on agreement with human creeds in addition to the Bible. Originally they sought to be simply "Christians," united in the Lord Jesus rather than denominational traditions.

The roots of other denominations were more sociological. They grew from temperamental, social or cultural differences. Wesley had scolded the Anglican denomination to which he belonged for neglecting the poor, deprived masses. Because he preached mainly to the poor, most early Methodists came from the lowest classes. Yet their socio-economic status rose steadily in the next three generations, as they took the Bible's work-ethic seriously. By the latter 1800s one of their preachers, William Booth, scolded the Methodists for neglecting the poor, deprived masses! In protest, he began the Salvation Army. Somewhat similarly, some people are more emotional, others less. Some people put great emphasis on education and intellect, others disdain them. Birds of a feather flock together, so people are attracted to churches which suit their inclinations.

We are telling what people have **done**, not necessarily what they **should** have done. We are not saying all these reasons are sound, by any means. In fact, we mentioned above several thoroughly bad causes of new churches. But not all denominations stemmed from such causes. And the facts of history raise numerous objections to an attitude which was formerly widespread and is still fairly common. That attitude says, "All denominations are bad; all their members are lost; and of course we are not a denomination, we are simply the

Lord's Church." No, no; the truth is much more complicated than that, thank God!

By the way, guess who said this: "We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and cooperate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant." Those words were written in the Millennial Harbinger magazine in 1840, page 556. The writer was Alexander Campbell. He is not our "pope," of course, but he was a godly and brilliant reformer. Note several facts about what he said. 1st, when he referred to the churches among whom he was a leader, he didn't shy away from calling them a denomination. Though he wasn't happy that they'd become a distinct group of churches, and it had not been his goal, he realized that the process had occurred and was no doubt irreversible. They had not been able to remain merely a movement to influence and unite all of Christ's people.

2nd, Campbell wrestled with all his might to keep that denomination from becoming sectarian. When he saw sectarian attitudes developing among some of his followers ("*we are the best of all Christians*" or even "*we are the only real Christians*"), he strongly deplored it. The quotation above shows that he believed and acknowledged that there were true disciples of the Lord in other church-groups than his own. He had always believed that. 3rd, he said that he and those who looked to him for leadership still desired "to unite and cooperate with all Christians." He had not lost his consuming passion for unity and cooperation among the people of God.

May we too have such a passion, in keeping with the heart of our great Savior (John 17).

For further study on this subject, we highly recommend the following:

The Pilgrim Church, by E. H. Broadbent. A stirring account of movements thru the centuries which sought to follow very closely the Bible's teaching about the church. Out of print; consult Christian used-book stores, or libraries.

Discovering Our Roots (The Ancestry of Churches of Christ), by Leonard Allen & Richard Hughes. Comparing the Stone-Campbell movement with other movements which took God's word seriously--but in differing ways. Paperback, \$11.00 + postage.

The Stone-Campbell Movement, by Leroy Garrett. A discerning analysis of various leaders, ideas and attitudes which helped mold us. Hardback, \$25.00 + postage

QUESTIONS ASKED OF US

Carl Kitzmiller

Are there not a lot of unregenerate people in the Bible-believing churches today?

Very likely. Regeneration is a matter of the heart and a transaction between God and man. God alone has absolute knowledge as to when and if it takes place. We may see a person go through the external acts of gospel obedience and his name may be added to the church roll; but we do not know if the profession of faith was genuine, the repentance was from the heart, or if the new birth ever really took place. Now over a period of time we may see fruit from the life which suggests the presence of the indwelling Spirit on the one hand or the same fleshly concerns of the old life on the other, but even this can be misinterpreted.

A truly born again person begins life as a spiritual baby and often does some stumbling around as he learns to walk in the Lord. Not every misdeed is evidence that the individual has never been regenerated. There would be no need for the continual cleansing of the Christian if none of his thoughts, actions, or words needed forgiveness. Even in the case of offenses so serious as to call for disfellowship we cannot assume that the offender is not a brother (2 Thes. 3:15). Such a man as the apostle Peter could act very hypocritically years after he had become a Christian (Gal. 2:11ff). The Christian can sin, in other words. And though a Christian does not practice sin (a continued course of action, (Gal. 5:21; 1 John. 3:6), there is such a thing as a carnal Christian (1 Cor. 3:1), a weak Christian (Rom. 14:1), or an immature Christian (Heb. 5:11ff). Even those who count themselves to be faithful, truly regenerated children of God can sometimes become very uncharitable in judgment, rendering an unrighteous judgment in these matters. Who has not often been very thankful that the Lord (who knows men's hearts and all that is involved) is the judge (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3-5).

There are some related thoughts that need to be expressed concerning this matter. While I may not have certain knowledge of another's state, I can have assurance as to my own as a Christian (1 John 5:13). This is not to say one cannot be self-deceived or that one may not substitute some tests other than those proposed by the Spirit. But it is to say that God has made it possible for honest, concerned Christians to know whether regeneration has occurred in one's own life.

Neither are we suggesting that God's word is not plain enough nor that we may not take a stand on what is contained therein as to becoming a Christian. It is not a case that "anything goes." We have no authority for reducing the terms of pardon nor for applying His message to men according to whether or not we are favorably disposed toward them. God knows how righteously to count obedience in the heart as obedience in fact if He chooses to do so, or how to judge according to the light people may have had, so we do not want to pronounce final judgment in doubtful cases where people seem to love the Lord and yet have not responded in full obedience. But neither must we whittle the word of God down to fit such cases. It is not unrighteous judgment on our part to preach, teach and insist upon regeneration according to the teaching of the New Testament.

It is very possible that churches contain unregenerate people because of a defective kind of evangelism. Modern high-pressure salesmanship seems to have spilled over into our efforts to reach people for the Lord, so that a fast-talking evangelist or personal worker with a good working knowledge of psychology may "sell" someone on becoming a Christian. But after the "buyer" has had time to think about it he is not so sure that he wanted it. He may repent of his repentance. By that time, however, he has been baptized and his name added to a church roll, and the shepherds of the flock begin what is likely to be a life-long effort of trying to keep him interested and showing concern for walking "the strait and narrow way." The tragedy is that many such ones get a sort of inoculation against ever being truly converted. They can always look back to the supposed-to-be conversion. Young people are often susceptible to emotionally charged situations so that when others are responding to the invitation they may respond too. I suspect that not all "losses" of young people in the later teen years in our churches is because of a lack of an exciting youth work; it may be due to unregenerate young people walking the only way they can--after the flesh.

Now the point is not that there is no such thing as a prodigal son, a child of God who strays from his Father's ways. It is certainly not that we do not need to do anything about reaching people. But it is important that we be vitally concerned with bringing people to the new birth, not just counting another statistic. We are not selling vacuum cleaners and collecting commissions.

How Much Is That Preacher?

Jean Shaw, adapted

Good morning, madam. May I help you?

Yes, please, I'd like to buy a minister.

For yourself or your church?

Oh, for my church, of course. I'm already married.

Uh, yes. Did you have a particular model in mind?

I've got a description from the Candidate Committee right here. We want a man about 30, well educated, with some experience. Good preacher and teacher. Balanced personality. . . Serious, but with a sense of humor. Efficient, but not too rigid. Good health. Able to identify with all age groups. And, if possible, sings tenor.

Sings tenor?

We're short of tenors in the Choir.

I see. Well, that's quite a list. How much did you want to spend?

The committee says \$19,000 - \$19,500 tops.

Hmmm. Well, perhaps we'd better start in the bargain department.

Tell me, how much is that model in the window?

You mean the one in the Pendleton plaid suit and the grey suede dune boots?

Yes, that one. He's a real dream.

That's our Princeton #467. He has a Ph.D. and AKC papers.

AKC?

American Koinonia Council. He sells for \$43,000 plus house.

Wow! That's too rich for our blood. What about that model over there?

Ah, yes. An exceptional buy. Faith #502. He's a little older than 30, but has excellent experience. Aggressive. Good heart. Has a backing of sermons, two of which have been printed in Christian Leaders.

He's not too bad. Can you do something about his bald head? Mrs. Penner especially insists that our minister have some hair.

Madam, our ministers come in a variety of hair styles.

I'll keep him in mind.

Now let me show you Olympia #222. Four years of varsity sports at Brass Ring College. Plays football, basketball, volleyball, and ping-pong. Comes complete with sports equipment.

What a physique! He must weigh 200 lbs!

Yes, indeed. You get a lot for your money with this one. And think what he can do for your young people.

Great. But how is he at preaching?

I must admit he's not St. Peter. But you can't expect good sermons and a church-wide athletic program, too!

I suppose not. Still. . .

Let me show you our Fresno #801. Now here's a preacher. All his sermons are superb--well-researched, copious anecdotes, and they always have three points. And -- he comes with a full set of the Religious Encyclopedia at no extra charge! You get the whole package for \$24,900.

He's wearing awfully thick glasses.

For \$220 more we put in contact lenses.

I don't know. He might study too much. We don't want a man who's in the office all the time.

Of course. How about this minister over here? Comes from a management background. Trained in business operations at Beatitude College. Adept with committees. Gets his work done by 11:30 every morning.

His tag says he's an IBM 400.

Madam, you have a discerning eye. Innovative Biblical Methods. This man will positively revitalize your church.

I'm not sure our church wants to be revitalized. Haven't you got something less revolutionary?

Well, would you like someone of the social worker type? We have this Ghetto #130.

The man with the beard? Good gracious, no. . . Mrs. Penner would never go for that!

How about our Empathy #41C? His forte is counselling. Very sympathetic. Patient. Good with people with problems.

Everyone in our church has problems. But he might not get out and visit new people. We really need a man who does a lot of visitation. You see, our people are very busy and. . .

Yes, yes, I understand. You want a minister who can do everything well.

That's it! Haven't you got somebody like that?

I'm thinking. In our back room we have a minister who was traded in last week. Excellent man, but he broke down after three years. If you don't mind a used model, we can sell him at a reduced price.

Well, we had hoped for someone brand-new. We just redecorated the sanctuary, and we wanted a new minister to go with it.

Of course. But with a little exterior work, and a fresh suit, this man will look like he just came out of the box. No one will ever know. Let me bring him out and you can look him over.

All right. Honestly, this minister shopping is exhausting. It's so hard to get your money's worth. Tell me, do you also give guarantees with the contract.

Uh-no. But if there's any dissatisfaction after six months we send a new congregation for the balance of the year. That usually takes care of most problems.

"How to Get Rid of a Preacher."

Not long ago a well-meaning group of laymen came from a neighboring church to see me. They wanted me to advise them on some convenient and painless method of getting rid of their preacher. I'm afraid, however, that I wasn't much help to them. At the time I had not had the occasion to give the matter serious thought. But since then I have pondered the matter a great deal, and the next time anyone comes for advice on how to get rid of a preacher, here's what I'll tell him:

*Look the preacher straight in the eye while he's preaching and say "Amen" once in a while and he'll preach himself to death.

*Pat him on the back and brag on his good points and he'll probably work himself to death.

*Rededicate your life to Christ and ask the preacher for some job to do, preferably some lost person you could win to Christ, and he'll die of heart failure.

*Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher and he'll soon become so effective that a larger church will take him off your hands.

--Selected

Why Preachers Keep Going

Carl Kitzmiller

If there is a preacher anywhere who is not "down in the dumps" at times, I have not seen him. In spite of all he can do he sees those who have claimed to be children of God slip backward, forsake the worship services, embrace the spirit of the age. He sees others who just never seem to be aroused by the gospel as they plunge on unheeding down the road to hell. No thinking Christian can be very happy about that! An even more discouraging thing, however, is the fact that brethren often disappoint. Almost every church has a good number of people who just do not seem to care whether the work goes on in a good way or not.

I suspect that nearly every preacher has given serious thought at times to quitting full-time preaching. A few have quit because of inadequate financial support, but many more have stepped down due to faulty moral support and the lack of spiritual encouragement. Many bulletins, church papers, etc., carry items on the theme, "Why Preach-

ers Quit." One that recently came to our attention carried a different heading, "Why Preachers Keep Going." Below we give several of the reasons that were listed, along with some of our own.

1. Preachers keep going because the words of 1 Cor. 9:16 keep ringing in their ears--"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel. . ." They know no other calling would ever be satisfactory with the Lord for them.

2. Preachers keep going because they owe a debt that can best be paid by proclaiming the Gospel--"I am debtor. . ." (Rom. 1:14).

3. They keep going because, relatively speaking, there are so few who do preach the word publicly.

4. They keep going because of godly elders, faithful Christians, devout teachers who help hold up their hands. They can always remember that some do care as much as they do. The faithful sometimes seem to be no more than a handful, but one seldom is in the place where that handful does not exist.

5. Preachers keep going because they remember that heaven is too good to miss and they are willing to endure much to try to take some with them.

6. They look about in the world and discover that every calling has its disappointments which must be endured. In this, God's work is no exception.

7. They remember that the Lord did not really picture general acceptance and world-wide pleasure in the message they bear. Christians, whatever their tasks, share the stigma of their Lord.

8. They keep going because of the thrill that comes from spiritual victories--prodigals restored; sinners snatched from the snare of the devil; Christians who grow and mature, worship and serve, all as they ought.

9. They keep going in order to help preserve a decent society for the present. "Righteousness exalteth a nation. . ." (Prov. 14:34).

10. They keep going because their Lord said: "Go. . .and make disciples. . .baptizing. . .teaching."

LOWS and HIGHS in the PASTORAL MINISTRY

A. Found in a Deceased Minister's Filing Cabinet

After the Homegoing of my dad, Carl Vogt Wilson, I made many discoveries--some of them surprising. He had drawer after drawer, folder after folder of letters, sermon notes, pictures and other mementoes. They covered the decades of his multi-faceted life.

Of great interest to me were items related to his ministry at the Portland Ave. Church, where I now am a shepherd/teacher as he used to be. Following are two of these, reflecting the depths and heights of such a calling. Almost every pastor/teacher has similar experiences.

1. How Seriously Do They Take Me?

One morning recently the question came to me, "Do these people of my congregation take me seriously?"

I wondered. They come to hear me preach, they call me for counseling, for weddings and funerals. They fill up the weeks with obligations. But do they really take me seriously! They tell me my sermons are "nice," "good," "enjoyable," and they tell me, "You are doing a good job"--"We are glad to have you for our minister." But are they taking me seriously?

Many times I doubt that they are. Their church duties are often fragmentary. Ideas that are Christ centered and should shake their very lives seem to get no response. One can plead, or one can shout, one can smile, or one can frown, yet the stolidness seems unbroken. I hear the echo of the words, "We piped unto you and you would not dance; we mourned and you would not weep."

[Dad had typed the above on a 3x5 card, then stuck it in his file cabinet. There is no date. I know for sure that the church at that time had its core of "shining ones," the nucleus of devoted lovers of the Lord. Yet often they are greatly outnumbered by the mass of "stolid" or indifferent, passive, lazy attenders. Those take much and give little if at all. They are mostly problem and rarely solution. They somehow don't see the Lord and His glory. Dealing with such folks day after day is draining.

Yet in reaching out to them, sometimes someone will wake up. The blinds are raised; the SON-light streams in. So we go on, hoping.

The following is condensed from a letter to Dad from one of the shining ones, who came to Christ out of a family situation of addiction and sadness. Try to imagine how he felt upon receiving it.]

2. The Rich Rewards in Serving Christ

Dear Brother Wilson,

I'm writing to tell you how very much I've appreciated all of the things you have done for me and my family through the years. I'm very thankful to God for allowing you and your wonderful wife to come into our lives. He has used you both to save our family. I mean that literally, not only to introduce us to salvation, but what might have happened if you hadn't taken the time to counsel with me in 1959. [She wrote this in 1974.]

I know that many times things have been very rough on you when you were called for help, nevertheless, you always have come and done everything humanly possible to help. You've played a part in every crisis in our family since 1959....I could name by incident the many hard times in my family but I won't. Instead, I just want to thank you again for being there and not giving up hope on all of us. You are truly a wonderful servant for God and I will always be grateful that you came into our lives.

[My husband] and I really appreciate your fervent prayers for us and our family even while we are away from home....

Much love and praise to God, [Signed]

B. Present-day Frustration and Fulfillment

The following excerpts from an article in Christianity Today (4-7-97) provide more windows into the struggles and delights of pastoral ministry:

The complexity of pastoral care is certainly one factor in why pastors today feel overloaded. Many people finding their way to the church today come out of broken homes, sexual- and physical-abuse situations, and addictions. The good news is that they come to church. The bad news is that the church--and its leaders--is often ill-equipped to provide care for such raw needs.

Conflict also contributes to burnout. So much of what tires pastors is the incessant conflict that seems endemic to pastoral leadership....

What complicates matters is that while the office of pastor commands less respect, the people whom pastors are trying to serve are demanding more from the church. That places more demands on its leaders.... Lyle Schaller writes, "The automobile, combined with the erosion of institutional loyalties, has made it easy for millions of churchgoers to switch their congregational affiliation...." The new

loyalty seems to be need-based. Schaller says, "The new criteria are 'Is it relevant to my own personal spiritual journey?' 'Is it high quality?'"....

In addition, the explosive growth in media in recent years has only compounded expectations of both laypeople and pastors. "With the mass media," says Don McCullough, "members of the church are able to compare their pastor with the best radio and TV preachers throughout the country. And the pastor compares himself with them as well." Neither the preacher nor the preached-to ends up feeling good about the sermon.

C. Too Many Roles can Knock you for a Loop

"Lord, we've got a problem. I thought you called me into ministry to reach the hurting, to care for the spiritual and physical needs of the people you would lead my way. You never mentioned budgets, committees, carpets, or banquets. Lord, I spend more time making decisions about who gets the van, who should repair the boiler, and where we should buy Sunday school literature than I do preparing my sermon. I thought my gift was exhortation. Why are you asking me to do administration?"

A semi-seminar for Bible teachers and preachers:

GOALS and METHODS OF PREACHING, and TYPES OF SERMONS

- 1. "More important than What we teach you to Know
is Whom we teach you to Love."**

--Seth Wilson, Ozark Bible College

- 2. Quotations from HERALDS OF GOD, a book about
preaching, by a great preacher**

--James S. Stewart of Scotland

Did they, or did they not, meet God today?

* * *

Remember that every soul before you has its own story of need.

* * *

The preacher is sent...to declare a Word which is not his own.

* * *

Preaching will never really touch a single heart unless it brings
some sure word about sin and its forgiveness.

* * *

Preach the resurrection...the destiny of the race.
The human heart cries out for light beyond the grave.

* * *

When preaching impels the hearers to prayer, it is preaching indeed.

* * *

Never forget you are working for a verdict.

* * *

It is simple directness...that moves the hearts of men.

* * *

Preaching is essentially worship
and in worship all human glorying is excluded.

* * *

There will be some who...beyond the human tones will hear,
pleading and commanding, the very voice of Jesus.

And long after the sermon is finished,
that voice will keep sounding on.

3. Bible Study and Preaching-- Topical, Yes; Expository, Best

R. H. Boll

The topical method of preaching and Bible study so generally in vogue now, is very good, sometimes indispensable, but also has its drawbacks, and needs to be supplemented by another sort. It is possible by the topical method for a man who has no real Bible knowledge to make a fine showing of knowledge and authority. The topical method lends itself to the advocacy of every sort of error; for it is quite easy to select isolated texts, without regard to their real meaning or context, and prove almost anything; or even in sincere search after truth to overlook, or over-emphasize or slight, passages bearing on the subject in hand. By an array of misapplied scripture-texts, skillfully arranged, it is possible to make a plausible argument on any side of almost any question. The hearers, unable to discriminate, and not sufficiently versed in the Bible to detect mistakes and misuses, are too easily imposed on in this way. (I have heard of one man who saved himself from "Seventh Day Adventism" by "always reading the verse before and the verse after.") This does not of course discredit the topical method of Bible study and teaching, which is necessary, and good if the word of God is handled aright; but it should caution against

these natural perils. The topical method is the safest in the hands of those who have the best knowledge of the Bible as a whole.

The fundamental method of Bible study is the reverent patient reading (and re-reading) of its books and its chapters in order and connection, always with prayer and a heart surrendered to do the will of God. And the sort of preaching (a sort which has fallen too much into disuse) which will best bring hearers into contact with the mind and truth of God and the real teaching of His word, and which will do most to build up Christian faith and to break down sectarian prejudices and barriers, is the careful, faithful expounding of the scriptures in their connection. There is great need of that sort today.

4. Long-range Planning of Teaching and Preaching, for Relevance and Balance

Alex V. Wilson

I fully agree with the emphasis in the preceding and following items, by brothers Boll and Hendron. But I'd like to amplify some of their points, and add others too.

Preachers (and Bible teachers, and church leaders) should seek both relevance and balance in the churches' teaching of God's Word. Relevance asks, "What does this congregation need now? Do any current crises call for special words of comfort, or rebuke, or enlightenment from above?"

We should also consider relevant issues in our society and culture, our time and place. Preacher, here's a quiz: Have I ever expounded what God's word says about divorce? responsibilities toward the poor? homosexual practice? racism? pornography? the duties of citizens? Have I ever taught my flock Scriptural principles about important topics which are not specifically mentioned in the Bible? Examples include abortion, which has killed more persons than all the wars the U.S. has ever engaged in. And TV, the most dominant influence in many people's lives. And gambling, now such a widespread scourge. Also, attitudes toward people with AIDS. Have I preached not only about death (and eternity), but also about dying (and living wills and organ-donations)?

I certainly am not saying all those topics are equally important. It is obviously more important to teach about heaven and hell than about living wills. But that doesn't make living wills unimportant. Of course many of these subjects are complicated, and controversial. Dedicated

Christians differ on some of these issues, and it's often wise if more than one side is heard.

Some of these topics might better be taught in classes for restricted age groups rather than in a sermon to the whole church. Churches with more than one man qualified to preach can divide up topics among the brethren according to their knowledge and experiences in some of these areas. The main point is, instruction and guidance on such matters need to be made available to Christians sometime, somewhere, somehow. Special meetings are another option, maybe using outside speakers with more expertise than we have. Inter-congregational conferences are important too. (The annual SBS conference comes to mind. Another good example is the upcoming Kentuckiana Fellowship Week, which will deal with the important matter of evolution versus creation.) Here's another good idea: Such topics are covered from time to time in magazines such as you now hold in your hand! A class at camp or Sunday school could profit from using W&W issues such as we've had regarding TV, use of time, racism, or helping the poor. (Some back issues are available @ \$.75 plus postage.)

Don't Get Off-Balance...ooops!

We must not evade topics such as those just mentioned. But they also must not become a tail that wags the dog. Preaching expository series straight through books of the Bible is ultra-important, especially when so many folks are illiterate concerning God's Word. Personally I have gained much from John Stott's expository books on the Sermon on the Mount, Acts, Galatians, Ephesians, and others. Their content has been a blessing, but also seeing a master expositor's preaching method has been very beneficial. Warren Wiersbe's book studies are helpful too; and Martyn Lloyd-Jones for meatier, in-depth expositions. (Read with discernment, of course.) Such men can teach preachers how to expound well. (I don't mean copy their sermons.) R. H. Boll's studies of Bible books are rich too, but are more like class sessions than sermons. They are great aids for teachers.

Someone said that an average preacher presenting a series of connected sermons is usually more effective than an above-average preacher giving a number of unrelated messages. Some preachers find it helpful to preach a few individual sermons on current problems in between longer expository series. Of course in cases of emergencies, series can be interrupted to minister to unforeseen needs.

Did we say Balance is Needed?

Think about several other kinds of balance too. (1) Don't preach only from the New Testament, but also the Old. (2) Don't give only

doctrinal sermons (such as God's wisdom, Christ's love, the Spirit's indwelling, sin, salvation, the second coming) but also moral (repentance, holiness, growth in faith, love, hope) and devotional (promoting and engaging in worship) and practical (how to pray and study the Bible; building loving families; witnessing). (3) Present positive teaching of what's true, but don't omit "negative" refuting of what's false--warning about cults and common errors.

(4) Depending on your audience, seek the right mix of evangelistic presentations of the Good News, apologetics messages which defend the Christian faith against attacks, and edifying the saints for growth. The latter also includes building a Biblical "worldview" or overall outlook and values. That also includes...(5) Promoting a burden for worldwide missionary work as well as evangelism at home. (W&W can help you there too.)

Wow, what a challenge it is to preach and teach the living word of the living God! What privilege; what responsibility. At the end of each year I review the sermon topics I preached during the past twelve months. I analyze which areas were strong and which were weak, and what subjects were possibly omitted altogether. I don't worry too much about omissions, for you can't possibly cover everything every year. But I keep the neglected areas in mind, and seek God's guidance for the weeks and months ahead. May He help us to be Bible-based, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled. Also both balanced and relevant. "Who is equal to such a task? Our competence is from God" (2 Cor.2:16c; 3:5).

5. Trust God's Word, Teach God's Word

Bob Hendron

We should be ready to cast out the standard topical sermon

We must return to expository preaching as the normal expression of our teaching. Topical sermons tend to leave us in charge of the text, as we blithely propose subject matter and use Scripture as proof text to validate our previously decided conclusions. This is intolerable for a church which exalts the truth. **Exposition of the text leaves God in charge of the Bible, not speakers.** I decided to preach through books of the Bible over 30 years ago. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made. It has forced me to deal with Scripture I would gladly have skipped if I had been using the topical approach. Expository preaching compels the teacher to deal with the whole Bible as it exposes those who hear it to the whole range of truth. No longer can we take refuge in a few brotherhood proof texts; we must have a belief that is as wide as God's Word itself.

Without such a commitment we tend to skate over the surface of our own preferences. What will "wow" them this time? What will be considered "sound" by those who listen for accents of orthodoxy?

Respect for the text will deliver us from the curse of having to look over our shoulders at those checking on our soundness. If the text testifies that salvation is by grace, not human works, we will have to be honest about it, whatever the consequences to our careers. This will certainly expand our appreciation for these texts, and will challenge the listeners to provide more space for God to work in their minds and hearts as well. As a lady said to me the other day, after hearing an expository lesson on John 6, "The text truly says that it is God's will for those who come to Jesus for salvation to make it. God is committed to our salvation! He really wants for us to go to heaven!" There will be many such joyous discoveries when the Word is free from human constraints.

We must be ready to let the Bible define our real needs.

Legalists are not the only persons misusing the Bible. Well-meaning ministers and teachers who are more tuned to rapid results than long-range goals can also manipulate the Word (Cf. 2 Cor. 4). The attention given to felt needs seems to them the only legitimate needs. This often sabotages laying a solid basis of grace, based upon the Word, which will be there whatever need may arise. Of course, distinguishing between felt needs and real needs is slippery business. I believe God's Word is not only the true answer for the real needs that we have, but also is the best aid in identifying those needs.

At a seminar I conducted several years ago, some persons showed up who hoped the seminar would address specific needs they identified in their lives as crucial. I was largely unaware of this situation, and was in the process of developing the biblical texts in a more general way. The local minister, compassionately reflecting the attitude of those persons, who had little if any background in the Bible, asked me if I could focus more on these "felt needs" than the text itself.

Part of me wanted to say, "We must have confidence in the text to do its work, and it will do it." Still, in my heart I knew these people were in a crisis. They would not wait around for the text to do its work. At that point, perhaps the minister has little choice but to reflect the fruits of his biblical research rather than leading people through the actual process of examining the text.

The crisis of immediate needs often obscures the greater needs. The danger here is that a preacher may find himself even believing

these felt needs are the only acceptable topics for preaching. Willimon quotes Harry Emerson Fosdick's expression of this viewpoint:

Every sermon should have for its main business the head-on constructive meeting of some problem which was puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives, and no sermon which so met a real human difficulty . . . could possibly be futile.

Willimon believes Fosdick's "life-situation preaching" had certain weaknesses. The major one was taking cues for the sermon from contemporary life instead of the text. The text, then is designed by God not only to answer our needs, but also to inform us what our deepest needs are.

We must interpret Biblical texts with an attitude of praise.

Doctrine must not be studied just for the sake of mastering dogma. This creates a corps of religious "experts." We have so much complex dogma that only a religious expert can make his or her way through the minefields of doctrine. If our approach to study doctrine is that we must define it with the accepted terminology, so as to guard it from any possible wrong thinking, or in other ways tame it, it will never yield its meaning to us.

Failure to approach doctrine in a spirit of worshipful awe usually results in more arguments and wrangling, all detrimental to our real growth. In Ephesians chapter one, Paul writes of God's choosing believers "before the foundation of the world" by "designating them ahead of time to be His sons." This is the biblical doctrine of predestination. If our object in dealing with this passage is to argue with Calvin we shall certainly miss what it has in store for us. If we approach it in a praise attitude rather than a dogmatic attitude, we will see something wonderful about God.

If we go at it to wrangle about the concept, forcing it into what we are comfortable with, we will not understand why Paul begins the section with "Blessed is the God and Father...." Paul is obviously in a praise context, not an argumentative one, so this is the key. "Praise God," Paul seems to be saying, "because he considered our needs long before we ever thought about them at all. In fact, not only did he think about us before we ever existed, but he also determined that by his grace we would be members of his family!"

How much gentler would our [Church of Christ] history have been if we had taken the time to praise God more and argued doctrine less.

--Excerpted by permission from *Wineskins*, Vol. 2, #12

VOICES from the FIELDS

Moto Nomura

February 1998

Recently we have a new family named Hirose--Christian parents and three children, the oldest being a 7th grade girl. They used to belong to a United Church of Christ about 15 miles down the hills, but were dissatisfied with cold ritual and lifeless services.

The father is still young, either in his latter 30's or early 40's, and quite a zealous man. He enjoys our Bible- and Christ-centered services. We pray they will grow in His grace and knowledge. He sends his eldest daughter to us on Thursday night, and we take care of her. We are praying she will accept Jesus as her Savior and Lord soon in His grace.

Another family named Hayashi now send their 3-year-old twin children to us on Sundays, and usually either the father or the mother attends Sunday morning services. They are members of a United Church of Christ in Tokyo, and they go to their home church in Tokyo twice a year, Easter and Christmas. We are hoping they will come to us on a more regular basis. Since the two boys love to come to us, we are praying the whole family will find time to come together on Sundays.

Slowly God is working in this isolated mountainous community to show people His great love through His Son Jesus Christ. People need Jesus Christ, thus we keep asking Him to use even us for His own glory and honor. We often visit them, too.

Tim and Dawn Yates

April 1998

Focus on Australia

For months now we have been searching for the right mission field. With the nationalizing of the work in Malawi, we became the missionaries without a home. After much searching, we believe we have found a new place of service.

When someone first mentioned Australia to us, we were not that excited. We thought that surely there were other, much more needy mission fields out there.

As it turns out, less than three percent of the population of Australia claim to go to church. Wait a minute. Isn't Australia a Christianized Country? At one time, the answer was yes.

At one time, Australia had plenty of churches and was considered one of the dominantly Christian countries of the world. As modern trends crept in, humanism and evolution became more prevalent.

Australia recently became the first nation in the world to pronounce itself a post-Christian society. In a nutshell, that means they used to be Christian, but now they have come upon the greater Truth. I hate to even capitalize that word in this context.

Tom and Eleanor Huffman have been missionaries in Australia since 1991, and have come back to the States to ask others to come and help them. We have begun working with them to put together a team of missionaries to work closely together in this difficult field.

Currently, there are two other missionary families who have committed to the team.

Please pray for all of us as we begin making plans to evangelize and plant churches. We trust the Lord to prepare our way and to prepare the hearts of those who would hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Bryantsville Church of Christ

The elders of the Bryantsville congregation want you to know that our minister is retiring in April, 1998.

We will be looking for a replacement then, probably fill-in for a while. We will need someone who has another job or is going to IU as we cannot support a full-time minister.

Ed Sherwood: Rt. 1, Box 409, Mitchell, IN 47446

Happy Birthday!

J. Miller Forcade celebrated his 90th birthday on March 15. Except for his eyesight, he is doing well and would enjoy hearing from any friends. His address is 302D S. 34th St., Gatesville TX 76528. Tel: 254-865-6305

Good News from Portland Christian School

Back in Nov. there was a deep spiritual stirring among many students at PCHS. In the March '98 *Portland Christian*

Broadcaster, Dominic Shillizzi updates the results:

"The fire that was kindled on that fortunate day continues to burn; this revival doesn't end with only an emotional experience. The student body has become increasingly more spiritual. There are now students on the Chapel Committee, a praise team to lead songs in chapel, and a Wednesday Bible study after school. Also, more students are wanting to lead chapels. When students see their peers leading chapel, it encourages them to be more attentive."

Resurrection?

In Jan. 1995 we wrote, "Lord willing, during this year W&W will publish a book about its outstanding former editor, R.H. Boll. Tom Bradshaw wrote it as his thesis. . . ." Well, that obviously didn't come true. But there are hopes and plans to publish the book this year. Pray for us; it's a time consuming task. We haven't forgotten that some of you made a pre-payment for the book; we promised you a discount. --AVW

News from the Philippines

"The Central Bible College (Manila) graduation went well Sunday, March 22. Six graduated in the Basic Bible course (1 yr.), 3 in Associate in Theology (3 yr course), and 1 in Bachelor of Theology (4 yrs.). Praise God for them all and for working in their lives." --from an email sent by David Moldez, acting president of CBC.

Also, from Cagayan de Oro City in the southern Philippines came an announcement of the 18th Annual Lectureship. It is scheduled for April 29 - May 1, and all three days are filled, with sessions running from 7 a.m. thru 9 p.m. Besides lectures, each day has 2 open forums and an evening evangelistic meeting. Three U.S. brethren are scheduled to speak too, including T.Y. Clark, who celebrated his 80th birthday in late March, by the way.

Gone South

Sam and Joan Marsh and their children have moved to Louisiana. Sam will minister with the church in Denham Springs. He did a good job at Lilly Dale Church in Gatchel, IN these past few years. He also served on the School of Biblical Studies' board of directors, including 2 years as chairman.

Gallatin Church of Christ

Report on Work in Honduras. . . Several of our adults and teens have been involved in the work in Honduras for the past three or four years. In July of 1997, 9 of our members along with 8 others from congregations in Shelbyville & Fayetteville spent a week working out of the Baxter Institute in Tegucigalpa. Work included assisting in the dental clinic, teaching children in the village, construction of a much needed house for a family, visiting and ministering to children in hospitals, and ministering to women in prison.

Last fall Dr. Harris Goodwin, founder of the clinic in 1985, and current director, along with his son, Edwin, were in Gallatin. They met with our missions committee and the missions team. A current need is to provide kitchen appliances at the clinic so that a class can be started teaching mothers to cook nutritional meals, also to enable these mothers to get jobs to help support their families. Your continual prayers are needed for the work being done in Honduras, the poorest country in Central America.

The Echoes of Silent Screams by Gary E. Black

Every 21 seconds an abortion is performed in America. A human being, encased in what God intended to be the ultimate place of safety and nurture - a mother's womb - is suddenly and mercilessly destroyed at the hands of a medical doctor who once took an oath to guard and protect the sanctity of human life. It is perhaps our nation's greatest sin - a largely unprotested holocaust that has claimed more than thirty million victims since the U. S. Supreme Court made it legal in 1973.

But the baby is not the only victim of an abortion; the mother is too. The pangs of childbirth are replaced by a deeper pain - the pain of loss & grief that seemingly never goes away. Is there hope and help for a woman who has aborted a child? The answer is emphatically "yes". Jehovah Rapha (God Our Healer) can restore beauty for ashes.

For over ten years our local Crises Pregnancy Center has ministered to hundreds of women and their

families during times of great stress. They counsel those contemplating abortion and those who are dealing with the guilt and sorrow which follow. Our faithful support as a congregation and as individuals makes this ministry possible. Thus far this year they have helped 153 clients and taught 3195 students in our local schools. Remember their efforts in your prayers.

Johnson City, Tn.

Excitement is mounting in anticipation of a great day of celebration next Sunday, March 29, 1998 at the Mountain View Church of Christ. It is not only a day to celebrate the 52nd anniversary of the beginning of our church, but it has also been designated as a time to express our special love and appreciation for Paul Clark, our beloved preacher and friend, who has served the Mountain View Church of Christ faithfully and tirelessly for many years. All of us have benefitted from his encouraging and inspiring sermons. All of us have been recipients of his gracious and loving acts of kindness down through the years. Now it is time for us to set aside a special day in which to express our gratitude to him.

Richard Lewis will be speaker at the morning worship service. There will be special music and a special time of prayer for Paul's recovery. Since last week, Paul has learned of another set-back in his battle against cancer. Even though the radiation treatments were successful in taking away the tumor that caused initial vertebra problem, a check-up last week revealed other problems which have occurred since his check-up a month ago. Chemotherapy to treat this latest problem is scheduled to be started this week.

All Must Be Well

Through the love of God our Saviour,
All will be well;
Free and changeless is His favor,
All, all is well;
Precious is the blood that healed us,
Perfect is the grace that sealed us,
Strong the hand stretch'd out to shield us,
All must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,
All will be well;
Ours is such a full salvation,
All, all is well;
Happy, still in God confiding,
Fruitful, if in Christ abiding
Holy, through the Spirit's guiding,
All must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow,
All will be well;
Faith can sing, through days of sorrow,
All, all is well;
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus ev'ry need supplying,
Or in living or in dying,
All must be well.

--Mary Bowley Peters, 1813-1856

[This may be sung to the tune of "Sleep, my child and
peace attend thee, All through the night.]

THE HUNGRY GET FED; CRITICS DON'T

(Though that's no excuse for sloppy sermons.)

Fred Rogers, of *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*, attended seminary years ago. Among other subjects he studied how to preach. (That's called "homiletics.") Then he had this experience:

My wife and I were worshipping in a little church with friends of ours. We were on vacation, and I was in the middle of my homiletics course at the time.

During the sermon I kept ticking off every mistake I thought the preacher--he must have been 80 years old--was making. When this endless sermon finally ended, I turned to one of my friends, intending to say something critical about the sermon. I stopped myself when I saw the tears running down her face.

She whispered to me, "He said exactly what I needed to hear." That was really a thought-provoking experience for me. I was judging and she was needing, and the Holy Spirit responded to need, not judgment."