

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

JANUARY, 2001

***SECOND
HELPINGS***

Leroy Garrett Will Speak at S.B.S. Conference

We eagerly await March 9-10, the upcoming S.B.S. lectureship in Louisville. Dr. Leroy Garrett -- who prefers to be called simply "Brother Leroy" -- is scheduled to speak at every session. He is deeply devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ and all His people everywhere. But he has a special ministry to those of the so-called Restoration Movement. He has spoken in past years at our Louisville Christian Fellowship Week, Southeastern Christian College's Bible conference, and at various gatherings at Ingallwood Park camp in DeRidder, La. He has also permitted *W&W* to reprint numerous articles he has written.

Brother Leroy studied at two Church of Christ colleges, then at three other schools -- including Harvard Divinity School, where he received a Ph.D. in philosophy. While there, he was picked to speak at the campus chapel's Easter service since he was the only student they could find who believed Jesus literally arose from the dead! Despite being exposed to every subtle expression of skepticism and atheism, he held fast to his trust in Christ and the Bible. He proved himself to be a *man of faith*.

In later years he taught philosophy in at least six colleges, including schools representing each of the three branches of the Stone-Campbell Movement. But at times he found that many who shared his faith were narrow and contentious. Then he proved to be a *man of love*, who sought to promote graciousness and to build bridges.

For 40 years Brother Garrett edited the magazine *Restoration Review*. Through its pages he often served as a gadfly, an agent of *tough love* -- like Socrates in Athens. Negatively, he exposed the follies of legalism and sectarianism. Positively, he emphasized God's grace and the need for loving cooperation among Christians despite doctrinal differences. In many places this made him highly unpopular in the past -- and in some places even now.

As a result of his loving attitudes (even toward those who strongly opposed him), and his wide experience and rich scholarship, he wrote the monumental history book, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*. We use this splendid volume as our textbook in the S.B.S. class on the history of the Restoration Movement. (And you can buy a copy from *W&W*!)

Brother Leroy has become highly respected as an "elder statesman" among a number of Churches of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ.

(Continued on Back Cover)

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Editorial:

Some Things I Wrote In The Previous Thousand Years

Alex V. Wilson

Ruth and I are spending most of January in the Philippines, ministering to new acquaintances plus many of our beloved friends and co-workers from ancient history, 1963-83.

So for this issue the editor is offering articles he wrote back in the preceding millennium! (You probably know that the 21st century really began this month calendar-wise, not a year ago. Not that it matters; for we know Christ was born at least four years "Before Christ.") This W&W is a supplement to last September's, in which important past articles by ten different writers were re-run.

You might think the editor is either lazy or fixated on reprints. He hopes he is neither, but merely offering "2nd helpings" of dishes which various readers claimed were nutritious and maybe even delicious the first time around.

Articles in coming months include a study of "weaknesses" and "infirmities." Are they sins? Entire issues will be devoted to Old Testament people and insights, also to the "400 silent years"; also to grace versus repentance (?). Prove all things; hold fast to whatever is good; and pray for Christian writers and editors.

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

IS IT RESTING OR WRESTLING?

Alex V. Wilson

"It is important to understand the nature of the power that God has given us," wrote Eric Fife. "To expect nothing supernatural from Him is to rob ourselves of one of our greatest joys and resources in the Christian life. On the other hand it is important that we not expect from God things that have no scriptural support; doing so can lead only to frustration and cynicism."

An example of these two errors showed up in a Bible class I taught. After we had studied about the Holy Spirit and obedient Christian living a young lady in the class wrote me a note telling of lessons she had learned. "I remember being quite surprised after I received Christ to find out that I was not automatically perfect in my conduct. Our recent studies about holiness helped me realize that being a victo-

rious Christian is a growing process that's never really finished in this life."

So her first mistake was in expecting too much. As a new convert she had thought that God would somehow transform her into a sinless person, just as you might convert a cassette-recorder from using alternating current (electricity) to using direct current (batteries) by turning a knob. Becoming a mature Christian is not that simple nor that quick.

Her note continued: "The class helped me realize more that the Holy Spirit is a person, and what that means. I have never really thought of Him as One who helps me in the growing process; therefore, I have often considered the task hopeless." That was her second error--expecting too little and thus feeling hopeless about overcoming sin and being holy.

COMMON MISTAKES

Such mistakes seem quite common. On the one hand, many Christians feel that Christian living and service depend entirely on their own efforts. Their attitude is, "If I can only try harder and put forth greater effort, surely I'll become a better Christian." So they grit their teeth and clench their fists and try harder to do their duty, at least for a while.

But there is little growth and less joy, and it all seems useless in the end. Often they give up. This kind of Christian living is very sad. Surely being children of the Living God is meant to be better than this.

On the other hand, some Christian teachers who realize the total inadequacy of such a self-dependent attitude tend to go too far in the other direction. Here are some typical quotations: "Christ is living the victorious life today, and Christ is your life. Therefore *stop trying*. Let him do it all. Your effort and trying can have nothing to do with victory." Another writer declares, "In our sanctification and service, God must do all, and *you will take no part in it* but to accept what He will do for you." And a third teacher agrees, writing, "The abiding life is an *effortless life*; true New Testament living is effortless. Why do we need to try? Only because we are not abiding."

Those ideas contain some truth (Christ is our life) and they sound very spiritual. Many Christians, including myself, have been attracted to such views. But as time passed, two objections arose in my mind. First, how is it possible to "stop trying" or to live an "effortless" life? What do such expressions mean in practice as far as resisting temptation and practicing righteousness are concerned? To say "stop trying" only confuses people, for it is impossible.

Second, this viewpoint is not biblically balanced. As the co-authors Robinson and Winward point out, Scripture certainly does tell us to believe, receive, abide, trust and rest. But it also urges us to fight, wrestle, run, work, suffer, endure, resist and put to death. The earlier

commands stress our need to depend fully on our Lord apart from whom we can do nothing. But we should remember that second list of commands too.

A BASIC PRINCIPLE

The Bible's teaching is summarized in Gal. 5:25, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (NIV). Or, "if the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course" (NEB). In other words, God imparted spiritual life to us when we were dead in sins. He thus *enabled* us to become holy; that is His part. Therefore we are *obliged* to be holy, to keep in step with the Spirit; that is our part. The Christian life is at the same time GIFT and DUTY, a divine provision and human response.

Notice two major applications of this principle. First is the DANGER OF SELF-DEPENDENCE. Christian living depends on what the Lord has done and continues to do for us. Therefore any kind of do-it-yourself attitude is disastrous for us disciples. However, what the Bible warns us against is not effort: nothing can be done without effort. What it tells us to beware of is *self-confident effort*. If we *rely* on our own efforts, or knowledge, training, experiences, abilities and successes instead of on the power of God we shall be as weak as Samson after his haircut. We might have outward success, but no eternal results to the glory of God.

We quoted Gal. 5 :25 above. The context of this important verse is Paul's teaching about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit is the source of our life" (v. 25), and He is also the source of the 9-fold fruit listed in verses 22-23. Left to ourselves, we cannot make ourselves loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, etc. These qualities result from His presence in our hearts. Just as we cannot save ourselves from sin's guilt apart from Christ's redemption, so we cannot save ourselves from sin's power apart from the Spirit's in-dwelling.

Self-dependence is folly, so reject it. Do not think you can make yourself holy in heart. It is impossible. But God can do it for you, so don't despair. The Almighty is our Father, His Son is our living High Priest, His Spirit is our Comforter-Counselor. So trust Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. He can overcome our most deeply-rooted sins, our strongest habits, our all-entangled personal relations. He can cause the delicious, nutritious fruit of the Spirit to thrive in our lives, as we depend on Him.

How do we express our dependence on God? Basically by praying. This is one of the main purposes of prayer. We don't inform God of anything He doesn't know when we pray. Why do it then? In order to remind ourselves and to express to Him our absolute need for Him. Prayer is the primary demonstration that we really believe that apart from the Lord we can do nothing.

AM I LAZY, OR DISCIPLINED?

We have seen that there is danger in self-dependence. But now notice the other side of the coin: The DANGER OF DISOBEDIENCE. All nine of the virtues called the fruit of the Spirit are also duties we are commanded to perform!

Love: "Put on love" (Col. 3:14).

Joy: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4).

Peace: "Never be anxious but always pray and give thanks, and God's peace will guard your heart" (Phil.4:6-7). We are commanded to fulfill these conditions if we want the Spirit to produce peace in our hearts.

Patience: "Put on patience" (Col. 3: 12).

Kindness: "Put on kindness" (Col.3:12).

Goodness: "Command those who are rich to do good" (I Tim.6: 17).

Faithfulness: "Be faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

Meekness: "Put on meekness" (Col. 3:12).

Self-control: "To your knowledge add self-control" (2 Pet. 1:6).

From one viewpoint these nine virtues are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is, they are attitudes which God plants within our hearts and causes to grow there, spontaneously to some degree at least. They are His work. If you are a genuine Christian you have surely experienced this. After your conversion you found a new love and joy and peace springing up within, didn't you? God had imparted His nature to you, which resulted in transformed character (2 Pet. 1:4).

But you did not become perfect. You probably discovered very soon that the new love within your heart needed nurturing, and that you still needed to put on meekness and to add more self-control. And this is scriptural. *For from a second viewpoint (and the Bible's writers see no contradiction between the two views) these nine virtues are actions which we are obliged to perform.*

We are commanded to speak the loving word, to perform the kind action, to persevere with faithfulness, and in meekness refrain from demanding our rights. If we are not doing these duties we are disobedient. We cannot say, "I admit I am not very loving, joyful, kind or persevering, but don't blame me. It's the Lord's business to make me that way, so I won't let my failures bother me."

"Oh no!" As someone said, "Without the Holy Spirit we can't. Without us He won't." That is, we cannot be holy without Him; but He won't force holiness on us if we refuse it, nor automatically impart it to us if we neglect it. Victorious living is our duty as well as God's

gift. So we need to obey, and obedience requires self-discipline. We need to do what we should so the Holy Spirit can do what He wants. George Duncan of Scotland explains this point clearly as he describes the fruitful life:

If we are to know the Holy Spirit in His fullness, we shall know Him not just doctrinally or emotionally, but functionally. **A man who is filled with the Spirit is a man in whose life the ministries of the Spirit are being fulfilled.** We quench the Spirit when we fail to allow Him to do in us that for which He has been given.

For example, one of His ministries is to help us in prayer (Rom. 8:26-27). And He does help us pray--as we pray! But if we neglect prayer, we keep Him from fulfilling that ministry in us. He also has come to bear witness to Christ. And He does--as we witness! "The Spirit will testify about me; but you also must testify" (John 15 :26).

He has come to help us understand Scripture too (John 16: 13). And He does that--as we open our Bible and prayerfully use our eyes and minds and hearts! But if we neglect to study, we shut the door on His teaching ministry.

Above all, the Spirit has come to glorify our Lord Jesus (John 16: 14). This is His greatest yearning. But if we live Christ-dishonoring lives, we stifle that ministry of the Spirit in our lives--we are not filled with Him. Then we need to repent and seek a fresh filling.

WHAT A WASTE

We are like students who want to get a university education but can't afford even the registration fees, much less the tuition, room and board, and transportation expenses. Then a gracious donor steps in and offers us a full scholarship. All expenses paid, even transportation! Wonderful! But the scholarship won't help us even one little bit if we fail to attend any classes.

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Without God, we can't. Without us, He won't. With Him, we can.

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION & DESPAIR

Alex V. Wilson

I've been there, more than once or twice. Doubtless you have too. In a deep valley of discouragement, and even a pit of despair. My worst time was back in 1976; several months of blackness, when at times I really wished that I didn't have to go on living. I wasn't tempted to take my life, but I wanted God to! Then again just last year there were some weeks of heavy gloom and depression.

Such moods are as old as Adam, I guess. And the affliction is very widespread too. Let me give you a quiz related to this. Who Made These Statements? (1) "For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation." (2) "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to." (3) "During a very serious illness, I had an unaccountable fit of anxiety about money matters." (4) "My nerves were ragged, frazzled, exhausted. And such gloom and depression fell upon me as I have never known, although depression is an old acquaintance of mine."

(5) "God seemed nonexistent. The grave seemed my endless goal. Life lost all of its glory, charm and meaning. Prayer brought me no relief; indeed, I seemed to have lost the spirit of prayer and the power to pray." (6) "I found that I could usually struggle on pretty well during the day. But at night it was as if I were the picked target of the Enemy. Irrational fears gripped my spirit, unreal guilt swept over me. Even my sense of God disappeared, though it never reached nihilism nor utter despair. Still, when I turned to God for help, He seemed remote and unapproachable."

OK, are you ready to check your answers? (1) Martin Luther, mighty reformer. (2) Charles Spurgeon, one of church history's greatest preachers. (3) Spurgeon again. (4) Samuel Logan Brengle, bold evangelist of a former day, and a writer of books about holiness which formerly were widely sold and translated. (5) Brengle again. (6) J. B. Phillips, noted author and Bible translator in the 1950's -70's.

Are you surprised? After all, these men were spiritual giants. And more could be mentioned, such as David Brainerd, dedicated missionary to the American Indians. His father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, called him "the most melancholic person I have ever known." Then there was William Cowper, the English poet who wrote such hymns as "There is a Fountain" and "Oh for a Closer Walk with God." He experienced acute mental sickness off and on from the age of twenty till his death at sixty-nine. He wrote his greatest hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," after an attack of insanity during which he tried to drown himself. Another example is F. B. Meyer, the outstanding preacher, leader and writer whose books still sell well seventy-five years after his death. After serving God fruitfully for many years, he experienced a period of nine years in which he lived in deep darkness and depression, wondering if he even belonged to the Lord at all.

"But this is preposterous!" someone may object. "Spiritual giants don't get shaken by desperation, have fits of anxiety, give way to nervous spells of gloom and fear, have attacks of insanity, wish they would die, and doubt their salvation. People who live like that can't be called great Christians. In fact, were they really Christians at all, or

just counterfeits? Surely, at best they were living in sin and carnality when they had such experiences!"

Oh? Are you sure? Well, let's take another quiz. (Don't you love them?)

QUIZ NUMBER TWO

Who Made the Following Statements? (1) "Cursed be the day I was born!" (2) "O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (3) He "prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (4) "I am not able to carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now."

(5) He "cursed the day of his birth. 'May the day of my birth perish..., Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come?'" (6) "I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning." (7) "Grief and anguish came over him. He said, 'The sorrow in my heart is so great it almost crushes me.'" (8) "I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears." (9) "We groan and are burdened." (10) "My heart is troubled." (11) "He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled."

Here are the answers: (1) Jeremiah; see 20:14-18. (2) Jonah 4:3, 8. (3) Elijah, in 1 Kings 19:4. (4) Moses, in Num. 11:14f. (5) Job 3: many verses. (6) David, in Psa. 31:9f. (7) Christ, Matt. 26:37f., Good News Bible. (8) Paul, 2 Cor. 2:4. (9) Paul, 2 Cor. 5:4. (10) Christ, Jn. 12:27. (11) Christ, Jn. 11:33.

Did you realize how often such deep depression was experienced by God's people--yes, by spiritual giants, including our Lord Himself? And many more examples could be given.

There is no joy in recording such facts. But that is what they are--facts, which stubbornly refuse to go away. So it is better to face them than to live in a never-never dreamland where God's people never feel devastated and everyone lives happily ever after, even in this life.

COMMON CAUSES

Let's think briefly about various sources of depression. Other articles in this issue delve into this subject too.

1. Temperament inclines some people--like Brainerd and Cowper, no doubt--to become more depressed than the average person. Unlike your character, which develops according to the moral choices you make throughout your life, you are born with temperament. You inherit it from the genetic pool of your parents and grandparents. So

"melancholic" David would be more liable to moods of discouragement than "choleric" Nehemiah. And "melancholic" Jeremiah would have to wrestle against depression more than "choleric/phlegmatic" Daniel, who lived during the same black period of Judah's downfall and captivity. Don't get me wrong. One's temperament does not excuse his faults; but it does explain his temptations. Some are more tempted to anger, others to laziness; some to pride, and others to depression; etc. (If you are at a loss regarding terms like melancholic, phlegmatic, and choleric, used here not just in their traditional sense but to describe various basic temperaments--then I recommend to you *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, a book by Tim LaHaye. You will find it fascinating and illuminating even if you don't agree with all of it.)

2. Sickness, some types of injuries, and sometimes even normal exhaustion account for much depression. Brainerd had TB; Luther and Spurgeon both had gout, a disease which commonly has the side-effect of depression. While Brengle was preaching in the open air, a drunk hit him in the head with a brick. The injury intensified the problems with despondency which he already had by temperament. Elijah was exhausted, and Job suffered from excruciating boils, when they sank into the pit of despair.

3. Intense emotional strain due to difficult circumstances, especially opposition or danger, is another source of depression. It certainly was a factor in the cases of David, Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, our Lord Jesus, and Paul.

4. Sometimes melancholy is due to aging and diseases that may attend it, such as hardening of the arteries or Alzheimer's disease. This probably explains F. B. Meyer's sad decline when he became old.

5. Our failures and sins. The two are not identical, but we lump them together here. Sometimes our mistakes and defeats get us down--the "if-onlies" of life. At other times we are depressed and rightly so--because of our sin and guilt. David surely was, after his Bathsheba affair. He bore stirring testimony to that fact in Psalms 32:3-4 and 38:3-4. He would not have been a holy man nor even a normal human being had he not felt shame, remorse and contrition. And since every last one of us experiences failure, commits sins and has to battle sin from time to time (to say the very least), is it any wonder that depression is so common? In fact, ought it not be more common? But blessed are those who know how to use "the Christian's bar of soap" described in 1 Jn. 1:7-9 and Prov. 28:13. To be cleansed is one great antidote to sadness and despair.

Interestingly, just today the newspaper reported a study showing that 237 of patients hospitalized for psychiatric problems blamed their mental illness on "sinful thoughts or actions." No doubt some of consciences which they allowed to become calloused and seared. The Bi-

ble mentions both of these dangers: 1 Cor. 8:7, 10; 1 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:15; Eph. 4:18f

6. The sins and follies of others often cause intense pain and anguish of heart. Those who are dearest to us can hurt us so sharply: "a foolish son brings grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1). No doubt Paul was saddened when John Mark left the evangelistic team and ran home to momma. Paul was no doubt more deeply grieved when Demas abandoned him at a time he was most needed. And our Savior loudly lamented His own people's stubborn rejection: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. ..how often I have longed to gather your children together ...but you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37). They hated Him without a cause; no experience can be more bitter.

7. Our great adversary the Devil is surely a major cause of depression. Discouragement is one of the weapons he uses the most. He uses any or all of the six factors just mentioned; he schemes and maneuvers to lure us into the quicksand of sadness, the "slough of despond" mentioned in Pilgrim's Progress. So beyond the other causes, and back of them, Satan orchestrates his forces and still "seeks to work us woe. On earth is not his equal." Woe to any Christian who forgets that we are in a spiritual war.

CONCLUSIONS

The "dark night of the soul" experienced and described by saints and mystics through the ages is not unusual, nor necessarily sinful. Depression may result from sin, or may result in sin, or may have nothing to do with sin. That is, sin may cause depression, as it troubles our conscience. In such a case, the needed cures are repentance and confession. Or depression may cause sin, if we let it lead us to bitterness or rebellion. But not all depression is sinful: I may need God's help in fighting it without necessarily needing His forgiveness for wallowing in it. This presumes that I have not wallowed in it. Instead I have accepted by faith those causes and conditions which cannot be changed, and resisted by faith those causes and conditions which should be changed.

Samuel Logan Brengle gives us an example of one way to resist depression. We now complete the quote we began before:

Prayer brought me no relief. Indeed, I seemed to have lost the spirit of prayer and the power to pray. Then I remembered to give thanks and to praise God, though I felt no spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Feeling, except that of utter depression and gloom, was gone. But as I thanked God for the trial, it began to turn to blessing, light glimmered, grew very slowly, and then broke through the gloom. The depression passed away, and life was beautiful and desirable again, and full of gracious incomings once more. (Quoted from *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, by David Seamands, ch. 10; a most valuable book).

Note well Brengle's third sentence there. It is a key that often turns the lock. It is not our only weapon, but one of the more important. Practical steps are not to be despised nor neglected. But along with all of them, praise the Lord despite your bad feelings or lack of feelings. "Praise the Lord anyway!" There is Light at the end of the tunnel.

BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE PRAYING

Alex V. Wilson

A big problem in Christian living is dryness. We know what we ought to do, but we don't feel like doing it. Our duty is plain, but there is no desire to perform it.

We may experience this in many areas: "I ought to study the Bible more . . . or visit that lonely person . . . or write that letter of apology . . . or tell my office-mate about the Lord . . . or keep my body in better condition . . . or attend church regularly, but I don't really want to, deep down inside. So even if I go ahead and do it, it wouldn't be sincere. I'd just be a hypocrite, wouldn't I?"

But perhaps this struggle between duty and desire, discipline and delight, is experienced regarding prayer more than anything else. Most of us should spend more time praying than we do, and we know it. But too often we don't feel like praying, so we shirk it. How can we overcome our dryness? How can we become victors over our feelings, rather than victims of them? Here are some practical suggestions. (They apply to other duties too, not prayer only).

WHAT TO DO

1. **Pray anyway whether you feel like it or not.** We don't send our children to school only on those days that they want to go, and we don't go to our jobs only when we feel like it. So why should we offer our God any less honor and obedience than we offer our boss at work?

In prayer we should not only ask for blessings, but offer worship. Our moods may change, but Christ's worthiness doesn't. He deserves our praise and adoration just as much on those days when we have the spiritual blahs as He does when we feel bubbling over and ecstatic. Heb. 13:15 tells us to "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually." At those times when worship wells up spontaneously and overflowingly from our hearts, praise is not much of a sacrifice--it's so easy! But when we have the blahs, we must sacrifice our wants to offer our Lord the praise He wants, and deserves.

When we don't want to pray, we are in dangerous condition of heart, and need prayer more than ever. So, as someone said, "Pray

hardest when it's hardest to pray," Here is another saying that has been challenging to me:

Pray when you *feel* like it;
pray when you *don't* feel like it;
pray *until* you feel like it.

2. **Tell God how you feel.** This avoids hypocrisy, and nullifies the excuse people sometimes make, "If I pray when I don't feel like it, I'm only pretending--and that's worse than not praying!" But you do not have to pretend. Go to God and say, "Oh Lord, I ought to pray now, so here I am. But I don't want to be here. I'd rather be watching TV, or talking with my friends, or doing anything else than praying. My heart is cold, and empty of desire. But You want me to pray, and You deserve my praise, so I am calling on Your Name. Help me in my praying."

Of course our Father already knows our hearts before we tell Him, so He won't, be shocked at the information! And it may be that a prayer that ascends from a heart as dry as dust-and-ashes brings great pleasure to Him. He realizes such praying is costly, therefore precious.

This whole matter of duty-versus-desire is a deep question. It appears in various forms. Two young hoodlums and drunkards in Scotland were converted. Thirty years later they met again and shared their experiences as Christians. One testified, "I'm still going on in the Christian life; and from the day of my conversion until the present I've never once had any further desire for a drink of wretched alcohol!" The other man replied; "I'm afraid I can't say that. I just wish I could. There's never been a single day through all the years that I haven't had the thirst for drink." Then he added quickly, "But, thank God, I've never touched it from that day to this!" Which man experienced the greater victory? It's hard to say, isn't it? Or again, a recently-converted teenage boy once told Frank Mullins Sr., "I'm a better Christian than you. You don't cuss but you don't even want to. It's no battle for you. I do want to, but don't do it--so I'm better than you"

In the same way it might be said that praying when you don't want to is even better than wanting to. And yet, in the long run at least, it will be best and most God-honoring if we always want to pray and never want to cuss or get drunk! It is a grand thing to be able to say, "I cheat and lust and act grumpy or violent whenever I want to--but I never want to!" Yet we shall not have our wants and our wills perfected until we see our Lord face to face. Till then the battle continues.

3. **Confess your sins**, if you need to, and thus receive cleansing for your guilty conscience (1 Jn. 1:9). It is highly possible that your dryness stems from a sense of guilt. Maybe you have committed specific sins, or maybe you know you are arguing with God over some matter. In such cases, dryness is a call to us to repent and confess our sins to

God. Perhaps, depending on the situation, we should confess also to people, and make restitution as well.

But it needs to be said again, as we hinted earlier, that dryness is not always a sin nor the result of sin. It may be strictly physical-emotional, and due to such things as poor health, exhaustion, or the weather. So if we find ourselves feeling low, we should search our lives for sin. But if the Lord does not convict us of any specific sins when we ask Him to, or if our coldness remains even after we do confess the sins we know about then we need not feel guilty about our coldness. Instead we should try to get good rest.

4. Use Scripture to motivate yourself to pray. Normally we need not be the helpless victims of our moods. Though we cannot control our inner feelings totally by will-power, yet we can influence them to some extent by directing our thoughts. For instance, when we are discouraged we can start counting our blessings. When fearful, we can recall verses about the Lord's might and loving care.

In the same way, when we don't feel prayerful, we can turn to passages like Rev. 4-5, where the hosts in heaven adore their Maker and the Lamb. Reading about that might raise our spiritual temperature a few degrees. Or we might turn to David's glowing testimony to God's goodness in Psa. 34, and respond to his invitation, "Oh magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together." Or we might find motivation from some of the big promises that the Lord makes about hearing and answering prayer. This is important, because if we can anchor our requests to some definite promise of God it gives us greater confidence in our intercessions.

One of the greatest men of prayer in church history was George Mueller of England. During the early years of his Christian life he would start praying the first thing after arising from bed. But his mind often wandered and he lacked expectancy in his petitions. Then he began reading Scriptures before praying, and found this procedure greatly strengthened his devotional life. The truths of the Bible furnished fuel for prayer, as it were. He fervently recommended this practice in a pamphlet entitled *Soul-Nourishment First*.

5. Take practical steps to help you pray. People differ, and what helps one person may hinder another. But some Christians pray better (in private) walking around than they do kneeling with bowed head. The latter posture makes them very sleepy and they doze off. Some in their daily devotions kneel for a while and then walk around praying for a while. Of course God doesn't give us any rules for posture (though kneeling may incline us to be more reverent, in general) or say we must always pray with closed eyes.

To keep their minds from wandering, some people recommend praying out loud during their devotions. This helps them concentrate.

A third practical step may be to use a prayer-list. A prayerful schoolteacher made out a list of four different individuals to intercede for every day of the month. But there were still others she was burdened to pray for, and her list finally reached eight prayer-targets daily per month-240 persons she prayed for by name! Other Christians use a weekly cycle: every Monday they pray especially for the lost, every Tuesday for governments and world-affairs, every Wednesday for the sick, every Thursday for missions, etc. Devise your own system and see if it doesn't help you.

6. **Resist Satan.** Prayer is spiritual warfare in which we must stand against the kingdom of darkness. In Eph. 6, where Paul describes our struggle against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms," he mentions prayer more often than any other piece of equipment--defensive or offensive. He also commends Epaphras for "always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God" (Col.4:12). And he urges the Roman church, "join me in my struggle by praying to God for me" (Rom.15:30). In prayer, by the authority of Christ, we can resist the Devil so he will flee from us (Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

To review, when I don't want to pray I should (1) pray anyway; (2) tell God I don't want to; (3) examine myself for any sins that may need confessing; (4) use Scripture to change my don't-want into a want; (5) take practical steps; and (6) resist Satan. God help us to handle the blahs.

THINK WISELY, DO RIGHT, OBEY GOD

Alex V. Wilson

What do you think of these statements, made to me by a Christian teenager? "I'm a Christian, and God won't let me go wrong or make a wrong choice. Anyway, I've prayed about this, so God will keep me from ruining my life. Besides, all things work together for good."

That sounds good, doesn't it? Full of faith in God. Yet the remarks were made to justify a course of action which was extremely unwise, obviously against common sense. Some folks even talk that way to rationalize actions which definitely contradict clear teaching from God's word.

Contrary to those seemingly Christian statements, scripture shows us numerous examples (and church history provides many more) of times when God's people did go wrong...and brought dishonor on the name of the Lord and disaster upon themselves. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and their fellow-disciples, and were struck dead for it, God used the incident to teach important lessons to those early

believers. He brought some good results out of those startling events. Yet their sin still dishonored Christ, and their punishment was a disaster to the two of them.

Here are three simple but important guidelines for knowing God's will and shaping our conduct.

THINK WISELY

We should urge our young people to use their minds (and the minds and experiences of older people too) regarding decisions like their education (how much, what major field), career, friendships, courtship and marriage, service to God, general lifestyle, etc. And many older folks also need to examine or re-examine some of these basic questions.

Today many people act merely on impulse, not reason. Years ago when I was in the army, another fellow in my platoon was a constant complainer. Gripe, gripe, gripe all day long. Knowing he had signed up rather than being a draftee, I asked, "Don, if you hate the army so intensely, why in the world did you join up?" His answer still tickles me: "I joined the army because I got so tired of being bossed around at home and school! I had no freedom--they were always telling me what to do." Wisdom tells us to look before we leap.

Sadly, today many *Christians* act mainly on impulse, not reason. (A key word there is "mainly".) They are suspicious of thinking things through, instead basing their decisions on feelings or constantly looking for unusual experiences. Of course, Proverbs 3:5 does say, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." But the meaning of this is explained in verse 7: "Do not think how wise you are, but fear the Lord" (NEB). That is, verse 5 is not warning us against thinking in itself, but against conceited, self-confident thinking, prayerless thinking, the absence of trusting God and seeking His direction. The book of Proverbs itself is full of wise advice on many subjects--family life, the use of money, business matters, eating and overeating, sexual matters, reacting to enemies, etc. God intends us to form wise principles from His Word and apply them with clear thinking. Paul tells us, "...In thinking be mature." Again he urges, "Be very careful how you live, not as unwise men but as sensible ones. Do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is" (1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 5:15,17).

James Packer has some straightforward advice for us about HINDRANCES to getting guidance from God:

1st, unwillingness to think. God made us thinking beings, and He guides our minds as in His presence we think things out--not otherwise. "O that they were wise...that they would consider..." (Deut. 32:29).

2nd, unwillingness to think ahead, and weigh the long-term consequences of alternative courses of action. Often we can only see what is wise and right (and what is foolish and wrong) as we dwell on its long-term results. "O that they were wise...that they would consider their latter end."

3rd, unwillingness to take advice. Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice." We need to consider carefully the counsel of mature people, even if we cannot finally accept it.

4th, unwillingness to suspect oneself. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." We dislike being realistic with ourselves. We recognize shallow reasoning or excuse-making when others do it, but overlook it in ourselves. This is especially true in matters related to courtship, sex and marriage. The joy and sense of well being that result from being 'in love' can easily silence our conscience and prevent careful thinking. We need to ask ourselves why we "feel" a certain course of action is right, and make ourselves give reasons--praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, and lead me." (Guidance and Wisdom)

DO RIGHT

Part of thinking wisely is to ask, "Is this course of action I am considering right? Is it honest and fair? honorable? loving and helpful? Or would even nonchristians realize that it flunks the test of ethical integrity? A sad chapter in the life of Abraham is recorded in Gen. 12, when he and his wife went to Egypt. Fearing he would be killed because of her beauty, he instructed Sarai, "Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." What a wimp! What a failure of his faith in God and his love for Sarai. He acted cowardly, selfishly and deceitfully and he shamed himself and his God, as we'll see in an upcoming WW.

OBEY GOD

Of course it is possible sometimes to disobey God even if our actions are right in themselves, not evil. Remember the prophet whom God zapped because he stopped to eat with another prophet? This is found in 1 Kings 13, and it's worth reading.

The brave younger prophet carried out his difficult, God-given mission to denounce the idolatry of none other than Israel's king. God honored his faith by a miracle, thus preserving him from probable execution. It was a glorious accomplishment. But then "a certain old prophet" entered the drama and deceived the younger man of God. He said that an angel told him by the word of the Lord to cause the younger man to eat at his house. That seems like an innocent act, ex-

cept for two things. The old man lied; and God had distinctly, specifically instructed His younger servant not to eat or drink with anyone at all while on this trip. That latter fact is emphasized by a threefold repetition--verses 9, 17 and 21-22. Nevertheless, being misled by the old prophet's lie, the man of God disobeyed his clear instructions. ..and ended up being killed by a lion.

Don't rush to wrong conclusions here. God is not a mean tyrant, eager to strike us down whenever we step out of line the least bit, even unknowingly. No, no; He is gracious and merciful; but He also deserves and expects total obedience to His clearly revealed will from those who are privileged to 'be His servants'. We also must not conclude that the Lord is picky, fussy over unimportant details, and vindictive. We should realize that He sometimes in *emergencies* allows exceptions to His general rules: David, when fleeing Saul ate the bread which only priests were supposed to eat, and God approved (Matt. 12:1-8). Again, during the revival under King Hezekiah, God answered his prayer and bent His rules regarding the observance of that feast (2 Chron. 30: 13-20).

Nonetheless, the young prophet was judged by the Lord because of his disobedience. His promising ministry was cut short, his very life was forfeited. And in this is a solemn reminder to us: Sincerity is not enough; seek God's will, then obey it. Don't be casual about the will of God. Don't be lazy and lax about obeying the Most High. As James wrote much later, "Don't be deceived," and--more soberly--"Don't deceive yourselves" (1: 16, 22).

The teenager mentioned in our opening paragraph did make the wrong decision, despite repeated warnings. In His grace God later delivered from the fouled-up results of that wrong choice, but at the cost of many tears and heartbreak. She had said, "God won't let me go wrong"; but we are not robots. He gives us the dread gift of free will, and the responsibilities that go with it. She said, "Anyway, I prayed about this"; yes, but she had not clearly thought about it nor carefully considered what God's Word says. Prayer is not enough; nor is sincerity. She said, "Besides, all things work together for good," but she didn't finish that verse: ". . .to those who love God." That means love Him enough to obey His commandments.

GOD ISN'T A COOKIE CUTTER

Alex V. Wilson

A true incident told by Glenn Baber at the Louisville Fellowship Week some years ago continues to intrigue me. Members of a small Church of God in Grapevine, Texas began asking, "How can we reach our community, and influence people for Jesus?" As they considered this question, they decided they might learn some helpful ideas from a

nearby Church of Christ. It was larger than their church, and apparently had developed some effective ministries. So they did a novel thing: a whole bunch of them attended the vacation Bible school at the Church of Christ. Maybe they felt VBS was the method they themselves should use for outreach, and thus they attended in order to learn some lessons.

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

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

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

BUT IS IT BIBLICAL?

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

(1) CONGREGATIONAL AUTONOMY

That term means that each congregation is independent of control by outside people, whether it be a pope, denominational supervisor, or church council of some sort. Instead, the local church is responsible directly to the Lord for leadership, which should be exercised by locally-chosen, Scripturally-qualified elders as they wait upon the Lord. Of course that means that local churches will differ from place to place in some ways, for we don't all see things exactly alike. Nor did Christ expect us to, nor were churches in the apostles' time alike in every way! Nor was that a sin! For example, members and leaders of the Jerusalem church were still observing Old Covenant feast-days in the temple, while churches in Gentile lands avoided such practices entirely (Acts 21:17-26). In the same way, six Churches of Christ today might all believe the one Gospel-message of salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-7), and yet differ in peripheral matters. Church #1 may decide to support a particular evangelistic ministry which church #2 decides not to back. #3 may believe Scripture justifies ordaining not only elders and deacons but also deaconesses, while #4 disagrees. #5 may choose to participate in a local drive against pornography, while #6 does not. Yet the six congregations could cooperate in a number of ways. That is part of our Freedom in Christ--to cooperate in love with other congregations even when we don't agree about everything. Each church should be both independent from other churches and interdependent on other churches.

(2) FELLOWSHIP BASED ON THE GOSPEL, NOT CREEDS

When we claim to have "no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible," we mean nothing should be added to the Gospel as a requisite for fellowship. Fellowship depends on our fellow-salvation, which depends on a proper response to the Gospel of "Christ and him crucified." "Receive one another, as Christ has received you" (Rom. 15:7).

We rightly object to anyone's saying, "You can be a member of our church only if you are born again and also agree with our interpretation of the millennium, or of eternal security, or of spiritual gifts," etc. And since we object to having any such creed imposed on us, we also should not impose one on others. We seek to promote freedom, unity in diversity, following Christ according to our differing understandings of His will (Rom. 14). But unwritten creeds are often enforced just as rigidly as written ones. Barriers to fellowship are often erected not because someone rejects the Gospel but simply rejects longstanding traditions of other people. Let's just pretend and wonder for a few minutes. ...

WHAT IF...?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIBERTY AND UNITY

Alex V. Wilson

As happens from time to time, tensions have arisen *within* some churches and also *between* some churches over various disagreements. Some of our "mainline Church of Christ" brethren are agitated over

whether it's all right to have special numbers by quartets, trios, etc, or whether all songs should be sung by the whole assembly! Some among them are contending over Hermeneutics or *methods of interpreting Scripture*. (This is really the root of the dispute just mentioned.) Is their traditional approach of determining our duties by looking for New Testament "direct commands, approved examples, and necessary inferences" valid or not? If so, how do we know which of these are still binding and which are not?

In other places, including a few churches close to home, tensions sometimes arise over singing stately hymns versus livelier gospel songs versus contemporary heart-songs (maybe by showing the words on a wall via overhead projector). Some members find their worship becomes more meaningful when they express themselves during song or prayer with uplifted hands; others find this unhelpful or even distracting. Then there is the matter of cooperation with other churches.

Underlying many of these disagreements is a larger, more basic question: Is the New Testament entirely *descriptive*, entirely *prescriptive*, or somewhere *in between*? That is, does it say to us, "This is what Christians did in the first century: have the same faith, love and enthusiasm as you serve the same Lord in very different ways today," Or does it say, "This is what they did, and Christians in every century should do the same things the same way." Or is there a middle ground?

HOW WILL YOU TRAVEL?

Let's think about an analogy. Suppose you want to travel quickly from Louisville to San Diego. You might go by plane. If so, during the flight the pilot might veer 25-50 miles away from a direct course--due to a storm, a navigational error, or because he wanted to see the Grand Canyon! The pilot has great freedom. You might travel by train instead (at least in former times you could, before so many routes closed down). By train there is hardly any freedom to maneuver. After all, it's supposed to stay on the tracks. Or maybe you choose to go by car. Then you'll have more freedom than the train has but less than the plane. You'll have freedom, but within limits. You'll want to stay on the road, and stay within the speed limit; yet you may drive faster or slower, take a scenic route or the most direct, etc.

Now compare those options to the New Testament's teaching about church practices and meetings. It's not like the plane flight: "It doesn't matter what the Bible says; anything goes." But it's not like a trip by train either: "All churches should be exactly alike; all should imitate every New Testament practice--nothing more, nothing less." No, it's like traveling by car: *freedom, but within limits*.

In other words, Bible teaching about church activities is not laid down in rigid laws but in *flexible principles*. It tells us to baptize, but

gives no rules about whether to do so in streams and rivers or in pools inside buildings. Christ told us to remember His death by means of the Lord's Supper, but He didn't say Sunday was the only day it should ever be held (after all, He initiated it on Thursday night). The Corinthian disciples had fellowship meals, but it seems Paul abolished them due to their abuses; so should we have such meals today, or not? (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE COVENANTS

One difference between the Old Covenant and the New is that the former contains *many specific details* while the latter contains *general principles*. If Christ's New Covenant with the church were as detailed as the Old Covenant with Israel, it would spell out for us exactly what the pastor-teachers should wear (the color and type material of their suits; whether to wear a necktie or not) ...and a precise code governing church meetings (how many per week, what days and times, the order of each service) ...and rigid regulations regarding the architecture, dimensions, and floor-plan of church-buildings (if it told us to build such edifices at all)! The former Covenant was suited to one people living in one small land, and during their spiritual childhood when they needed to be regimented. But the New Covenant is suited to many people scattered around the world in many lands with differing customs; living at different times; and being spiritually more mature and thus able to be trusted with more freedom.

We repeat, our Rabbi has not given His church rigid rules but spiritual principles to serve as guidelines. What principles am I referring to? These, among others: "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." "I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved." "Let all things be done for edifying--for the strengthening of the church." "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." "Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." "Don't pass judgment on one another; instead make up your mind not to put any stumbling block in your brother's way."

Within these and other similar guidelines found in Scripture there is much leeway, room for variety. We have great freedom, within the limits of Biblical principles and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Thus churches need not all be alike; there is no one detailed blueprint for us all. Thus differences within God's guidelines should be no grounds for bitterness or lack of fellowship.

HISTORY'S EVIDENCE

When we examine the history of the *many* movements that sought to "Restore the church to its N.T. pattern," a remarkable fact stands out. There has been much variety among them. No two of them have agreed on all the details. "It became clear that other Christian move-

ments had also pursued the restoration vision, but pursued it in vastly different ways. How could we account for these differences among those who claimed to uphold the apostolic faith?" That is quoted from a very important book by two Church of Christ professors, Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes. I strongly recommend their book, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*.

Here are a few examples. John Cotten was a leader among New England Puritans, who endeavored "to have all Christ's own institutions, and no more than His own, having a liberty to enjoy all that God commands, and yet urged to nothing more than He commands." With this desire, he believed that we should keep Sunday as the "Christian sabbath," and observe it from Saturday evening to Sunday evening--not Sunday morning to Monday morning, as was common in England. He also believed, along with many others, that we should sing only Psalms or other Scriptures put to music. How dare any uninspired writer expect his words to be sung in church meetings, as though on a level with inspired verses!

Again, most Separate Baptist churches in the 1700's believed in "the nine Christian rites": baptism, the Lord's Supper, the love feast, footwashing, the kiss of charity, anointing the sick, laying on of hands, dedication of children, and the right hand of fellowship. But a leader of the Particular Baptists during the same era found thirteen rites that Christians should practice: all the "nine rites" except dedication of children, plus collecting money for the saints, feasts, fasting, funerals, and marriage. He also believed that the Lord's Supper should be observed every Lord's day evening only, for not only did the earliest Christians observe it at that time, but the very term "supper" required it--since any other time would make it the Lord's breakfast or the Lord's dinner! Would you care to debate that man?

Refreshingly, the Separate Baptists, unlike many other groups, "left room for disagreements about the precise details of the biblical pattern, for they did not want to revert to the strict conformity they had fought so hard to escape." Hooray for them.

The point is clear: If we are to enjoy the unity which Christ desires His people to have, we must also grant each other liberty in beliefs and practices.

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Alex V. Wilson

Times change, and people do things differently. I once saw a picture of a Puritan church meeting in the 1600's. All the men sat on one side and the women on the other--at least in that picture--and the men

were wearing their hats inside the building! (The movie *Oliver Cromwell* showed the king wearing his hat at mealtime in his palace, so that must have been accepted custom in those days.) The Puritan preacher and commentator, Matthew Henry, "in public services usually prayed for half an hour, preached for an hour, and joined in singing Psalms." Are you glad or sad that we do things differently from the Puritans?

Alexander Campbell lived 150 years ago. He too didn't quite follow our pattern, or rather, we don't follow his in every way. In his magazine he reported visiting a church on one of his trips to the Midwest. Shocked, he wrote something like this: At that meeting I saw something I've never seen before and hope never to see again, a congregation remaining seated during prayer to the Heavenly Father! He expressed his profound wish that such a disrespectful, irreverent custom might never spread elsewhere. He believed we should either kneel or stand before the Lord when we pray. His view may have been wise, but times have changed, haven't they?

Campbell also did not follow our custom of having invitation songs in most meetings. Earl West writes, "When J. W. McGarvey enrolled at Bethany College, he determined to become a Christian. He made up his mind that at the first opportunity he would confess Christ and be immersed. He listened to Alexander Campbell preach much, but it was not Campbell's custom to extend an invitation after each sermon, so McGarvey waited two weeks after he made up his mind before he had the opportunity of stepping forward." There's nothing wrong with having invitation-songs, of course, but they are not essential. Peter at Pentecost didn't say, "If you want to become Jesus' disciple, come forward while we sing #131," It's too bad McGarvey thought he couldn't confess faith in Christ till "the invitation" was publicly given in some set way.

Memories from the Early 1900's

After Word and Work ran two articles about Stanford Chambers' life, I received a letter and pamphlet from sister Mary Neal Pitner. Her father had been one of his closest friends, and they attended Berea Church near Sullivan, Indiana. Brother Chambers considered that his "home church" in Indiana, so it was interesting to read the memorial pamphlet about the congregation (now disbanded, largely due to nearby coal mines becoming depleted.)

But you might be surprised to read the section, "Sunday Morning at Berea Church." Here is an excerpt:

Mrs Clara (Chambers) Blakeman led singing at Berea Church for as long as I can remember. Clara was an excellent song leader and when we went to Harding (College) or visited nearby congregations, we always could sing the songs correctly, because she was very strict about singing the songs as the music was written. She never stood to

EXAMPLES FROM HISTORY

In 1827 sixteen congregations agreed to support a young evangelist named Walter Scott for one year by voluntary contributions. He converted about one thousand people that year (and the next year, and the next!), as he traveled about preaching in various places. Leroy Garrett writes, "New churches were formed and new life infused into old ones, some doubling their membership. This was unbelievable, for in the year before Scott was sent out, the Mahoning churches did well to hold their own or to enjoy modest growth." (*The Stone-Campbell Movement*.)

But he was not the only effective evangelist in those days by any means. Historian Earl West tells how Jacob Creath "traveled continually, preaching the gospel and establishing congregations. His work took him over Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana, Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee." And John T. Johnson also was "preeminently an evangelist. . . He had a lawyer's mind and a poet's heart and he preached with strong appeals both to logic and to emotions." Having been converted to Christ during his 30's, he traveled and preached for 26 years and led many to the Lord.

Alexander Campbell commented in regard to Johnson, "I wish Kentucky had a few persons equally gifted for *taking care* of the sheep, as brother Johnson is for *making* them and putting them into the green pastures." This statement implies that in those days the "located-minister" shortage was sometimes a bigger problem than the evangelist shortage, while in our time the evangelist shortage is far greater than the "located-minister" shortage--as great as that is. In the 1800's congregations in the same general area of a state often cooperated in selecting an evangelist, assuring him of pay, and authorizing him to preach within that region. They considered him to be an officer of several churches rather than of any one church (like an elder or deacon). Thus they respected the autonomy of each local church while successfully cooperating for greater effectiveness. (West, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. I).

In this century, among our churches Stanford Chambers was an example of a man highly gifted both in evangelism and teaching. From 1924 onwards, most of his time was occupied in teaching at Portland Christian School. But for a number of years before then, he gave himself to gospel-preaching. During that period he helped establish many new congregations in Indiana and Louisiana--fifteen or twenty of them. Later during the 1930's and 40's, J. E. Blansett pioneered perhaps twenty churches in Texas. My dad-in-law, Jesse Wood, told me how Brother Blansett was especially gifted in going into neighborhoods where Christians were very few. He could easily arouse the interest of unbelievers, present Christ to them and appeal to them to become disciples. Then he would form a local assembly. Not

very long afterwards, he would try to get someone else to take the leadership there while he moved on to other virgin areas.

A few other men could also be mentioned, such as A. K. Ramsey and others in Louisiana. All of these used various methods--open-air meetings, tent meetings, Bible classes in homes or schools or rented rooms, and personal visitation. But whatever methods were employed, their supreme calling and vision and burden and gifts were aimed at reaching out to pioneer areas and establishing new churches. Like Paul, their ambition was to preach the gospel where Christ was not known or at least not well known (Romans 15: 20) .

OUR PRESENT SITUATION

Since the 2nd World War very few new churches have been established by us in the U.S., by means of *evangelists*. Thank God a number have been planted overseas, by missionaries and/or national preachers and/or radio. And a few have started here in various ways, but hardly any by church-planters. In fact, in general we seem to have lost the very concept of a gift/calling/ministry/office bestowed by God as a major means for starting new churches. Surely Paul was a church-planter *par excellence*, and his ministry is described in detail for us. Philip is termed "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8); and Timothy, one of a number of young men trained by Paul as traveling preachers, is reminded, "Do the work of an evangelist" (Acts 20:4; 2 Tim. 4:5). Yet the whole idea of church-planters seems to have faded from our consciousness, or at least from our priorities. We still recognize the need for foreign missionaries and we recognize the need for leaders in the local churches. But have we forgotten that home-missionaries, pioneer church-planters, are also a vital part of the Lord's plan?

I'm thankful that in recent years Sonny Childs has been on the road evangelizing in various ways and places. He seeks to impart vision and provide on-the-job evangelism training to youth too. He does this via his "Missionaries-for-America Program" (MAP). He also holds meetings that seek to revive established churches; or to build up new or struggling ones by reaching the unsaved (and the "half-saved" who need to get really saved). [For more information, write PO Box 611, Olney, IL 62450, or ncchilds@wworld.com.] But many more like him are needed.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

How shall we get them? First, by praying the request Christ clearly told us to make, that the Lord will raise up workers. Second, by looking around. We may discover in our midst already men who are gifted in evangelism. Perhaps now their gifts are not so evident because the men are tied down with other duties. Perhaps some who are now pastoring local churches (and doing a fair job of it) are actually more gifted as Church-planters. If such were sent forth and their gifts

developed, they might become far more effective than they now are as "local preachers." Third, such men naturally will need financial backing if they are to have sufficient time to plant new churches.

Just as local churches help support foreign missionaries, they should also support pioneer evangelists in the homeland. Let's bend our knees. Then, as God answers and raises up workers, let's send them out. Full-time Church-planters are not the only way to start new congregations. (We hope future articles--by you?--will deal with other methods). But our lack of them has hurt terribly.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Cherry St. hosted a choral performance of the Harding University chorus on January 4, 2001. The chorus was excellent! Good crowd as well! After spending the night in several homes - they sang at PCS the next morning before leaving for the Detroit area. The chorus has sung in 42 states and 22 countries.

Tell City/Lilly Dale Workshop is scheduled for February 21-24 and will be at Lilly Dale. Bro. Sonny Childs will be bringing messages concerning church growth and membership involvement. Sessions begin at 7:00 p.m. on Wed., Thurs. & Fri and 10:00 a.m. on Sat. For housing or other information you may contact Bro. Elmer Pacheco at (812) 836-2338 or 14198 Old State Rd. 37, Tell City, In. 47586. elmer@psci.net

Lilly Dale...is now on the web. members.truepath.com/LDCC/ LDCC This past June members from both congregations were involved in a mission trip to Monterrey Mexico. Those from Lilly

Dale were: Brian, Jeannie, Matt & Pat Williams, Stephanie Sutcliffe, Bobbi Jo Cook, and Evelyn Simpson. They were joined by Jamie, Lora Beth and Logan Heeke of the Tell City Church of Christ and Anita Pacheco served as guide. Two Vacation Bible Schools were conducted (one of these conducted in an area where they are trying to establish a church) and many Bibles were handed out. (Yvette Pekinpaugh)

Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship...is being planned for August 6-9, 2001. Mark it on your calendar and make plans now to attend this year's program. Theme: Prophetic!!!

Ladies Inspiration Day...for 2001 is scheduled for Saturday, April 28th and will be hosted by the Cherry St. Church of Christ in New Albany. More information will be sent to supporting congregations.

New Web Site...for the Iroquois church can be seen by going to the BlessedHope2001@msn.com

Check it out and you'll find a lot of helpful information.

SBS Spring Semester... began the week of January 2 and goes through April 27. Is your church encouraging men & women to attend classes? The purpose of SBS is to "provide an opportunity for a thorough grounding in the Word of God for all who wish to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His church." This is a great opportunity for training S.S. & VBS teachers, Elders, Deacons, Ministers, and Christian workers in general. Those interested should contact Portland Christian School at (502)778-6114. It's not too early to start planning for the fall semester.

Woodland Bible Camp... has been an important ministry field for many decades. A consistent, coordinated maintenance program is needed to keep the camp operational. A punch-list of needed work is available for work to be done at Woodland. If you or your church can participate - contact Allen Goffinet at 1206 10th St., Tell City, IN 47586 or call (812) 547-2793.

Summer Schedule:

Jun. Wk. 1 June 10-16
Inter. Wk. 1 June 17-23
Junior Wk.2 July 8-14
Inter. Wk.2 July 15-21
Sen. Wk July 22-28
Sen. Cit Sept. 9-14
Sen. Retr Sept. 14-18
Annual Meeting of Corporation
Oct. 13

Contact the camp if available to work!

David Johnson (Perry County Clergy Assoc.) Special Event: Basketball star with a message coming to Perry Co: Cameron Mills, UK sharpshooter, of the 1998 NCAA Champions with his wife Dee Dee. January 31 & Feb. 1, 2001, Perry Central High School. Contact David Johnson for further information at (812) 547-6778

Highland Church, Louisville, bulletin: Family communion and prayer service: Don't forget that next Sunday morning is our Family communion service. We will be taking communion by family and, at the communion table, we will pray for each family and the coming new year. There may be some family members who do not feel comfortable taking communion or young children who do not yet take communion. All family members are still welcome to come to the communion table and participate in the time of prayer. Also, if you desire, you may choose to have one of your own family members lead in the family prayer. Finally, don't worry if you are by yourself next Sunday. There will be a time at the end for you to come up and, as a church family, take communion with me and Kristina. I know that the friendships many of you have with others (in and out of the church) are as close as family bonds. If you want to come up to the table with those friends, feel free to do so. I hope you enjoy this time of family commitment and renewal centered around the Lord's supper. --James Girdley

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Frank and Connie Preston
542 Unity Pike

Harrodsburg

KY 40330

He has spoken at the Abilene Christian University Bible Lectures, the North American Christian Convention, and numerous unity forums.

Several decades ago one Christian college barred him from their campus as an agitator. But last year they invited him to speak at their lectureship and gave him an award of excellence for his contribution to the Stone-Campbell movement! This is evidence of the powerful impact our Lord has made through him as the years passed by. Upon receiving the award, he commented to the audience, "You're surprised, aren't you? That shows what can happen when one lives long enough!"

He will speak at the S.B.S. Spring Lectureship on Friday, March 9, at 7:00 p.m. and on Saturday, March 10, from 9:00-11:30 a.m. These meetings will be at the Southeast Church of Christ, 12610 Taylorsville Road in Louisville (just in from Snyder Freeway). This is not only S.B.S.'s annual conference, but serves this year as the K.C.R.C. Joint Lectureship. The Kentuckiana Consortium of Restoration Colleges consists of Louisville Bible College and the College of the Scriptures plus the School of Biblical Studies. Everyone is invited to attend.